GOETHE'S CONCEPT OF THE DAEMONIC

After the Ancients

ANGUS NICHOLLS

Goethe's Concept of the Daemonic

"The idea of the daemonic," wrote Walter Benjamin, "accompanies Goethe's vision all his life." For Plato, the daemonic is a sensibility that brings individuals into contact with divine knowledge. Socrates also relied upon a "divine voice" known as his "daimonion," which inspired him in situations where his rational methods had reached an impasse, thereby showing the limitations of reason itself. Goethe was introduced to this ancient concept of the daemon by Hamann and Herder, who associated non-rational, daemonic inspiration with an aesthetic category of central importance to early German Romanticism: that of "Genius." Angus Nicholls's book shows how the young Goethe initially depicted the idea of daemonic genius in works of the Storm and Stress period, before exploring the daemonic in a series of later poetic and autobiographical works. Reading Goethe's works on the daemonic through theorists such as Lukács, Benjamin, Gadamer, Adorno, and Blumenberg, Nicholls contends that they contain philosophical arguments concerning reason, nature, and subjectivity that are central to both European Romanticism and the Enlightenment. This is the first book to examine Goethe's writings on the daemonic in relation to both Classical philosophy and German idealism.

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Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

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After the Ancients

Angus Nicholls

CAMDEN HOUSE

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for Soe Tjen

DÄMON, m. genius. der griechische *δαίμων* bezeichnet einen bösen sowol als einen guten geist, einen schutzgeist; dem christenthum gegenüber trat er in die dunkelheit und treibt die menschen, über die er macht hat, zum bösen. doch nehmen ihn einzelne wieder im sinne der alten, besonders GÖTHE.

— Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*

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Goethe Editions and Goethe-Related Publications

FA Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Sämtliche Werke: Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*. 2 parts. 40 vols. Edited by Hendrik Birus, Dieter Borchmeyer, Karl Eibl, Wilhlem Voßkamp, et al. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985–2003 (= Frankfurter Ausgabe). Numbers indicate part, volume, and page.

GG *Goethes Gespräche*. Auf Grund der Ausgabe und des Nachlasses von Flodoard Freiherrn von Biedermann. Edited by Wolfgang Herwig. 5 vols. in 6. Zürich and Stuttgart: Artemis, 1965–87.

GH *Goethe Handbuch*. Edited by Bernd Witte et al. 4 vols. in 6. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1996–99.

HA Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Werke*. Edited by Erich Trunz. 14 vols. Hamburg: Christian Wegner, 1948–60. 11th ed. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1978 (= Hamburger Ausgabe).

LA Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Die Schriften zur Naturwissenschaft*. Edited by Dorothea Kuhn, Rupprecht Matthei, Wilhelm Troll, and Lothar Wolf. 21 vols. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1947– (= Leopoldina Ausgabe).

MA Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*. Edited by Karl Richter with Herbert G. Göpfert, Norbert Miller, and Gerhard Sauder. 21 vols. in 31. Munich: Carl Hanser, 1985–98 (= Münchner Ausgabe).

WA Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Werke: Weimarer Ausgabe*. Edited by Gustav von Loeper, Erich Schmidt, et al., im Auftrage der Großherzogin Sophie von Sachsen. Four parts, 133 vols. in 143. Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1887–1919 (= Weimarer Ausgabe).

Other Editions

AGS Theodor W. Adorno. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Edited by Rolf Tiedemann. 21 vols. in 23. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971–86.

BAM Hans Blumenberg. *Arbeit am Mythos*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979.

BGA Nicholas Boyle. *Goethe: The Poet and the Age*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991–2000.

BGS Walter Benjamin. *Gesammelte Schriften*. 7 vols. in 14. Edited by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972–89.

CWA Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. 2 vols. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1984.

GGW Hans-Georg Gadamer. *Gesammelte Werke*. 10 vols. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985–95.

GSZ Georg Lukács. *Goethe und seine Zeit*. Bern: A. Francke Verlag, 1947.

HW Johann Gottfried Herder. *Werke*. Edited by Günter Arnold, Martin Bollacher, et al. 10 vols. in 11. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985–2000.

HWP *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Edited by Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, Gottfried Gabriel, et al. 12 vols. Basel: Schwabe, 1971–2004.

KW Immanuel Kant. *Werke in sechs Bänden*. 6 vols. Edited by Wilhelm Weischedel. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983.

PCD Plato. *The Collected Dialogues*. Edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1961.

SCW Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling. *Werke*. Edited by Wilhelm G. Jacobs, Jörg Jantzen, Walter Schieche, et al. 8 vols. Stuttgart: Fromann Holzboog, 1976–.

SM Johann Georg Hamann. *Hamann's Socratic Memorabilia: A Translation and Commentary* (German and English Edition). Translated by James C. O'Flaherty. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins P, 1967.

SW Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller, *Werke und Briefe*. Edited by Otto Dann et al. 12 vols. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992–2004.

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A. N.
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Introduction

On Tuesday, 9 November 1830, Johann Wolfgang Goethe recommenced work on the fourth part of his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (Poetry and Truth, 1811–33). During the following day, Goethe received the news that his son August had died while traveling in Italy. The news of his son's death came at a crucial time in Goethe's life. At eighty-one years of age Goethe was an elderly man, and accordingly he and his staff were engaged with the task of preserving his literary legacy and creating an appropriate image of the great poet for posterity. Goethe's assistant Johann Peter Eckermann was assigned the role of recording his conversations, while Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer was entrusted with preparing a definitive edition of Goethe's complete works, the *Ausgabe letzter Hand* (literally the "Edition of the Last Hand," the last edition overseen by the author himself, published between 1827 and 1842).[1] While reacquainting himself with part 4 (book 20) of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* during probably the most difficult period of his life,[2] Goethe would no doubt have been confronted with the following passage, written around April 1813,[3] and widely recognized as his most comprehensive statement on a mysterious phenomenon he named *das Dämonische* (the daemonic).[4] Writing about himself in the third person, Goethe observes:

> Er glaubte in der Natur, der belebten und unbelebten, der beseelten und unbeseelten etwas zu entdecken, das sich nur in Widersprüchen manifestierte und deshalb unter keinen Begriff noch viel weniger unter ein Wort gefaßt werden könnte. Es war nicht göttlich, denn es schien unvernünftig, nicht menschlich, denn es hatte keinen

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[1] See Siegfried Unseld, *Goethe and His Publishers,* trans. Kenneth J. Northcott (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1996), 2–3.

[2] *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is divided into four parts, with each part being subdivided into numbered books.

[3] This date is confirmed by the commentaries of both Trunz (*HA* 10:628) and Sprengel (*MA* 16:1072).

[4] This is the view expressed by both Trunz (*HA* 10:632) and Sprengel (*MA* 16:1072–73) in their respective discussions of part 4 (book 20) of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.

> Verstand, nicht teuflisch, denn es war wohltätig, nicht englisch, denn es ließ oft Schadenfreude merken . . . Dieses Wesen, das zwischen alle übrigen hineinzutreten, sie zu sondern, sie zu verbinden schien, nannte ich dämonisch nach dem Beispiel der Alten und derer die etwas Ähnliches gewahrt hatten. (*FA* 1,14:839–40)

As Peter Sprengel has written in the Münchner Ausgabe (Munich Edition) of Goethe's works, the function of this passage within the narrative of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is that of a *Deutungsmuster* through which Goethe attempts to synthesize the tendencies of his final years in Frankfurt: his love for Lili Schönemann, his early artistic productions, and his decision to move to Weimar (*MA* 16:1073). Sprengel's comments demonstrate that both the immediate and the enduring effect of this famous passage upon the history of Goethe studies was to bring the broad philosophical concept of the daemonic — a concept with an extremely rich and complex history in Western philosophy, extending from the pre-Socratics, through Plato and Neo-Platonism into the Judeo-Christian tradition — within the narrow confines of Goethe's life. Further mention of the broader philosophical history of the daemonic will be made later in this chapter. For now, it is necessary only to point out that this contraction of the wider philosophical notion of the daemonic into a narrow, mystical principle associated almost exclusively with Goethe's life occurred despite the fact that Goethe himself drew attention to his use of this term "nach dem Beispiel der Alten."

Why, then, is another book on Goethe's notion of the daemonic necessary? As Hans Blumenberg wrote in 1979, this concept has long roused the *Deutungslust* of many a Goethe scholar (*BAM,* 437), and eminent members of this fraternity like Friedrich Gundolf, Walter Benjamin, Benno von Wiese, and Blumenberg himself, to name just a few, have recognized its importance in relation to Goethe's self-understanding in texts like *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens* (Conversations with Goethe in the Last Years of his Life, 1835), and in terms of its appearance in and thematic relevance for important dramatic and fictional works, from *Egmont* (1787), through *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (The Elective Affinities, 1809), to both parts of *Faust*. At the same time, however, even philosophically inclined critics like Walter Benjamin have failed to completely avoid what is perhaps the most common pitfall of Goethe scholarship — that of reading the author's works in relation to events in his life, often at the expense of a consideration of the broader philosophical and historical contexts in which he lived and worked.

The present volume aims to counter the dominant biographical tradition in Goethe scholarship on the daemonic by considering Goethe's presentations of this concept, not simply as modes of biographical reflec-

tion that relate to the existence of an extraordinary individual, and not merely from the perspective of philology, but also as instances of philosophical argumentation that are influenced by major figures in the history of Western thought; most notably the ancients to whom Goethe refers in the famous passage from part 4 (book 20) of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* quoted above, and also Goethe's own important philosophical forbears and contemporaries in Germany: Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Johann Georg Hamann (1730–88), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854).

The purpose of my analysis will be to demonstrate that Goethe's concept of the daemonic, far from remaining confined in its relevance to the author's biography, addresses key philosophical debates concerning the relationships between human subjectivity, reason, and nature — debates that emerge during the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) period, before playing themselves out in Goethe's important confrontations with Kant's critical philosophy and the early *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling. I hope to show that these debates do not arise in and of themselves from the genius of Goethe, but rather are part of a long literary-philosophical dialogue that begins, as Goethe himself acknowledged, with the ancients, and that resurfaced in Germany during Goethe's lifetime.

In perhaps the finest and most succinct philological essay in existence on the subject of the daemonic as it manifests itself in Goethe's works, Benno von Wiese observes that this idea penetrates Goethe's entire literary production, extending from the early lyrics and *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (The Sorrows of Young Werther, 1774), through *Egmont, Torquato Tasso* (1790), *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's Years of Apprenticeship, 1795), and *Die Wahlverwandtschaften,* and ending with the second part of *Faust*.[5] When Wiese's view is combined with Walter Benjamin's considered judgment that the notion of the daemonic influenced the opinions of Goethe for his entire life,[6] it becomes clear that a one-volume study cannot hope to give an exhaustive account of the theme of the daemonic in all of Goethe's works.[7] The present volume

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[5] Benno von Wiese, *Das Dämonische in Goethes Weltbild und Dichtung* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1949), 13.

[6] Walter Benjamin, "Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften," in *BGS* 1,1:150.

[7] A comprehensive list of the appearances of the terms *Dämon* and *dämonisch* in Goethe's works can be found in the *Goethe Wörterbuch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1989), 2:1056–58. For a general discussion of these terms, as well as extensive lists of secondary sources, see also Theo Buck, "Dämonisches," in *GH* 4/1:179–

does nonetheless aim to provide a broad if necessarily fragmentary picture of Goethe's poetic-philosophical development, from the *Sturm und Drang* period until shortly before his death, through an analysis of his concept of the daemonic and closely related philosophical themes as they appear in a select number of key texts. But before proceeding with a discussion of these texts, it is necessary to say a few words about the long and detailed reception history of the daemonic in Goethe scholarship.

The Daemonic in the History of Goethe Criticism

The scholarly record shows that when it comes to the interpretation of the concept of the daemonic in Goethe's works, the dangers of biographically based criticism are significant. The famous passage from *Dichtung and Wahrheit* quoted at the beginning of this chapter already set in place the tendency to associate this concept with Goethe's *Lebenslauf,* or what might, in the more grandiose tones favored by some Goethe scholars, be called his *Schicksal*. This tendency was then reinforced in a decisive way by Goethe's various biographical discussions of the daemonic with Eckermann, many of which are roughly contemporaneous with the latter's reading and revision of some key passages on the daemonic that appear in part 4 (book 20) of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.[8] In many cases these conversations seem to have as their primary aim the creation and defense of an appropriate *Goethebild* for posterity, rather than the elucidation of a philosophical concept with a long, detailed, and complex history.[9] Goethe has been, at least until recently, extraordinary successful in influencing the ways in which his works have been read by subsequent generations of scholars. The critical template established by Goethe in collaboration with Eckermann was to read the works first and foremost in relation to the life of their author, and only secondarily in relation to the historical, literary, and philosophical conditions under which they came into being. This template was to a large extent adopted by early twentieth-century Goethe scholarship on the daemonic, which tended to interpret this concept either along strictly biographical lines or according to the prevailing mood of *Lebensphilosophie* favored by Wilhelm Dilthey and the Stefan George circle, seeing it as a vitalist creative principle that pre-

81; Gero von Wilpert, "Dämon, Dämonisches," in *Goethe-Lexicon* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1998), 201.

[8] Trunz notes that Eckermann read the section of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* that deals with the daemonic on 28 February 1831 (*HA* 10: 628).

[9] This is the view of Hans Blumenberg in *BAM,* 505–7.

sided over Goethe's existence.[10] A case in point is Friedrich Gundolf's discussion of the daemonic in his book *Goethe* (1916), a discussion that quickly became the definitive treatment of the term adopted by the cult of-personality school of Goethe criticism:

> Über Goethes Schicksal waltet das was er selbst das Dämonische genannt hat . . . das ist vielleicht von Gott aus gesehen oder gedeutet dasselbe was vom Menschen aus gesehen eben jene heimlich bildende Gewalt ist, jene Bildnerkraft die eine Gestalt schafft und den Raum, das Gesetz für diese Gestalt: dieser Raum und dies Gesetz der Gestalt ist bei den größten Menschen nichts anderes als ihr Schicksal.[11]

Gundolf's discussion of the daemonic is concomitant with a kind of Romantic individualism, and with the mythicization of Goethe's life that has its origins in Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe*. In this context, Gundolf more or less uncritically accepts the following contention, outlined by Goethe to Eckermann: "Je höher ein Mensch . . . desto mehr steht er unter dem Einfluß der Dämonen" (*FA* 2,12:323). By 1942 the individualistic mysticism of Gundolf's approach to the subject was ripe for appropriation by the ideology of National Socialism, leading to August Raabe's *Das Erlebnis des Dämonischen in Goethes Denken und Schaffen* (The Experience of the Daemonic in Goethe's Life and Creation, 1942).[12] As early as 1914, no lesser a figure than Thomas Mann was already associating the concept of the daemonic with the heroism of the German nation,[13] and this tendency was emphasized further still by early National

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[10] In *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (Poetry and Experience, 1906), Dilthey proposes that poetry is first and foremost a representation of lived experiences. In this context, he sees the works of Goethe as being exemplary: "Poesie ist Darstellung und Ausdruck des Lebens. Sie drückt das Erlebnis aus, und sie stellt die äußere Wirklichkeit des Lebens dar . . . Da ist es nun die erste und entscheidende Eigenschaft der Dichtung Goethes, daß sie aus einer außerordentlichen Energie des Erlebens erwächst" (Wilhelm Dilthey, "Goethe und die dichterische Phantasie," in *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung,* 4th ed. [1906; Leipzig: Teubner, 1913], 177).

[11] Friedrich Gundolf, *Goethe* (1916; Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1922), 3.

[12] August Raabe, *Das Erlebnis des Dämonischen in Goethes Denken und Schaffen* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1942).

[13] In his essay "Gedanken im Kriege," Mann writes of the German soul: "Es ist ihr 'Militarismus,' ihr sittlicher Konservatismus, ihre soldatische Moralität, — ein Element des Dämonischen und Heroischen, das sich sträubt, den zivilen Geist als letztes und menschenwürdigstes Ideal anzuerkennen" (Thomas Mann, *Das*

Socialist appropriations of Goethe's works such as Walther Linden's 1938 essay "Im Ringen um ein neues Goethebild" (In the Struggle for a New Goethe Image, 1938).[14] In the work of Raabe, the daemonic in Goethe develops further in the direction suggested by Mann's treatment of the term, coming to designate a general *Lebenstrieb* of the German nation towards the true, the beautiful, and the good. For Raabe, Goethe's notion of the daemonic touches upon (*berührt*):

> ein abgrundtiefes Welt and Lebensrätsel . . . dessen Durchdenken nicht nur im allgemeinen unzählige Erscheinungen in Natur und Menschenwesen in helles Licht rückt, sondern auch im besonderen das Schicksal und den Werdegang unseres deutschen Volkes gleichsam unter dem Blickpunkt der Ewigkeit verstehen lehrt.[15]

One year earlier than Raabe, Werner Schultz, in his essay "Die Bedeutung des Dämonischen für Goethes *Faust*" (The Meaning of the Daemonic for Goethe's *Faust,* 1941), argues that despite the explicit connection made by Goethe between his own concept of the daemonic and that of the ancients, it is not to be equated with the "fatalistisch-zerstörerischen" elements contained in ancient Greek tragedy.[16] By focusing exclusively upon classical tragedy as Goethe's source for the daemonic, Schultz completely overlooks the Platonic philosophical heritage that underlies Goethe's use of this term, an oversight that this study aims to remedy. In the postwar period two studies — Paul Hankamer's *Spiel der Mächte: Ein Kapitel aus Goethes Leben und Goethes Welt* (The Play of the Powers: A Chapter from Goethe's Life and Goethe's World, 1947), and Walter Muschg's 1958 essay "Goethes Glaube an das Dämonische" (Goethe's Belief in the Daemonic) — see the daemonic along similar biographical lines to those sug-

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Essayistische Werk, ed. Hans Bürglin, vol. 2 of *Werke* [Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1968], 19).

[14] In relation to Goethe and *das Dämonische,* Linden writes that Goethe was "kein Tragiker, aber dennoch einer, der um die dunkeln dämonischen Lebenstiefen wußte und sie nie übersah . . . Er ist und bleibt die stärkste Naturkraft, der freiest gewachsene, lebensvollste, ganzheitlichste Mensch innerhalb der gesamten abendländischen Geistesgeschichte . . . ein arthafter germanisch-deutscher Mensch, die stärkste Verkörperung germanisch-deutscher Naturgesinnung, Weltfrömmigkeit, Lebens- und Schicksalsglaubens" (Walther Linden, "Im Ringen um ein neues Goethebild," *Goethe* 3 [1938]: 180). Quoted in Karl Robert Mandelkow, *Goethe in Deutschland: Rezeptionsgeschichte eines Klassikers, 1919–1982* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1989), 2:92.

[15] August Raabe, *Das Erlebnis des Dämonischen,* 374–75.

[16] Werner Schultz, "Die Bedeutung des Dämonischen für Goethes *Faust,*" *Dichtung und Volkstum* 41 (1941): 386–405.

gested by Eckermann's *Gespräche* and Gundolf's *Goethe,*[17] while more comprehensive philological attempts to explicate the appearances of this term in Goethe's works were offered in Benno von Wiese's public lecture *Das Dämonische in Goethes Weltbild und Dichtung* (The Daemonic in Goethe's World-Image and Poetry, 1949),[18] in Erich Franz's study of the daemonic in *Faust,*[19] in Hans Joachim Schrimpf's *Das Weltbild des späten Goethe* (The World-Image of the Late Goethe, 1956),[20] and in unpublished dissertations by James Whitehead and Walter Schlichting.[21]

Since the early 1970s, synthetic, overarching approaches to the daemonic in Goethe have mostly been abandoned, as scholars have tended to focus more upon specific appearances of the term in Goethe's works. This preference for the particular over the universal seems to have begun with H. B. Nisbet's journal article "*Das Dämonische:* On the Logic of Goethe's

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[17] See Paul Hankamer, *Spiel der Mächte: Ein Kapitel aus Goethes Leben und Welt* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1947), 53–55. For Hankamer, the daemonic is an incalculable "kosmische Widerkraft" that manifests itself in Goethe's late attraction to Minchen Herzlieb, while Muschg, in his article "Goethes Glaube an das Dämonische," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 32 (1958): 321–44, suggests that Goethe transformed himself from being a "daemonic poet" (the youthful, inspired genius of the *Sturm und Drang* period) to a poet of the daemonic — the sober, reflective Goethe of the *Zeit der Klassik*. See also Hankamer's discussion of Goethe's description of Napoleon as "daemonic" (*Spiel der Mächte,* 112–16).

[18] In his public lecture *Das Dämonische in Goethes Weltbild und Dichtung* (1949), Wiese engages in a highly accessible discussion of the theme of the daemonic in Goethe's works, ranging from *Werther* to the poem "Urworte. Orphisch." The general approach to the daemonic adopted by Wiese in this lecture is foreshadowed in his major study of 1948, *Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1948), in which he argues that *das Dämonische* "wird für Goethe zu einer Kategorie, die sein persönliches Verhältnis zum übersinnlichen umschreibt" (79–80).

[19] Erich Franz, *Mensch und Dämon: Goethes Faust als menschliche Tragödie, ironische Weltschau und religiöses Mysterienspiel* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953).

[20] Hans Joachim Schrimpf, *Das Weltbild des späten Goethe* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1956), 307. Taking a similar approach to that of Wiese, Schrimpf offers discussions of the daemonic as manifested in the sonnets "Urworte. Orphisch" and "Mächtiges Überraschen," in Eckermann's *Gespräche,* and in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*. Schrimpf sees the daemonic as a general category that designates Goethe's experiences of the supersensuous, or "das lebendige Wirken der unerforschlichen Gottheit" (307).

[21] James Whitehead, "The Concept 'dämonisch' in German Literature, 1785–1810" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1966); Walter Schlichting, "Goethe und das Dämonische" (Ph.D. diss., University of Manitoba, 1967).

Demonology," in which the author observes that "historical considerations can scarcely elucidate his [Goethe's] thinking on . . . [the daemonic] . . . as a whole, although they may furnish a useful commentary on isolated references to daemons and the daemonic in his writings and conversations."[22] Accordingly, recent scholarship on the daemonic in Goethe has tended to limit itself either to certain periods in his literary career,[23] to certain texts within his oeuvre,[24] or to connections between Goethe's concept of the daemonic and the works of other authors.[25]

In 1925, the Protestant theologian Karl Holl observed in a public lecture given in Berlin that the expression "daemonic personality" had become a common catch phrase in contemporary German life.[26] Holl's statement attests to the fact that, by the mid 1920s, a broader philosophical and theological tradition of writing on the general concept of the daemonic had begun to flourish in Germany. Some of this writing took its inspiration directly from Goethe's use of the term, bringing to Goethe's works a more rigorous philosophical approach than those offered by the biographical and philological mainstream of Goethe studies, while other scholars saw Goethe's oeuvre as being only a small part of a much longer tradition of Western philosophical and religious speculation. This study has been influenced significantly by many of these philosophically oriented discussions of the daemonic in the Western tradition, discussions that are summarized below and referred to subsequently in later chapters.

Between the period spanning the commencement of the First World War and the beginning of the Second World War, several important philosophical considerations of the daemonic in Goethe appeared, beginning in 1917 with Rudolf Otto's seminal work *Das Heilige: Über das Irration-*

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[22] H. B. Nisbet, "Das Dämonische: On the Logic of Goethe's Demonology," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 7 (1971): 259–81.

[23] See Gabrielle Bersier, "Sinnliche Übermacht — übersinnliche Gegenmacht: Die dämonische Verwandlung des klassischen Eros in der Epoche der Wahlverwandtschaften," in *Verantwortung und Utopie: Zur Literatur der Goethezeit,* ed. Wolfgang Witkowski (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1988), 404–18.

[24] See Norbert Puszkar, "Dämonisches und Dämon," *German Quarterly* 59 (1986): 414–30; Arjan van Dijk, "Das Dämonische als moderne Rezeptionskategorie: Dargestellt an Goethe's *Egmont* und *Torquato Tasso,*" *Neophilologus* 83, 3 (1999): 427–43.

[25] Hans-Georg Pott, "Das Dämonische bei Goethe und Eichendorff," *Germanica Wratislaviensia* 95 (1992): 35–57.

[26] Karl Holl, *Über Begriff und Bedeutung der dämonischen Persönlichkeit* (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1925), 3.

ale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen (1917; translated as *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational,* 1923) and continuing with Paul Fischer's *Goethes Altersweisheit* (Goethe's Old Age Wisdom, 1921), Walter Kaufmann's doctoral dissertation in philosophy "Das Dämonische bei Goethe" (The Daemonic in Goethe, 1922), Walter Benjamin's famous essay "Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften" (Goethe's Elective Affinities, 1924), Dietrich Mahnke's *Leibniz und Goethe: Die Harmonie ihrer Weltansichten* (Leibniz and Goethe: the Harmony of their Worldviews, 1924), Franz Koch's *Goethe und Plotin* (Goethe and Plotinus, 1925), Hippolyte Loiseau's "L'idée du démonique chez Goethe" (The Idea of the Daemonic in Goethe, 1932), Henri Lichtenberger's "Le démonique chez Goethe" (The Daemonic in Goethe, 1932), and E. M. Butler's study of Hellenism in Germany, *The Tyranny of Greece Over Germany* (1935).[27] In the postwar period, works by philosophers like Ernst Bloch, and by Goethe scholars such as Grete Schaede, Ernst Loeb, Eduard Spranger, Hermann Kunisch, and Andreas Anglet brought to Goethe's concept of the daemonic a deeper philosophical examination than that offered by many earlier studies.[28] In recent years, the

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[27] Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen,* 11th ed. (1917; Stuttgart: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1923). For Otto's discussion of the daemonic in Goethe, see pages 171–75. Translated by John W. Harvey as: *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959); Paul Fischer, *Goethes Altersweisheit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921); see pages 20–30 for Fischer's discussion of the daemonic; Walter Kaufmann, "Das Dämonische bei Goethe" (Ph.D. diss., University of Göttingen, 1922). This author (born in 1901) is not to be confused with Walter Kaufmann, born 1921, former professor of philosophy at Princeton University and translator of the works of Nietzsche; Dietrich Mahnke, *Leibniz und Goethe: Die Harmonie ihrer Weltansichten* (Erfurt: Kurt Stenger, 1924); see, in particular, pages 16–17 for Mahnke's discussion of the daemonic in Goethe; Franz Koch, *Goethe und Plotin* (Leipzig: J. J. Weber, 1925) particularly chapter 6, "Dämon, Freiheit und Unsterblichkeit"; Hippolyte Loiseau, "L'idée du démonique chez Goethe," in *Goethe: Études publiées pour le centenaire de sa mort* (Paris, Société d'édition Les Belles lettres, 1932), 129–45; Henri Lichtenberger, "Le démonique chez Goethe," in *Revue de l'Allemagne* 6 (1932): 149–62; E. M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1935); see page 151 for Butler's discussion of the daemonic.

[28] Ernst Bloch, *Werkausgabe,* vol. 5, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (1959; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985); for Bloch's discussion of the daemonic in Goethe, see pages 1166–67; Grete Schaede, *Gott und Welt: Drei Kapitel Goethescher Weltanschauung* (Hameln: F. Seifert, 1947); for Schaede's discussion of the daemonic,

analysis of the daemonic in Goethe's works has been heavily influenced by philosophical approaches to myth, metaphor, rhetoric, and *topos* research. This development commenced with Hans Blumenberg's discussions of Goethe's notion of the daemonic in *Arbeit am Mythos* (Work on Myth, 1979), and has continued in important essays by Gerhard Schulz and Walter F. Veit, and also in Blumenberg's recent book on Goethe, *Goethe zum Beispiel* (Goethe, for Example, 1999).[29]

Notwithstanding the frequent references that will be made to these philosophical considerations of the daemonic in Goethe works, it is also necessary to observe that no previous book in the history of Goethe scholarship has undertaken a detailed analysis and excavation of the classical philosophical heritage that precedes Goethe's use of this concept, before tracing the effects of this heritage into the works of Goethe and his philosophical contemporaries. Since such an analysis is one of the central aims of this study, a brief overview of this classical heritage is in order.

The Ancients and the Daemonic

The notion of the *δαίμων* (in English, daemon; in German, *Dämon*) also written by some classical scholars as *daimon*,[30] first appears in pre-Socratic

see pages 94–110; Ernst Loeb, *Die Symbolik des Wasserzyklus bei Goethe* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1967); see pages 70–76 for Loeb's discussion of the daemonic; Eduard Spranger, *Goethe: Seine geistige Welt* (Tübingen: Hermann Leins, 1967); see page 432 for Spranger's definition of the daemonic in Goethe; Hermann Kunisch, *Goethe-Studien* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1991); see pages 46–80 for Kunisch's discussion of the daemonic in Goethe; Andreas Anglet, *Der "ewige" Augenblick: Studien zur Struktur und Funktion eines Denkbildes bei Goethe* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991); for Anglet's discussion of the daemonic in Goethe, see pages 386–92.

[29] Blumenberg undertakes a major analysis of the concept of the daemonic in Goethe, which is discussed in chapters 6, 7, and 8 of this study. For Blumenberg's discussions of the daemonic in Goethe see the following chapters: "Gegen ein Gott nur ein Gott" (*BAM,* 433–604) and "Der Titan in seinem Jahrhundert" (*BAM,* 605–89); Gerhard Schulz, "Chaos und Ordnung in Goethes Verständnis von Kunst und Geschichte," *Goethe Jahrbuch* 110 (1993): 173–83; Walter F. Veit, "Selbstverwirklichung, Entsagung und der Orient," in *Westöstlicher und nordsüdlicher Divan: Goethe in interkultureller Perspektive,* ed. Ortrud Gutjahr (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000), 89–108; Hans Blumenberg, *Goethe zum Beispiel* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1999); for Blumenberg's discussion of the daemonic, see page 229.

[30] The two different ways of translating *δαίμων* (daemon and daimon) reflect different transliteration conventions used in separate historical periods. The Latinate

philosophy and in the philosophy of Plato before making a spectacular return to Western thought, during the latter stages of the European Enlightenment, in the works of Goethe. The effects of what I will describe as the daemon are also often encompassed in the adjective "daemonic." As the Grimms' *Deutsches Wörterbuch,* the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie,* and even the *Oxford English Dictionary* testify, this adjective has also, chiefly as a result of its extensive use by Goethe, come to function as a proper noun: *das Dämonische* (the daemonic), a term that closely resembles the Greek noun *daimonion*.[31]

In Plato's philosophy, the daemonic turns upon the possibility of there being a conduit, nexus, or crossing between the temporal, secular realm of phenomena and the divine realm of the forms or *eide*. Etymologically, the term daemonic comes from the ancient Greek root *δαίω* (*daio*) — meaning to distribute or divide.[32] In this context, the daemonic refers to the process by which the gods allot divine gifts and fates to humans. Related to this notion of the daemonic is the term daemon/daimon (*Dämon*), which can refer specifically to the fate of an individual, or more generally to a kind of hidden or numinous force that shapes a person's life.[33] This particular meaning of the term is most readily found in Orphic beliefs.[34] It is also in this sense that one speaks of an individual being possessed by his or her daemon as by an alter ego or "other self." A person's daemon is thus seen as his or her life principle or entelechy —

"daemon" was favored during the Romantic period, while "daimon" reflects the more direct transliteration used in recent scholarship. Only one form of spelling (*Dämon*) is used in German.

[31] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch,* 16 vols. (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1854–1954), s.v. "Dämon"; C. Axelos, "Das Dämonische," in *HWP* 2:4–5.

[32] H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* ed. Sir Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie, 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 365–66. Liddell and Scott's etymology is confirmed by H. S. Versnel in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary.* See H. S. Versnel, "daimōn" in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary,* ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 426.

[33] Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* 322. For this resonance of the term daemon, see Homer's *Odyssey* 5:396. See also Karl Kerényi's discussion of the term "daimon" in his *Antike Religion* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1995), 57, 76, 148. Kerényi observes that "daimon" refers to: "jener Aspekt des Göttlichen, in dem es Menschen als sein Schicksal erscheint" (57).

[34] Jane Ellen Harrison observes that "Orphism tended rather to the worship of potencies *(δαιμόνες)* [*daimones*] than of anthropomorphic divinities." See Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1908), 587.

the entelechy being Aristotle's term for the indwelling biological law or determinant characteristic of all living organisms.[35] Heraclitus also spoke of this notion of the daemonic when he stated that a man's daemon is his fate.[36] The term daemon can also, however, refer to a mythical "golden race of men who came first,"[37] and, more generally, to a winged soul or being, intermediate between man and God, which distributes divine or numinous messages to the secular realm.[38] Included in this latter category are semi-divine intermediaries like Cupid.[39] Finally, in its most general sense, the term daemon can, in its original adjectival form — *daimonios* — refer to beings that are godlike, and to things, people or events that seem to be influenced by divine intervention.[40]

A curious thing occurs when one looks up "daemonic" in the *Oxford English Dictionary:* "see DEMON" is the entry. Under "demonic" the *OED* lists as its first entry: "of or pertaining to a demon, possessed by a demon." The second entry is closer to the spirit of *das Dämonische,* and lists Goethe as its source: "Of, relating to, or of the nature of supernatural power or genius . . . (in this sense usually spelt *daemonic* for distinction.)" These entries reveal the ambivalent status of the daemonic in the English language. The initial detour from daemonic to demonic in the *OED* marks the degree to which daemonic phenomena have been effaced, overwritten, or even repressed by the Judeo-Christian tradition. In short, the daemonic has literally been demonized by the English language.[41] The

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[35] For Aristotle's use of this term, see *De Anima* II.i 412b. The connection between Aristotle's notion of the entelechy and the concept of the daemon is suggested by Goethe in his explanation of the poem "Urworte. Orphisch" (*HA* 1:403–4), as well as in a number of passages in Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe;* see, in particular, the conversation dated 11 March 1828, *FA* 2, 12:656. These texts are considered in chapter 8 of this study.

[36] See Heraclitus, *Fragments,* trans. T. M. Robinson (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1987), Fragment 119, 69.

[37] Plato, *Cratylus* 397d, in *PCD,* 435.

[38] See, for example, Plato's *Phaedrus* at 246e.

[39] See Robert Stock, *The Flutes of Dionysus: Daemonic Enthrallment in Literature* (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 1989), 11.

[40] See, for example, Homer, *The Iliad* 1:222 and 3:420, and also Plato, *The Republic,* 509c. This is also the first meaning of the term "Dämonen" offered by F. P. Hager in *HWP* 2:1–2.

[41] See, for example Werner Foerster's entry under *δαίμων* (daemon) in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: W. M. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 2:1–20. Foerster observes that the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (ca. 30 C.E.–100

reasons for this demonization are complex, and an exhaustive account of them would no doubt involve another volume on the connections between the philosophical traditions of ancient Greece and Judeo-Christian thought.[42] One plausible explanation is, however, offered by Leonard Barkan in his book *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (1986):

> In Judeo-Christian culture, Eros is suppressed or infantilized and the daemonic splits off into angels as heralds of the divine and devils as the agents of evil. Ambivalence is incorporated into the pagan idea of a daemon as a being situated between the human and the divine, whereas in Judeo-Christian usage, that positional ambiguity is polarized and an unbridgeable chasm set up between heaven and hell, good and evil.[43]

For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to note that the idea of the daemonic as it occurs in pre-Socratic, Platonic, and neo-Platonic thought refers to an agency that is morally ambivalent. As Barkan observes, slippage between the terms *daemonic* and *demonic* began to occur when Judeo-Christian culture divided the hitherto ambivalent force of the daemonic into an opposition between the angelic and the demonic or the devilish.

C.E.) sees the adjective *δαιμονιος* (*daimonios*) as referring to things that are both "dreadful" and "superterrestrial" (see Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary,* 10). Similarly, in his essay "Das Unheimliche" (The Uncanny, 1919) Sigmund Freud observes that, in Arabic and Hebrew, the term *unheimlich* (uncanny) means the same as *dämonisch* (daemonic) and *schaurig* (gruesome). Freud, "Das Unheimliche," *Gesammelte Werke,* ed. Anna Freud, vol. 12, *Werke aus den Jahren 1917–1920* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1947), 232.

[42] In his book *Daemonic Figures: Shakespeare and the Question of Conscience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1994), Ned Lukacher describes the demonization of the Neo-Platonic daemon/daimon in the following way: "The ancient daemon whose temporality and topology were enigmatic, elusively at once inside and outside the human being, became, as a result of the New Testament, fully internalized in the human psyche. More important still, the pagan daemon was demonized, and in its place the Apostle Paul substituted his epoch-making notion of *syneidesis,* which defined a new way of casting out the demon" (32). Lukacher describes Pauline *syneidesis* as the internalization of "the external strictures of Jewish law within the framework of the Greek culture of the self" (37). This description, and Lukacher's further discussion of Pauline *syneidesis* (37–52), go some way towards giving an account of the demonization of the daemonic in terms of the overlapping traditions of Ancient Greece and Judeo-Christianity.

[43] Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1986), 99.

The German term *das Dämonische* has a more complex meaning and resonance than the English words *daemonic* and *demonic*. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1860), like the *OED,* defines the term *dämonisch* by referring to its use by Goethe. Their definition is: "von dem Dämon beherrscht, besessen, wirkend wie ein Dämon." The word from which the Grimms derive *dämonisch* — *Dämon* — is also defined in relation to both its pre- and its post-Christian usages, while its revival in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is attributed specifically to Goethe:

> DÄMON, m. genius. der griechische *δαίμων* bezeichnet einen bösen sowol als einen guten geist, einen schutzgeist; dem christenthum gegenüber trat er in die dunkelheit und treibt die menschen, über die er macht hat, zum bösen. doch nehmen ihn einzelne wieder im sinne der alten, besonders GÖTHE.[44]

As the Grimms show, *das Dämonische* in the Germanic tradition represents something like a fusion of the English words *daemonic* and *demonic*. On the one hand, it harbors the sense of a supernatural force that relates to artistic inspiration or genius, and that also encompasses something like an indwelling destiny or fate. On the other hand, however, the term carries with it a sense of anxiety, malignancy, or evil, particularly when used in theological contexts. The prime example of this latter tendency is Søren Kierkegaard's definition of the daemonic in *Begrebet Angest* (The Concept of Anxiety, 1844) as both "anxiety about the good" and an "unfree relation to the good" that is associated with sin.[45] Kierkegaard's interpretation exerted some influence upon later theological and philosophical discussions of the term in Germany, most notably those by Paul Tillich.[46]

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[44] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch,* s.v. "Dämon." The Grimms' use of lower-case letters for substantives reflects their desire to reform certain aspects of the German language. On this subject, see *Deutsches Wörterbuch,* 1:liii–liv; Peter Kühn, "'wir wollen kein Gesetzbuch machen." Die normativen Kommentare Jacob Grimms im Deutschen Wörtenbuch," in *Studien zum Deutschen Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm,* ed. Alan Kirkness, Peter Kühn, and Herbert Ernst Wiegand, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1991), 107–67.

[45] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety,* ed. and trans. Reidar Thomte and Albert B. Anderson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1980), 118–19.

[46] See Paul Tillich, *Religionsphilosophie,* in *Gesammelte Werke,* ed. Renate Albrecht, 14 vols. (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1959–75), 1:338; Paul Tillich, "Das Dämonische, ein Beitrag zur Sinndeutung der Geschichte," in *Gesammelte Werke,* vol. 6, 52–69.

Owing to the very indeterminacy of the daemonic as a mode or conduit that mediates between phenomena and noumena, it has often been consigned to the basket of evil — as the *demonic* or the *demoniacal* — in an attempt to neutralize its inherent ambivalence. While the German language appears to have been able to live with the many different meanings and moral implications of *das Dämonische,* the English language has displayed what might be an unconscious tendency to divide the daemonic into separate categories of good and evil,[47] or, as is more often the case, to simply relate it to the influence of Satan or the Devil, as the demonic. An example of this occurs repeatedly in English mistranslations of Goethe, in which *das Dämonische* often becomes either the *demonic* or the *demoniacal.*[48] These mistranslations amount to major misunderstandings of Goethe's use of this term, and occur despite the fact that Goethe himself took the time to point out, in part 4 (book 20) of *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* that the daemonic is "nicht teuflisch" (*FA* 1,14:839).

Goethe, the Ancients and the Daemonic

When one searches for examples of the daemonic in Western thought, the results will inevitably depend upon what sense of the term one seeks to find, and just as one of the major themes of the daemonic is the indeterminacy of non-rational or numinous experience, so too is the term itself to some degree indeterminate in its field of reference. At the beginning of his book on the subject of the daemonic in Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon* (Struggle with the Daemon, 1928), Stefan Zweig makes the following observation on the impossibility of exhaustively and objectively defining the term:

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[47] An example of this tendency can be seen in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Notebooks,* in which Coleridge distinguishes between *Cacodaemons* (evil daemons) and *Agathodaemons* (good daemons). For a discussion of these terms see: J. B. Beer, *Coleridge the Visionary* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), 104, 124.

[48] This occurs, for example, in John Oxenford's translation of *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* in which *das Dämonische* becomes "Demoniac." See *The Autobiography of Goethe: Truth and Fiction; Relating to my Life,* trans. John Oxenford, 2 vols. (New York: John D. Williams, 1882). R. O. Moon's translation of Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe* translates *das Dämonische* as the "demoniacal." See *Eckermann's Conversations with Goethe,* trans. R. O. Moon (Thornton Heath, Surrey: W. H. Hulbert, 1950). Even late twentieth-century translations of Goethe translate *das Dämonische* as "demoniacal." See, for example, Christopher Middleton's translation of "Mächtiges Überraschen" in *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Selected Poems,* ed. C. Middleton (Boston, MA: Suhrkamp/Insel, 1983), 176–77.

> Dämonisch: das Wort ist durch so viele Sinne und Deutungen gewandert, seit es aus der mythisch-religiösen Uranschauung der Antike bis in unsere Tage kam, daß es not tut, ihm eine persönliche Deutung aufzuprägen.[49]

There is little doubt that Goethe, especially in autobiographical texts like *Dichtung und Wahrheit* as well as in his conversations with Eckermann, attaches highly subjective meanings and connotations to the concept of the daemonic in precisely the manner suggested by Zweig. At the same time, however, it is also clear that Goethe was made aware by his early philosophical mentors — particularly Johann Georg Hamann and Johann Gottfried Herder — that this term carries with it a long and detailed philosophical heritage that begins in ancient Greece. In this context, the question arises as to whether it is satisfactory, from the point of view of literary scholarship, to deal with Goethe's personal and particular understanding of the daemonic by looking exclusively at the works from his oeuvre in which it appears, or whether any real grasp of his use of this concept must inevitably reckon with its manifold appearances throughout the history of Western thought. Further to this, is it even possible, by analyzing and cataloging representations of the daemonic throughout the history of Western letters, to arrive at a theoretical essence against which Goethe's use of this concept can be measured and assessed?

In his study of the notion of the *Trauerspiel* (tragic drama) in the works of German Baroque dramatists like Opitz, Gryphius, and Lohenstein — *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (The Origin of German Tragic Drama, 1925) — Walter Benjamin addresses precisely this problem: namely, the difficulty of presenting the meaning or essence of a particular idea or notion (in Benjamin's case *Trauerspiel,* in the present case, the daemonic) by referring to its singular manifestations within the works of various authors. In response to this methodological problem, Benjamin argues, in the "Erkenntniskritische Vorrede" of his study, that the absolute essence of the *Trauerspiel* cannot be captured or represented. Rather, aspects of its central idea may be revealed in a fragmentary way through "genauester Versenkung in die Einzelheiten eines Sachgehalts."[50] Generalized notions, concepts, or topoi can be understood, according to Benjamin, not as fixed essences, but only in terms of their individual, concrete, and particular manifestations.

Following the example set by Benjamin, this study does not pretend to bring the theoretical or historical essence of the daemonic into view.

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[49] Stefan Zweig, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon* (Leipzig: Insel, 1928), 9.

[50] Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels,* in *BGS* 1,1:208.

Rather, its aim is to analyze and elucidate the philosophical (as opposed to biographical) dimensions of Goethe's use of this term by examining its origins in classical philosophy and its subsequent resurgence in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German thought. Any such examination must inevitably deal with Plato (427–347 B.C.E.), the classical philosopher who sets the agenda for all subsequent representations of the daemonic in the history of Western thought. In fact, Plato's theory of forms is the point of departure for all of the key "ancients" (discussed in chapter 1 of this study) who address, either directly or indirectly, the problem of the daemonic: from Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.), to Stoic and Neo-Platonic figures like Posidonius (ca. 130–50 B.C.E.), Plutarch (ca. 46–120 C.E.), Marcus Aurelius (ca. 121–180 C.E.), and Plotinus (204–269 C.E.).

By virtue of his attempts to demonstrate the ontological priority of universal, supersensuous forms or *eide* over the existence of particular, sensuous material objects, Plato is seen traditionally as the father of Western rationalism,[51] the figure who proclaims at 247c of the *Phaedrus* that truth or the *eide* are apprehensible "by reason alone, the soul's pilot" (*PCD,* 494). When Plato's apparent preference for philosophy over poetry, and his apparent belief in the superiority of Socrates' dispassionate dialectical methods over the passionate and irrational behavior of poets are added to this picture, one is presented with an image of the rational philosopher *par excellence:* a figure who wishes — in his famous conception of the "Philosopher-Ruler" outlined in *The Republic* — to extend the domain of philosophy into the sphere of politics.

This study will ask whether the aforementioned rationalist view of Plato represents a comprehensive understanding of his entire philosophy, including ostensibly non-political dialogues like the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus.* Is there room for an intrusion of the non-rational and the mythic in Plato's philosophy? This is the question that I will seek to answer by investigating the meaning of Plato's conception of the daemonic and its subsequent influence upon Goethe.

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[51] Here I use the term "rationalism" in its most general sense, as referring to the belief that truth can be grasped through the deployment of reason. In this connection, Daniel Garber observes that the term rationalism can be used "to characterize the views of Plato and later Neoplatonists, who argued that we have pure intellectual access to the Forms and general principles which govern reality." See Daniel Garber, "Rationalism," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy,* ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 673. This general position is not to be equated with the more specific sense of rationalism propagated by the three main Continental rationalists: Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz.

This question was also asked and answered by one of Goethe's early philosophical mentors, Johann Georg Hamann, and it is Hamann who is probably responsible for Goethe's earliest exposure to the Platonic notion of the daemon. In 1759, Hamann published a volume entitled *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* (Socratic Memorabilia), in which he offers a portrait of Socrates as an inspired religious genius. Due to its emphasis upon the non-rational, divinatory aspects of Socrates' teachings, Hamann's *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* deals at length with the divine sign or voice that spoke to Socrates at certain crucial times in his life — a voice known as his *daimonion,* which is a particular instance of the general notion of the daemonic in Plato's philosophy that will be considered in some depth in chapter 1.

As part of his general polemic against eighteenth-century German rationalism, a polemic discussed at some length in chapter 2 of this study, Hamann seized upon the Socratic divine voice or *daimonion* in *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten,* describing it as the non-rational source of Socrates' genius. In this regard, Hamann's intention was essentially to replace the rational, dialectical image of Socrates that prevailed during the Enlightenment with a new portrait of him as a non-rational religious prophet. Direct evidence of Goethe's exposure to Hamann's portrait of Socrates exists in two letters that he wrote to Herder in early and mid 1772 respectively, in which he reveals his fascination with the image of the daemonic Socrates as it appears in Hamann's *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* and in Plato's *Symposium* and *The Apology*.[52] These letters will be examined in chapter 3 of this study.

Goethe's reception of Hamann's anti-rationalist, anti-Enlightenment portrait of Socrates raises the question of his own attitude towards and position within the European Enlightenment. Goethe did, after all, become productive at a time in which many of the central precepts of that movement began to be questioned by the European movement known broadly as Romanticism. One of the first critics to recognize Goethe's significance in this respect was Wilhelm Dilthey. In *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (Poetry and Experience, 1906), Dilthey argues that while Goethe's early career and worldview were undoubtedly influenced by the

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[52] See Goethe to Herder, Frankfurt, beginning of 1772, in *FA* 2,1:252–53, and Goethe to Herder, Wetzlar, 10 July 1772, in *FA* 2, 1:255–58. E. M. Butler also observes that Goethe's understanding of the term daemon "owed something undoubtedly to the daimon of Socrates as interpreted by Hamann" (*The Tyranny of Greece,* 151), a connection also made by Loiseau ("L' idée du démonique chez Goethe," 129–30) and later confirmed by Whitehead ("The Concept 'dämonisch' in German Literature," 27).

Enlightenment poetics of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, his major poetic achievement is in fact the "Befreiung der dichterischen Phantasie von der Herrschaft des abstrakten Verstandes und des von den Kräften des Lebens isolierten guten Geschmacks." In this respect, Dilthey regards Goethe and the Romantics as being inseparably linked in a struggle against the Enlightenment.[53]

Dilthey's analysis raises a major question addressed in this study: that of Goethe's position with respect to the European Romantic movement. One of the difficulties inherent in this question lies in the fact that the actual time-span of the epoch known as the Romantic period has proven notoriously difficult to define. Traditional German approaches tend to hold that the period begins towards the end of the eighteenth century, in the writings of philologists and theoreticians like August Wilhelm Schlegel and Friedrich Schlegel, and in the work of poet-theoreticians like Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis),[54] before coming to a close in the 1830s, while Anglo-American scholarship generally argues for a much longer period: beginning in the mid- to late eighteenth century with Blake and ending, in some accounts, in the mid-nineteenth century.[55]

German scholars have, moreover, tended to avoid labeling Goethe with the term "Romantic." His earlier works of the *Sturm und Drang* period are normally differentiated from the aesthetic concerns of figures like the Schlegels and Novalis, while his later work is seen to belong to the category of German classicism, a category that is, in itself, problematic and has recently undergone a radical revision in some scholarly quarters. Reading Goethe's works from the perspective of Anglo-American scholars of Romanticism like M. H. Abrams, through the eyes of philosophically inclined critics like Georg Lukács, Walter Benjamin, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Theodor Adorno, and Hans Blumenberg, and taking into account some of the conclusions drawn by Goethe's most renowned recent biographer, Nicholas Boyle, this study addresses Goethe's notion of the

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[53] Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung,* 111–12.

[54] See, for example, Heinrich Heine, *Die romantische Schule,* in *Werke,* ed. Helmut Schanze, vol. 4, *Schriften über Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1968), 180. Herbert A. Frenzel and Elisabeth Frenzel offer 1798 to 1835 as the dates for the German Romantic period. Herbert A. Frenzel and Elisabeth Frenzel, *Daten deutscher Dichtung: Chronologischer Abriß der deutschen Literaturgeschichte,* 2 vols., vol. 1 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1976), 296–348.

[55] See Harold Bloom, *The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1971), and M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford UP, 1953).

daemonic, not only with respect to its classical heritage, but also in connection with some of the literary-philosophical ideas that proliferated during the broad period of European — and not exclusively German — Romanticism.

Goethe: Author or Text?

What does the name "Goethe" actually mean in the early twenty-first century? Can Goethe still be studied as though he were a discrete historical individual, or has he rather become, as Marcel Reich-Ranicki observed in 1982, a kind of "Markenzeichen," a trademark or symbol onto which a number of aesthetic and ideological preoccupations — for example, the concept of a national German literature, or the notion of a unified German cultural identity — are projected?[56] And how does one undertake a scholarly consideration of one of the most heavily documented and closely examined literary figures in the history of Western civilization more than 250 years after his death? In 1990, Nicholas Boyle responded to some of these questions by observing that the "secondary writing about Goethe long ago grew to a point at which no one man could hope to encompass it" (*BGA* 1:x). In light of Boyle's observation, my purpose here is neither to give a history of Goethe criticism, nor to catalog exhaustively the various images or readings of Goethe, as these undertakings would surely amount to ambitious studies in themselves. Nevertheless, a philosophical reading of the daemonic in Goethe's works must acknowledge certain developments in literary criticism that took place in the second half of the twentieth century, while also demanding a consideration of some of the philosophical images of Goethe that have appeared since Dilthey's *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (1906).

From the time of Goethe's death in 1832 until the early twentieth century, Goethe criticism tended, for the most part, to follow the narrowly biographical approach to his oeuvre that was in fact initiated by Goethe himself in his autobiography and particularly in Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe* (1835). Such an approach urged the reader to understand Goethe's works as reflections upon actual events in his life, and variations upon this approach continued into the twentieth century, perhaps most famously with Friedrich Gundolf's *Goethe* (1916). Gundolf's study proceeds from the premise, no doubt suggested to the author by Goethe's autobiographical methodology in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, that

[56] Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Bewundert, doch nicht geliebt," in *Goethe noch einmal: Reden und Anmerkungen* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002), 17.

art is first and foremost the imitation of life.[57] When such an approach is taken to the works of Goethe, their literary-philosophical meaning is necessarily confined to the horizon of an individual life, and cannot be viewed within the broader context of the history of ideas.

Emerging shortly after the First World War in the work of key figures such as T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, William Empson, and John Crowe Ransom, and extending its influence until the late 1950s in the work of critics like Northrop Frye, the movement in Anglo-American literary theory known as the New Criticism focused on the internal structures of literary texts rather than on the social, historical, or indeed biographical conditions that purportedly gave rise to them.[58] Both related yet also opposed to the New Criticism was the movement in literary criticism known as Structuralism, which arose from the structuralist linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), was first applied to the study of literature by Roman Jakobson during the 1930s, and finally became one of the dominant paradigms in French and Anglo-American literary theory during the 1960s and 1970s. Like the New Criticism, structuralist literary theory also held that the poetic text, and not its author, should be the primary issue in any critical enterprise; however, structuralist critics also diverged from the New Criticism by arguing that a poem or work can never be seen purely as a microcosm that is isolated from its sociohistorical conditions, and also tended to radicalize the New Criticism's diminution of the life of the author as an interpretative source for his or her texts.[59] This led Roland Barthes to proclaim the "Death of the Author" in his famous essay of the same title.[60]

Roughly contemporaneous with the rise of the New Criticism in the United States were philosophically inclined analyses of Goethe's works, beginning with the aforementioned study by Dilthey (*Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung)* and Georg Simmel's *Kant und Goethe* (Kant and Goethe,

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[57] Gundolf, *Goethe,* 2.

[58] See Cleanth Brooks and T. V. F. Brogan, "New Criticism," in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* ed. Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993), 833–34; Leroy F. Searle, "New Criticism," in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism,* ed. Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994), 528–34.

[59] See Jonathan Culler, "Structuralism," in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* 1215–22, and Ronald Schleifer, "Structuralism," in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism,* ed. Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994), 696–701.

[60] See Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image – Music – Text,* trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 142–48.

1906) and followed by Simmel's *Goethe* (1913).[61] While Dilthey and Simmel sought to position Goethe within a philosophical rather than a strictly biographical context, both authors nevertheless found in him a convenient figure upon which to project their own socio-philosophical preoccupations. Thus for Dilthey Goethe became the intuitive genius who managed to reveal "das Geheimnis der Natur" by forging a seamless continuity between poetry and lived experience,[62] while for Simmel Goethe demonstrated an organic unity between the individual's productivity and his natural inclinations, a unity sadly lacking in the rational and bureaucratic lives of early-twentieth-century humans as analyzed in Max Weber's *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, 1904).[63] Dilthey's and Simmel's treatments of Goethe were quickly followed by Dietrich Mahnke's *Leibniz und Goethe: Die Harmonie ihrer Weltansichten* and Walter Benjamin's "Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften," both published in 1924. In the postwar period further philosophical studies of Goethe's works appeared, most notably Ernst Cassirer's *Rousseau, Kant, Goethe* (1945), Hans-Georg Gadamer's seminal essay "Goethe und die Philosophie" (Goethe and Philosophy, 1947), and Georg Lukács's *Goethe und seine Zeit* (Goethe and his Age, 1947). In sum, the general tendency of such philosophically trained critics was to diminish the importance of Goethe's life as an interpretative lens through which to read his works by seeking to position his writings within the context of the history of ideas. Since then, Goethe's utterances on many topics, including the daemonic, have been exposed to rhetorical analyses by Hans Blumenberg in two key works: *Arbeit am Mythos* (1979) and *Goethe zum Beispiel* (1999).

Emerging from a different critical tradition to that occupied by Blumenberg, two recent American studies have sought to apply some of the precepts of French poststructuralism and deconstruction to Goethe's works. In *Dictations: On Haunted Writing* (1986), Avital Ronell argues that Goethe has become an "excessive signifier"; a kind of textual site upon which, partly due to the efforts of Eckermann's *Gespräche,* various narratives and myths have accumulated to such an extent that one can no longer distinguish Goethe the man from his works.[64] David E. Wellbery,

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[61] Georg Simmel, *Goethe* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1913); *Kant und Goethe: Zur Geschichte der modernen Weltanschauung* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1916).

[62] Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis,* 124.

[63] Simmel, *Goethe,* 7.

[64] Avital Ronell, *Dictations: On Haunted Writing* (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 1986).

in his book *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (1996), sees Goethe's early lyric poems as marking key moments in the origins of European Romanticism. Wellbery contends, at the same time, that it is necessary to deconstruct the metaphysics of presence that underlies these poems: the notion that they communicate to the reader something prior to the act of linguistic signification itself.[65]

Although one can scarcely speak of a "Death of the Author" in the discipline of Goethe studies, even in the field of biography recent works have tended to combine a broad biographical approach to Goethe's works with close textual and philosophical readings of key texts; readings that avoid the reductive tendency of immediately relating Goethe's literary works to actual events in his personal life. Here I am referring to Karl Otto Conrady's two-volume work *Goethe: Leben und Werk* (Goethe: Life and Works, 1982–85) and particularly to Nicholas Boyle's *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* (vol. 1, 1991; vol. 2, 2000).

In accordance with the balanced studies of Conrady and Boyle — both of which have served to moderate the worship of Goethe exemplified by figures like Gundolf, and thus at least partially to rescue Goethe from the myths that threatened to overwhelm his literary legacy — this study does not completely dispense with biographical approaches to Goethe's works, and simply read Goethe as a "text" as opposed to a human being. Boyle's biography in particular demonstrates quite conclusively that while Goethe was definitely influenced and perhaps even to some degree written by his age, he cannot simply be viewed as a "text," "cultural relic," or "signifier," as Avital Ronell has suggested.[66] Indeed, the dearth of poststructuralist interpretations of Goethe's works might be seen to indicate that both the singularity and the influence of Goethe's eminently human responses to the aesthetic, philosophical, and even the political issues of his day belie the phenomenon referred to by Barthes as the "Death of the Author." While it is true that literary texts are often influenced, and perhaps even to some degree produced, by the social

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[65] David E. Wellbery, *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1995).

[66] Ronell writes: "Goethe, his *oeuvre* and his destiny, became for posterity both an inexhaustible source of inspiration and a traumatism of sorts. An eternal summit dwarfing and paralyzing what comes under its shadow, he is like the culmination of a *Bildungsroman*. . . . Through the towering and therefore indeterminate position that Goethe adopted in regard to the diverse genres of discourse, one could say that he anticipated and in part programmed this rich and painful heritage: at once ungraspable yet present as preeminent authority, he condemns himself to being a legendary, or in other words, fantasmatic figure" (*Dictations,* xix).

contexts in which they appear, society can at the same time be shaped by these selfsame texts, and by the individuals who create them. Goethe, I submit here, is a case in point.

This is not to suggest that this study will view Goethe's works as being narrow expressions of his personal preoccupations. Perhaps more than the works of any other writer of his age, Goethe's oeuvre does not simply depict the exclusively internal development of an individual. On the contrary, and as Georg Lukács has shown in *Goethe und seine Zeit,* the primary concern of Goethe's works — ranging from *Die Leiden des jungen Werther,* through the scientific and aesthetic essays of the late eighteenth century, to *Wilhelm Meister, Die Wahlverwandtschaften,* and part two of *Faust* — is to develop new ways of depicting and theorizing the relationship between the individual and his or her natural, social, and political environments; the relationship, in short, between the subject and the objects (both human and non-human) with which it engages.

But in order even to speak of Goethe's responses to the philosophical, aesthetic, and political issues of his day, it must be assumed that there is a subject — named "Goethe" — addressed by this study. Here I merely wish to acknowledge that when I refer to "Goethe's" literary/philosophical development in the course of my analysis, I do not lay claim to some privileged access to the "real" Goethe. The Goethe to which I will refer in this study is also ineluctably a construct, albeit a construct that has secure foundations in three main fields; first, in the recent even-handed biographies of Conrady and Boyle; second, in a tradition of philosophically inclined Goethe criticism, most readily exemplified in the aforementioned works by Mahnke, Benjamin, Gadamer, Lukács, and Blumenberg; and third, in the extensive array of existing philosophical approaches to Goethe's notion of the daemonic discussed earlier in this chapter.

Keeping these sources in mind, we can perceive Goethe's conception of the daemonic or *das Dämonische,* throughout this study, as a lens through which we can view his attitude to a central concern of Romanticism: the theorization and delineation of the boundaries of the subject. Goethe scholars have tended to view the daemonic as a phenomenon that Goethe *experienced* in his youth, and then subsequently *theorized* in the latter stages of his life, particularly in autobiographical works like *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* and in reflective comments like those recorded in Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe.* Take, for example, the following view outlined by Benno von Wiese:

> Es ist kein Zweifel, daß der junge Goethe dem Dämonischen gefühlsverbundener gegenüberstand als der alte, der rückschauend das Dämonische mehr und mehr als ein Geheimnis des Alls selbst

> ergreift. In der Jugend Goethes durchdringt das Dämonische das dithyrambische Erlebnis des Genies und seines Vorgefühls der ganzen Welt. Es verschmilzt dort mit dem Bewußtsein eines unaufhaltsamen and elementaren Schicksals, das den Erwählten seine gnadenvolle und dennoch tödliche Bahn führt. Das Wort freilich gehört ganz in die Sphäre des alten Goethe, so sehr auch schon der junge das Außerordentliche, Überschwengliche und Individuelle des menschlichen Daseins als dämonisch erlebte.[67]

Notwithstanding the undoubted influence of Goethe's self-representation in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* upon Wiese's account, when seen within the context presented to us by Wiese many of Goethe's early *Sturm und Drang* works are preoccupied with the themes of subjectivity and genius, and particularly with the question as to exactly how far the internal wishes, desires, and longings of the subject or genius can be fulfilled in the real, external world: a world inhabited by natural objects and by other subjects. This question presents itself in Goethe's initial encounters with the philosophies of Hamann and Herder (discussed in chapter 2), as well as in early poems like "Mahomets Gesang" (Song of Mohammed, 1773) and the major literary accomplishment of Goethe's youth: *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (discussed in chapters 3 and 4 respectively). I will submit that these works are concerned with the following further questions: To what extent can the human subject, the human genius, be godlike? Can human subjects, like the daemons of antiquity, mediate between the earthly and the divine? And what consequences ensue when humans attempt to challenge the gods by understanding existence in purely subjective terms, in terms of their own internal longings and desires?

This, then, is the first sense in which the concept of the daemonic will be seen to function in Goethe's works: in terms of the notion that the *internal* powers and capabilities of the artistic subject or genius can be daemonic, in the sense of mediating between the earthly and the divine — or, in the young Goethe's pantheistic terminology, between the human and God/Nature.

Goethe's later works, by contrast, appear to reflect upon the question of subjectivity and its limits from both a *scientific* and a *mythic* perspective. Chapter 5 will discuss how Goethe, increasingly under the influence of Kant's critical philosophy, explores the extent to which natural objects may in fact obstruct and contradict the theories imposed upon them by the subject, scientist, or aesthetic observer. This issue is addressed by Goethe in scientific essays like "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt

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[67] Wiese, "Das Dämonische und seine Gegenkräfte in der Tragödie Goethes," in his *Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel,* 81.

und Subjekt" (The Experiment as Mediator between Object and Subject, 1792) and "Erfahrung und Wissenschaft" (Empirical Observation and Science, 1798); in autobiographical texts like the *Italienische Reise* (Italian Journey, 1786–88), "Einwirkung der neueren Philosophy" (The Influence of Modern Philosophy, 1820) and Goethe's correspondence with Schiller during the late 1790s; as well as in Goethe's general scientific projects, such as the work on morphology and comparative anatomy, along with the grandiose quests for the *Urpflanze* (primal plant) and the *Urphänomen* (primal phenomenon). In these texts — as well as in the sonnet "Mächtiges Überraschen" (Powerful Astonishment, 1807–8), addressed in chapter 6 — Goethe may be seen to suggest that the desires of the subject are limited and obstructed by natural or even divine forces that cannot be understood in purely rational terms, and that are consequently described as daemonic. In fact, Goethe's apprehension of the limits of rational or scientific inquiry, limits suggested to him by his encounters with both Kant's critical philosophy and the early *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling, often serves to introduce him to the mythic dimensions apparent in human existence; those dimensions that cannot be clarified or explained in rational modes, but which nevertheless require us to represent them — not through the elaboration of concepts, but rather through the deployment of myths, narratives, and images.

Here we find the second sense in which the term "daemonic" will be understood to operate in Goethe's works: as an apparently *external* force in God/Nature that serves to obstruct the aims, goals, desires, and projects of the striving subject — a force that is both non-rational and mythic. At this point it is also necessary to note, in connection with the first and second senses in which Goethe uses the term daemonic, that these two senses are not mutually exclusive. Particularly in late texts like *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* the poem "Urworte. Orphisch," and Eckermann's *Gespräche,* discussed in chapters 7 and 8, Goethe often seems to oscillate between these two basic formulations of the daemonic.

Thus, in the cases of both the ancients (particularly Plato and his Neo-Platonic successors) and Goethe, the daemonic will be seen as a sensibility that announces the possibility of there being a connection or link between the human and the divine (in Goethe's case God/Nature), while also being a phenomenon through which rational modes of cognition are confronted with the non-rational constituent of human experience. Such encounters will also be seen to introduce situations in which rational concepts are challenged by non-rational or mythic images.

Theoretical Background and Argument: From *Mythos* to *Logos*

This study will argue that the phenomenon referred to by Goethe as the daemonic manifests itself most readily in the categories of the non-rational and the mythic. In this context, one of its central aims is to consider the relationship between non-rational and rational thought: the connections between *mythos* and *logos*.

The distinction between *mythos* and *logos* is perhaps most famously addressed by Plato at 61b of the *Phaedo*. Shortly before his death, Socrates discusses the dreams to which he is subject during the period of his imprisonment. In one of these dreams — a dream that Socrates tells us has recurred throughout his life — a voice urges Socrates to practice and cultivate the arts. In response to this dream, Socrates begins, after a lifetime of ambivalence, if not outright hostility, toward all things poetic, to write poetry. He then makes the following observation with regard to his poetry:

> I began with some verses in honor of the god whose festival it was. When I had finished my hymn, I reflected that a poet, if he is to be worthy of the name, ought to work on imaginative themes [*poiein mythos*] not descriptive ones [*logos*], and I was not good at inventing stories. So I availed myself of some of Aesop's fables [*mythos*] which were ready to hand and familiar to me. (*PCD,* 44)

Here Socrates distinguishes between the activity of the imagination (which corresponds with the realm of *mythos*) and the activity of description or elucidation (corresponding with *logos*). *Mythos* is understood as referring to a tale, narrative, or legend that has no substantive basis in fact, while *logos* accords with the recounting of historical events or truths. The emotions, the imagination, and even dreams inform the activity of *mythos,* while reason, analysis, thinking, and reckoning are connected with *logos. Mythos* functions independently of the rules of dialectical argumentation, while *logos* or reason must pay heed to these rules.[68] Thus, even when

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[68] The above analysis is indebted to the work of Luc Brisson in his book *Plato the Myth Maker,* trans. Gerard Naddaf (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1998). See in particular section 10, "The Opposition between Myth and Argumentative Discourse" (112–15), and section 11, "The Utility of Myth," 116–21. See also Robert Scott Stewart's article "The Epistemological Function of Platonic Myth," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22, 4 (1989): 260–80. Stewart argues that myth fulfils two epistemic functions in Plato's philosophy. First, myths provide interlocutors with physical images or metaphors that assist them in moving from physical modes

Socrates finally submits to the advice of his dreams by composing poetry, the results of his efforts tell him that he is more inclined to be a philosopher than a poet. Philosophers, he says, concern themselves with facts (the domain of *logos*) and not with fictions (the realm of *mythos*). Likewise, in *The Republic* Socrates informs us, at 534b, that the philosopher or dialectician is "the man who is able to give an exact account [*logos*] of the essence [*ousia*] of each thing" (*PCD,* 766). The concept of *logos,* then, is not simply reducible to the notion of objective truth. It also refers to the faculty through which human beings arrive at truth (as is the case at 70a of *Timaeus* and at 511b of *The Republic,* where it is seen as being akin to reason, the faculty that drives the process of dialectic) while also denoting the divine plan or intelligence that created the universe (as is discussed at 265c of the *Sophist*).[69]

Plato's distinction between *mythos* and *logos* has, especially during the last century, been exposed to a profound critique, particularly at the hands of post-Enlightenment philosophy. In their *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Dialectic of Enlightenment, 1944) Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno famously state that "schon der Mythos ist Aufklärung, und: Aufklärung schlägt in Mythologie zurück" (*AGS* 3:16). The philosophical argument behind this statement is roughly as follows; in its attempts to find a rational ground from which to interpret, to conceptualize, and ultimately to control nature, "enlightenment" (understood here as a trans-historical process or method rather than as a specific historical period, and hence not capitalized)[70] was forced to expel and repress the non-rational and the mythical from its field of vision. In so doing, enlightenment forgets that the very notion of exercising power and control over nature is, in itself, a mythical notion derived from humanity's earliest fears concerning the powers and mysteries of nature. Thus, ac-

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of thought to abstract or metaphysical modes of thought. Second, and most important, the allusive and inexact mode of myth is able to "speak of those things which cannot be dealt with directly . . . [and] . . . in this it constitutes . . . an integral part in the epistemic process since it is through myth alone that Plato is able to write about that which he is most serious" (275–76).

[69] For a comprehensive account of the concept of *logos* in Plato, see Hugo Perls, *Lexicon der Platonischen Begriffe* (Bern: Francke, 1973), 212–15.

[70] On the distinction between enlightenment as a method or recurrent tendency in intellectual history, and the Enlightenment as a finite historical period, see Kai Hammermeister, "Enlightenment Thought and Natural Law from Leibniz to Kant and its Influence on German Literature," in *German Literature of the Eighteenth Century: The Enlightenment and Sensibility,* ed. Barbara Becker-Cantarino, 33–54 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), vol. 5 of *The Camden House History of German Literature.*

cording to Horkheimer and Adorno, the earliest attempts made by humans to calm and control their fear of nature's mysteries by representing them in mythic narratives were already part of an enlightenment methodology through which the fearful aspect of the unknown was approached, named, and to some extent ameliorated.

At the same time, however, that enlightenment imagines itself to have become purely rational by way of its supposed abandonment of myth, it succumbs to its own variety of mythic thinking: the myth of a purely rational, purely self-conscious subject. Hence, there can be no simple progression from myth to enlightenment, or from *mythos* to *logos*. Rather, there can only be a kind of oscillation or exchange between the two, as both modes are primarily concerned with representing and perhaps even controlling those aspects of existence that threaten the autonomy of the subject.

More recently Hans Blumenberg argues, along similar lines, that enlightenment or theory takes its bearings from questions already suggested by — and therefore also conditioned by — myth. For this reason, Blumenberg contends that the idea of humans having achieved a pure and unproblematic *Fortsprung* from *mytho*s to *logos* is misleading and even dangerous, since it refuses to recognize both the origins of philosophy in myth, and the ineradicable residues of mythic thinking in philosophy. The inextricable relationship between myth and philosophy, between *mythos* and *logos* is, according to Blumenberg, already recognizable in Plato's dialogues, and especially in Socrates' ambivalence towards poetry (*BAM,* 33–34).

Keeping Blumenberg's arguments in mind, it is necessary to ask the following questions: Why does Socrates decide to write poetry — an activity that he says impairs the reason at 605b of *The Republic* — at the very end of his supposedly rational life?[71] And why does Socrates, and by

[71] It is apposite here to note that two recent interpretations of section 61b of the *Phaedo* suggest that myth might be seen to play a positive and active role in the thought of the Platonic Socrates. David A. White, in his book *Myth and Metaphysics in Plato's* Phaedo (London: Associated University Presses, 1989), writes that Socrates' decision to write poetry following the suggestions of his dream may correspond with his realization that the goals of philosophy and dialectic may be assisted by myth. White writes that: "Socrates' new interpretation of the dream could mean that now, during a period in his life that he knew would culminate in his death, he should complement a life spent pursuing philosophy by realizing that the *logoi* produced by the love of wisdom have limits. According to this interpretation, philosophy can and perhaps must be complemented by myth" (31). More recently still, Luc Brisson observes that the function of myth in Plato is to "realize an emotional fusion between the hero of the story and its addressee

extension, Plato, still behave indecisively when faced with a choice between *mythos* and *logos,* between the poetic and the rational? Possible answers to these questions may present themselves when the aspect of the non-rational that entered Socrates' life at its most crucial moments is investigated: namely the "divine sign" or *daimonion,* and the general mode of the daemonic, both of which will be discussed at length in chapter 1 of this study.

In relation to Plato's tendency to invoke the existence of daemons throughout his philosophy, the eminent Plato scholar Paul Friedländer has observed that while ancient philosophy afforded this daemonology a central role in Plato's thought, many modern interpreters of Plato have often seen themselves as being too enlightened and too rational to see these daemons as being of central philosophical significance. Yet even in those cases where Plato's references to daemons seem to be a kind of philosophical play, Friedländer argues that this form of play nevertheless needs to be taken very seriously by interpreters of Plato's works.[72] Thus, while on the one hand the image of Plato presented in *The Republic* — the serious figure who wishes to banish irrational poets from Athens, and to order the state strictly in accordance with the theory of forms — is extremely familiar, on the other hand this study will also shed light upon the version of Plato alluded to by Friedländer: the Plato seen at 244a–d of the *Phaedrus,* who places great value upon the non-rational, "mantic" arts, mantic meaning "of divination."[73]

Accordingly, chapter 1 of this study will suggest that even in Plato and his Neo-Platonic successors there is no simple step or leap forward from *mythos* to *logos.* Rather, there is something like a process of exchange, a dialectical relationship, between these two faculties or modes.

Chapters 2 through 8 will all demonstrate the ways in which, throughout Goethe's oeuvre and particularly in his confrontations with his philosophical contemporaries, the so-called passage from *mythos* to *logos* is called into question. Goethe was born during one of the high

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through the intermediary of the storymaker." In this regard, Brisson observes that myth, in its ability to move beyond the logical necessity of rational dialectic, may be a "privileged instrument for modifying the behavior of the inferior part of the soul" (Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker,* 112, 116).

[72] Paul Friedländer, *Platon,* 3 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1928), 1:38.

[73] The word "mantic" comes from the Greek term *mantikos* meaning either "prophetic" or "oracular," as well as "of divination" or "prophecy." See Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* 920. In this passage, Socrates is careful to distinguish between *mantikos* (prophetic or divine madness) and *manikos* (madness or frenzy).

points of the Western *logos*, at the tail end of the European Enlightenment. While he was initially exposed to philosophies that purportedly guaranteed the rationality of the universe — here I am referring to the respective systems of Spinoza and Leibniz — Goethe was also led, via his encounters in the 1770s with the thought of Hamann and Herder, to an awareness of the imaginative subject or genius; a subject who has the capacity to disrupt the universal order in its attempts to consummate its own internal, subjective desires. Once the significance and power of human subjectivity had become clear to Goethe, it was under the influence of early texts belonging to the movement that later dominated German thought of the nineteenth century — Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy, generically known as German idealism — that he would come to represent poetically the relationship between the striving human subject and the objects of nature. It was to this relationship that Goethe often attached the term *das Dämonische*, a term that he also quite consciously invokes "nach dem Beispiel der Alten."

1: The Ancients and Their Daemons

IN A LETTER written to Herder in July 1772, Goethe reports:

> Seit ich nichts von euch gehört habe, sind die Griechen mein einzig Studium. Zuerst schränckt ich mich auf den Homer ein, dann um den Sokrates forscht ich Xenophon und Plato, da gingen mir die Augen über meine Unwürdigkeit erst auf, gerieth an Theokrit and Anakreon, zuletzt zog mich was an Pindarn wo ich noch hänge. Sonst habe ich gar nichts getahn, und es geht bey mir noch alles entsetzlich durch einander. (*FA* 2,1:255–56)

This letter attests to Goethe's wide-ranging and eclectic approach to classical sources. Ernst Grumach's two volume collection of Goethe's reflections on the ancients — *Goethe und die Antike* (Goethe and Antiquity, 1949) — demonstrates that Goethe's interest in the classical world ranged from poetry, drama, mythology, and philosophy to architecture, painting, sculpture, rhetoric, and law. For this reason, the question as to precisely which classical sources exerted the most influence upon Goethe is difficult to answer, and responses to this problem have accordingly led to broad, synoptic studies like Ernst Maass's *Goethe und die Antike* (Goethe and Antiquity, 1912, not to be confused with Grumach's later collection) and Humphry Trevelyan's *Goethe and the Greeks* (1941).

When we turn to the question of the influence exerted by classical philosophy upon Goethe's thought, the picture becomes slightly clearer. We know that Goethe was familiar with and read parts of Johann Jakob Brucker's multi-volume *Historica critica philosophiae* (Critical History of Philosophy, 1766–67) during his youth,[1] volumes one and two of which provide the reader with a broad overview of classical thought from the pre-Socratics, via Socrates and Plato, to Aristotle, Stoicism, and Neo-Platonism. Further to this, there are Goethe's own numerous reflections on this subject, only a few of which can be mentioned here: the account of his youthful encounters with Neo-Platonism via the tradition of alchemy in *Dichtung und Wahrheit;*[2] his early intention to compose a drama

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[1] See Goethe's reference to Brucker in the essay "Einwirkung der neueren Philosophie" (*FA* 1,24:442) as well as in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*FA* 1,14:243).

[2] *FA* 1,14:373.

about the death of Socrates, as revealed in a letter to Herder written in early 1772;[3] the influence exerted by the thought of Aristotle upon Goethe's theory of morphology;[4] Goethe's interest in the *Enneads* of Plotinus during the first decade of the nineteenth century;[5] and finally his later fascination with Plato and Socrates, as revealed in a letter to Jacobi written in early 1793,[6] as well as in his explanation, appearing in *Über Kunst und Altertum* (On Art and Antiquity, 1816–32), of the poem "Urworte. Orphisch."[7]

Given the fact that Plato's dialogues are central to any discussion of the classical concept of the daemonic, it is also apposite to consider what general impact Plato's thought may have had upon Goethe. Notwithstanding the frequent references to Plato and Socrates made by Goethe in his correspondence with Herder during 1772,[8] evidence suggests that Goethe's first serious encounters with Plato's dialogues did not occur until 1793, when he read the three texts that contain Plato's most important discussions of the daemonic: the *Symposium, Phaedrus,* and the *Apology.*[9] It was also around this time that Goethe began, under the influence of Kant's critical philosophy, to shape and refine his approach to scientific research in essays like "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt," written in 1792. In this connection it is perhaps no coincidence that commentators like Elisabeth Rotten, Ernst Cassirer, H. B. Nisbet, Ernst Moritz Manasse, and R. H. Stephenson have all argued that Plato's theory of the forms exerted, either directly or indirectly and to a greater or lesser extent, an influence upon Goethe's reception of Kant and his attempts to understand collections of natural phenomena as expressions of universal types or ideas.[10] As will become clear throughout this study, any

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[3] See Goethe to Herder, Frankfurt, beginning of 1772, in *FA* 2,1:252–53.

[4] See, in this connection, Karl Schlechta, *Goethe in seinem Verhältnis zu Aristoteles: Ein Versuch* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1938).

[5] See Goethe to Zelter, Lauchstädt, 1 September 1805, in *Goethes Briefe, WA* 19:53–57.

[6] See Goethe to F. H. Jacobi, Weimar, 1 February 1793, *FA* 2,3:660–61.

[7] See Goethe, "Urworte. Orphisch," *FA* 1,20:491–97.

[8] See Goethe to Herder, Frankfurt, beginning of 1772, *FA* 2,1:252–53, and Goethe to Herder, Wetzlar, 10 July 1772, *FA* 2,1:255–58.

[9] See the aforementioned letter to Jacobi: Goethe to F. H. Jacobi, Weimar, 1 February 1793, *FA* 2,3:660–61.

[10] Elisabeth Rotten, *Goethes Urphänomen and die platonische Idee* (Gießen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1913); Ernst Cassirer, "Goethe und Platon," in *Goethe und die geschichtliche Welt* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1932), 105–48; H. B. Nisbet, "The Neo-Platonic Tradition," in *Goethe and the Scientific Tradition* (London: Institute

philosophical understanding of Goethe's conceptualization of the daemonic must also take into account the complex interconnections between Plato, Kant, and Goethe's ideas concerning scientific method.

As a means to achieving this end, the majority of the present chapter will outline the notion of the daemonic as a mode or conduit that responds to the gap between the sensible world and the supersensible forms in Plato's philosophy. There are two central themes in Plato's thought that will operate as touchstones for this discussion, and that also exercise an influence upon subsequent Stoic and Neo-Platonic conceptualizations of the daemonic. The first of these is the catastrophic split between the earthly and divine, between the temporal world and the realm of the forms. Although prefigurations of this idea can be found in thought systems that predate Plato — in pre-Socratic thinkers like Empedocles, for example — it will be demonstrated that Plato canonized and institutionalized this split within the Western philosophical tradition. In this regard, he will be viewed as having set the agenda for those German thinkers — Hamann and Herder in particular — who exerted an influence upon Goethe's early understanding of the daemonic.

The second Platonic theme with which this chapter is concerned is a human state that follows directly from the split between the forms and the material world: the state of longing. In modern interpretations of Platonism, longing operates as a human expression of, and response to, the distance of the forms from the human world. Platonism is a philosophy of longing in the sense that its entire system may be seen to operate as a refutation of human philosophical consummation: the capacity of humans to possess absolute truth as closure or completion. I will examine this particularly modern interpretation of Plato's philosophy later in this chapter with the help of three sources: Søren Kierkegaard's book *Om Begrebet Ironi med stadigt Hensyn til Socrates* (On The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates, 1841); Georg Lukács's early essay on Plato and Socrates entitled "Sehnsucht und Form" (Longing and Form), which appears in the volume *Die Seele und die Formen* (Soul and Form, 1910); and the definition of the daemonic offered by Georg Lukács in his *Theorie des Romans* (Theory of the Novel, 1920).

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of Germanic Studies, 1972), 6–22; Ernst Moritz Manasse, "Goethe und die griechische Philosophie," in *Goethe und die Tradition,* ed. Hans Reiss (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1972), 26–57; R. H. Stephenson, *Goethe's Conception of Knowledge and Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1995), 36–37; and H. B. Nisbet, "Religion and Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe,* ed. Lesley Sharpe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 219–31, particularly 227.

Following the discussion of Plato, this chapter will turn to Aristotle as a second, albeit indirect, influence upon Goethe's concept of the daemonic. Despite the fact that Aristotle was far too empirical a figure to devote much time to a subject as apparently esoteric, mythological, and other-worldly as the daemonic, his indirect influence upon Goethe's conceptualization of this term, an influence exerted via Leibniz's conception of the monad, cannot be overestimated. As will become apparent in the forthcoming analysis, Aristotle reformulated the Platonic relationship between the body and soul. This chapter will trace the consequences of this reformulation in some of the early Neo-Platonic and Stoic interpretations of the daemonic. In this connection, the key Neo-Platonic figures are Plutarch and Plotinus, while the most important discussions of the daemonic in Stoicism occur in Posidonius and Marcus Aurelius.

Plato and Socrates

Before proceeding with a discussion of Plato's dialogues and how they relate to the theme of the daemonic, it is necessary to explore Plato's relationship to Socrates: that is to say, to Socrates the historical figure and the Socrates who drives the Platonic dialogues. As Paul Friedländer observes, Plato's understanding of the daemonic finds some of its most notable expressions through Socrates — in Socratic eroticism, in Socratic irony, and especially in the Socratic notion of the *daimonion*.[11] Keeping Friedländer's point of view in mind, it is necessary to ask the following questions: What is the relationship between Plato and Socrates? Did Plato merely transcribe the discussions of Socrates, or is Socrates rather a kind of mouthpiece for Plato's ontology?

A standard feature of much scholarly literature on Plato is the division of the dialogues into three distinct periods, a division supported in recent years by eminent Plato scholars like Gregory Vlastos and Alexander Nehamas.[12] These periods include Plato's early or elenctic phase,[13] a middle or ontological period, and a late stage. The elenctic Socrates of the

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[11] Friedländer, *Platon,* 1:38–39.

[12] Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1991). For Vlastos's discussion of the chronology of Plato's works, see pages 47–49; Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1998). For Nehamas's views on chronology, see 196, 212–13.

[13] The adjective "elenctic" comes from "elenchus," meaning "scrutiny, refutation, interrogration." See F. E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* (New York: New York UP, 1967), 51.

early Platonic dialogues is, according to this chronology, Plato's closest approximation of the historical Socrates: a figure who pursues truth by refuting the views of others, and who was executed by the state for doing so. This Socrates does not expound the detailed metaphysical theories outlined in dialogues like the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. The Socrates with which this study is largely concerned is precisely the ontological Socrates of the middle period who appears in some of Plato's key texts on the daemonic: the *Symposium, Phaedrus,* and the "Myth of Er" in *The Republic*. This Socrates gives voice to the ontology of Plato, and thus effectively functions as his mouthpiece. The middle Socrates adheres to the theory of the forms, the idea of *anamnesis,* and the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. It is within the scope of these particular topics, all of which relate to the split between the realm of the forms and the material world, that the daemonic receives its strongest treatment in Plato.

In addition to this middle period, this study will also deal with Plato's creation story in the *Timaeus* (from the late period), Socrates' discussion of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* (late period), Socrates' discussion of poetry in *Ion* (from the early period), and his notion of the *daimonion* in *The Apology* (early period). This study will not seek to maintain any systematic distinction between the views of Plato and Socrates, except where such a distinction is specified explicitly.

The Platonic Split and the Idea of Necessity

The origin of the split between the forms and the material world, between Being and Becoming, is discussed by Plato in one of his later dialogues, *Timaeus*. The *Timaeus* is Plato's creation story and as such it sets the scene for the two central problems that relate to the daemonic in his philosophy. First, why is there a cleavage between the forms and the material world? Second, how can a bridging of this cleavage be brought into effect? *Timaeus* constitutes an answer to the first of these questions. The second question is answered by Plato in many different ways, and is the central issue at stake in the ontological dialogues of his middle period: the *Symposium, Phaedrus,* and *The Republic*.

The *Timaeus* offers a complicated account of how the corporeal world came into existence. A character known as the demiurge, and also referred to by Timaeus as the father, is presented with the task of creating a world from the antecedent chaos, which is a formless mixture of Plato's four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. The demiurge is preceded by the transcendent forms that exist independently of time and space as immutable and incorruptible ideas. The demiurge is a kind of craftsman, and as such he works to a plan. His task is to fashion the world as a likeness or reflection of the eternal forms. Since the forms are transcendent, they are

also beyond replication, and so the demiurge is forced to mould corruptible, temporal, and corporeal images based upon them, as is outlined at 37d.

While this early phase of the dialogue outlines the famous Platonic distinction between Being and Becoming, later in the *Timaeus* (that is, from 48e onwards) Plato complicates matters by seeking an explanation for that which is prior to the four elements. It is here that Plato introduces the *hupodochê* described as "the receptacle, and in a manner the nurse, of all generation" (*PCD,* 1176). It is this formless *hupodochê* or receptacle onto which the likenesses or copies of the forms are imprinted. Later in the dialogue (at 52b), Plato also refers to the *hupodochê* as the *chorâ* (space) that "provides a home for all created things" (*PCD,* 1178–79).

Notwithstanding the complications of the creation story in the *Timaeus,* Plato is at pains, in this as well as in the earlier dialogues of the middle period, to demonstrate that the formation of the material world constitutes a kind of primal scene of division between the forms and the corporeal existence, and therefore between Being and Becoming. The creation of the material world is, for Plato, a kind of fall from a transcendent and eternal first stage into a second stage of temporality and corporeal decay and suffering. The Platonic philosopher then looks for redemption in a third stage, in which he strives for a reunion with the transcendent forms. It is this third stage, a stage in which the possession of divine truth has been lost and can only be partially recovered, that characterizes the conduit of the daemonic.

In ancient Greek thought, daemons were seen as intermediaries between the world of the divine and the material world, and Plato would also have been aware of the conception of the philosopher as a daemon or intermediary between the secular and the divine. This idea is present only fifty years or so before Plato's birth in the thought of Empedocles. Empedocles' notion of the daemon as an exile who has been banished from the kingdom of the gods is presented in fragment 107 of the *Katharmoi,* often called "The Decree of Necessity":

> There is a decree of necessity, ratified long ago by gods, eternal and sealed by broad oaths, that whenever one in error, from fear, (defiles) his own limbs, having by his error made false the oath he swore — daimons to whom life long-lasting is apportioned — he wanders from the blessed ones for three times countless years, being born throughout the time as all kinds of mortal forms, exchanging one hard way of life for another. For the force of air pursues him into the sea, and sea spits him out onto earth's surface, earth casts him into rays of blazing sun, and sun into the eddies of air; one takes

> him from another, and all abhor him. I too am one of these, an exile from the gods and a wanderer, having put my trust in raving strife.[14]

The daemon is cast out of heaven as a result of committing the sin of bloodshed (defilement of the limbs), which is viewed as an act that produces a pollution of the divine part of the soul. This act also constitutes a transgression of the bond or oath imposed upon the daemon by Love, and accordingly he becomes subject to *miasma:* a kind of infection of the soul that separates him from his divine counterparts and begins the cycle of his existence on earth in different incarnations of mortal life.[15] The daemon is then presented with the task of reunifying himself with the gods, as this will represent his redemption. Thus, as M. R. Wright observes in his commentary on the *Katharmoi,* "to be forced from the company of his fellows for a time of exile, and eventually to return to them, is basic to Empedocles' theory of the daimon."[16]

The importance of this passage lies in its contribution to the poetic invention of the notion of necessity. The daemon's fate is produced by a necessity that can only be described as an indeterminate or unknowable cause. In this way, Empedocles gives a name to that which is unknowable and incalculable. There is, moreover, no sense in which the daemon's banishment can be accounted for in terms of the Christian psychology of sin. The daemon has not sinned in the modern psychological sense of freely and consciously choosing a particular course of action. Rather, as M. R. Wright puts it, "although the daimon has come under the power of Strife . . . this need not imply wrong intention or power of choice on the part of the daimon."[17] For Empedocles, and for other pre-Socratics like Heraclitus, character was an objective and not a subjective phenomenon. As is seen in the example of Empedocles' daemon, one's character is not really a matter of choice or subjective will; rather, human acts are seen to flow from an external, divine agency associated with necessity.[18]

Accordingly, when Heraclitus states in fragment 119 that "a person's character is his daemon," the term daemon may mean either one's fate or

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[14] Empedocles, *The Extant Fragments,* ed. and trans. M. R. Wright (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1981), 270.

[15] Here I am paraphrasing pages 64–65 of M. R. Wright's introduction to the *Extant Fragments.*

[16] Wright, *The Extant Fragments,* 65.

[17] Wright, *The Extant Fragments,* 66.

[18] Wright, *The Extant Fragments,* 66.

one's guardian divinity.[19] In his commentary on fragment 119, T. M. Robinson argues that the fragment may in fact carry both meanings. Hence, on the one hand, a daemon may be the soul of a noble individual who has died — a soul that will subsequently function as a guardian divinity that protects another person during his or her life, thereby influencing his or her fate. On the other hand, however, the fragment may also mean that the person's *own* character, and not the soul of another individual who has died, is their daemon. In this latter sense, according to Robinson, "one's own character is also one's *destiny* (daemon)" and in this sense one is completely responsible "for the daemon that is one's character."[20] This notion of responsibility is, however, definitely not to be equated with modern notions concerning the consequences that arise from the actions of free and autonomous agents. As Charles H. Kahn observes, Heraclitus identified the individual character with the elemental powers and constituents of the cosmos. It is these elemental powers, as opposed to the individual's freedom and autonomy, that "constitute the physical explanation or psychophysical identity of the particular life in question, the elemental equivalent of a given moral and intellectual character."[21]

Similarly, the catastrophic split between the forms and the physical world depicted by Plato in *Timaeus* should not be confused with the Christian Fall. Although, as Ronna Burger points out, the Platonic split does have something in common with original sin, in the sense that all humans are born fallen and "in ignorance of the truth," the split cannot be said to have occurred as the result of sin in the Christian sense. Rather, it occurs simply because it was not possible to bring beings based upon the forms into existence without making them temporal and corporeal.[22] The temporal world is fallen, but not in any moral or psychological way: rather, its fallen-ness is its necessity, as the act of creation in Plato is necessarily an act of division.

With regard to the fates of individuals, the Platonic daemon is likewise connected with the notion of necessity, although the idea of sin re-

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[19] Heraclitus, *Fragments,* trans. T. M. Robinson (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1987), 69. T. M. Robinson's commentary on Fragment 119, from which my own interpretation is derived, appears on pages 159–60.

[20] Heraclitus, *Fragments,* 159–60.

[21] Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979). Kahn's commentary on fragment 119 appears on pages 260–61.

[22] Ronna Burger, *Plato's* Phaedrus: *A Defense of a Philosophic Art of Writing* (University, AL: U of Alabama P, 1980), 49.

ceives a stronger treatment in Plato than it does in Empedocles. In the "Myth of Er" section of *The Republic* (614b–621d) Plato, through the character of Er, gives an account of the transmigration of souls similar to that found in Empedocles' "Decree of Necessity." Er, having died in battle, encounters the "other world" in which souls are allotted their fates, and then returns to life to tell of his experiences. Er has been appointed by the judges of the other world as a messenger charged with reporting to earthly men the events that take place there. He refers to this other world as a *topos daimonios* (daemonic place, 614c) as it is here that souls are required to choose their fates or lots for the next life. The lots are distributed by Lachesis, the daughter of necessity, and they include both animal and human forms of life. Each soul may choose its respective lot, but this choice is soon forgotten, as the souls proceed to the forgetful river at Lethe and, after drinking their fill, they forget all of their experiences in the daemonic world, subsequently returning to life ignorant of their choice of lot. Thus, although Plato implies that each soul chooses its lot and is therefore responsible for this choice, in the trajectory of life itself the choice of lots is forgotten, and life appears to be governed by necessity.

What does Plato mean by calling this other world a daemonic place? Here daemonic can mean both "of necessity" and "of divination" or "mantic." In Heraclitus's sense of the daemon as the nexus between character and fate, the world experienced by Er is one in which souls are once more fated (that is, given a lot) for their next incarnation. This interpretation also accords with the etymological origin of daemonic in the word *daio,* which refers to the division and distribution of divine gifts by the gods.[23] Er's role as an intermediary or courier who brings news of the hidden world is also daemonic in the mantic or divinatory sense. The experiences that he reports take place in an intermediate, transitional world suspended between life and death, and he himself is something like the living dead, having mysteriously arisen from his own funeral pyre. Overwhelmingly, however, the "Myth of Er" is a testament to the inexorable and unfathomable workings of necessity. This is seen when Plato gives us a detailed rendering, at 616b–c, of the "Spindle of Necessity" that revolves upon a "straight light like a pillar . . . extended from above throughout the heaven and the earth" (*PCD,* 840), demonstrating the extent to which Plato's version of the daemonic is literally a kind of conduit or tube that transports divine or numinous information to the physical realm.

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[23] H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* ed. Sir Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie, 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 365–66.

Anamnesis: The Recollection of Divine Memory

Although the concept of *anamnesis* is given its most detailed philosophical treatments in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo,* it is in the *Phaedrus* that Plato endeavors to present this concept by way of a mythical narrative that displays some similarities with the account of the soul found in the "Myth of Er." All souls, says Socrates in the *Phaedrus,* were originally winged and beheld true Being before descending to the material world. Once they have fallen, most souls forget their previous divine existence. This forgetting may be attributable to what Plato says about the "forgetful river" at Lethe, or it may generally be associated with the soul's contamination by things evil and foul, which cause the soul's wings to wither and die, as the soul's loss of its wings is concomitant with the forgetting of the forms (246e). To complicate matters further still, Socrates also suggests later in the dialogue (at 248c) that the soul's falling to earth may merely be the result of an accident or malignant necessity. Having lost its wings and fallen to earth, where it is forced to dwell in the secondary and derivative world of matter, the soul is faced with the task of regrowing its wings and returning to its former divine status.

The capacity to recollect the soul's previous divine existence is, according to Socrates, most often found in philosophers. At 249b–c of the *Phaedrus,* it is revealed that the philosopher is gifted in this particular area because he is able to move

> from a plurality of perceptions to a unity gathered together by reasoning — and such understanding is a recollection of those things which our souls beheld aforetime as they journeyed with their god, looking down upon the things which now we suppose to be, and gazing up to that which truly is. (*PCD,* 496)

On one level, *anamnesis* is associated with reason. Plato sees the dialectical mode of the Socratic dialogue as a kind of path that leads from particular instances back to the universal forms. In another sense, however, *anamnesis* can be a fundamentally non-rational state of possession. Socrates argues that in some cases the process of *anamnesis* takes place as a result of the subject's contemplating those aspects of the material world that, in their beauty and goodness, remind him of the transcendent realm from which his soul originally emanated. In effect, Socrates contends that *anamnesis* may be facilitated by focusing upon the beauty inherent in a love-object. This, it is explained at 249e, occurs when a man

> as soon as he beholds the beauty of this world, is reminded of true beauty, and his wings begin to grow; then is he fain to lift his wings

> and fly upward; yet he has not the power, but inasmuch as he gazes upward like a bird, and cares nothing for the world beneath, men charge it upon him that he is demented. (*PCD,* 496)

In the discussions of *anamnesis* in the *Phaedrus,* it becomes apparent that although Plato is traditionally viewed as having carefully distinguished non-rational states of mind from the rational, dialectical modes of the philosopher symbolized for him in Socrates, these two opposed ways of thinking may be seen to cross over and intermingle. *Anamnesis,* in its reasonable manifestation in Socratic elenchus, and in its embodiment as the divine possession of love, is both a rational and a non-rational mode or activity.

At this stage, it is necessary to outline the key points that arise from the discussion of *anamnesis* in the *Phaedrus.* First, it is important to note the circular and tripartite structure of Plato's ontology. The Platonic cycle runs as follows: a divine and eternal origin experienced by the soul in its winged state, followed by a fall into temporal life that often serves to obscure the forms. The third stage, that occupied by the process of the daemonic, is that which attempts to conjoin temporality and the sensual or material world with the realm of the forms. Thus, as Paul Friedländer observes, "ohne den Bereich des 'Dämonischen' brächen Himmel und Erde auseinander."[24]

Implicitly, therefore, Plato argues that one can only move forward by going back: that is to say, back to one's origin, the realm of the forms. It is also likely, however, that at least for human purposes, this origin may be fundamentally mythic and absent, in the sense that the forms exist outside human temporality and experience. I will return to the idea of the absent origin in Plato later in this chapter. More crucial, however, at this point, is the sense in which this numinous origin may be uncovered through two dialectically opposed modes: reason or philosophical argumentation, and the unreason or possession associated with love.

Eros and Love in Plato: The *Symposium*

The *Symposium* is one of Plato's most enigmatic dialogues, and as such it points to some questions that surround many of his writings. How seriously should one take the speeches of characters other than Socrates? What is the function of these speeches? At the level of argumentative structure, the function of these speeches is obvious: they are the straw men created by Plato to allow Socrates to display his skills of refutation. But apart from this obvious structural purpose, many of these speeches

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[24] Friedländer, *Platon,* 1:51.

are so detailed that they seem to have some other kind of ancillary function. One of these functions may be that of myth or *mythos:* the activity of telling stories in order to convince an audience.

The importance of the "Myth of Er" in *The Republic* has already been noted. Although it is known, from the section of Plato's *Phaedo* (61b) discussed in the introduction to this study, that the activity of *mythos* does not correspond directly with Plato's conception of logical truth, it is nevertheless possible that myths or narratives can tell a kind of truth that does not lay any claims to philosophical rigor.[25] The myths in Plato's writings are not bound by Socrates' usual logic, and it is for precisely this reason that they are able to point to possible truths that exceed or escape logical argumentation, thereby extending into areas where the *logos* cannot reach.[26] Ultimately, the modes of argument that are advanced by myth might be seen as being non-rational, poetic, or emotive rather than rational, precisely because they extend beyond the strict bounds of the *logos.* Thus, according to Hans Blumenberg, the philosopher — for our purposes, Plato — may have "etwas für den Mythos übrig" precisely because myth is one of the modes through which the mysteries of existence can be approached by way of their conversion into a narrative form (*BAM,* 33).

The most vivid myth in the *Symposium* is that told by Aristophanes on the subject of love and its connections with the original human nature. It is important to note that the general subject of the *Symposium* is love as *eros,* which involves sexual desire, and not love as *philia:* affectionate regard, familial love, or friendship. At 189e–190a of the *Symposium,* Aristophanes famously argues that all humans were originally double — with two heads, four arms, four legs, two sets of genitals, and so on — and could be categorized into three different sexes: men, women, and hermaphrodites. These double beings possessed great strength and, like Prometheus, saw fit to challenge the gods. In response to this threat, Zeus decided to divide them in half, thereby creating beings with two arms and two legs, and diminishing their strength. This division is then used as an explanation for love and the different manifestations of sexual desire. Those beings that were originally double men desire other men, those who were double women desire other women, and those who originally formed hermaphrodites desire the opposite sex, since, says

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[25] This is the view of Josef Pieper in his book *Über die platonischen Mythen* (Munich: Kösel, 1965). Pieper argues that the myths of Plato contain things that are true ("es ist zwar Wahres daran") while at the same time not being actually true ("eigentlich wahr"; 19).

[26] Friedländer, *Platon,* 1:201.

Aristophanes at 191d, "love is always trying to reintegrate our former nature" (*PCD,* 544).

What significance does this story hold for the subject of the daemonic and its role of mediating between the forms and the everyday world? The answer to this question appears later in the *Symposium* when we are told of what Socrates has learnt from his teacher in the art of love, Diotima of Mantinea. Before this stage of the dialogue we have already heard from Eryximachus (at 188b–c) that "the sole concern of every rite of sacrifice and divination — that is to say, the means of communion between god and man — is either the preservation or the repair of love" (*PCD,* 541), but this connection is made clearer by Socrates' account of Diotima's theories. Diotima's speech and that of Aristophanes operate on different levels. While Aristophanes' discourse on the origin of love functions as a kind of comic interlude in the *Symposium* — albeit a comic interlude that gives a mythic representation of some of the key features of Plato's notions of love as *eros* — the speech of Diotima is intended to be taken far more seriously. Socrates tells us that Diotima is a wise woman, and that he has learnt much from her.

At 199c–201c of the *Symposium,* prior to Diotima's speech, Socrates discusses the nature of love with Agathon. In order to refute Agathon's assumption that love is to be equated with the beautiful, Socrates points out that love must be love of something, and that this something is the beautiful. Socrates then goes on to argue that because love is the desire for the beautiful, and given that one who desires always desires that which he lacks, then love itself is not beautiful. Love and desire are thus defined by Socrates in terms of a lack, and more specifically, as a lack of beauty and goodness. It is at this point that Socrates introduces Diotima's speech. In response to Socrates' statement that love is a great god, Diotima argues that love cannot be a god because love desires, and therefore lacks, that which the gods possess: beauty and goodness. Love (*eros*) says Diotima at 202d–203a, is:

> A very powerful daimon[27] . . . and daimons, you know, are half-way between god and man. . . . They are the envoys and interpreters that ply between heaven and earth, flying upward with our worship and our prayers, and descending with the heavenly answers and commandments . . . the man who is versed in such matters is said to have daemonic powers [*sophos daimonios*], as opposed to the mechanical

[27] In the translation of the *Symposium* by Michael Joyce used in this study, *daimon* is translated as "spirit." I have altered Joyce's translation by reverting to the original Greek term (*daimon*) throughout this passage.

> powers of the man who is an expert in the more mundane arts. There are many daimons, and many kinds of daimon, too, and Love is one of them. (*PCD,* 555)

Diotima's contention is that the daemon corresponds with a state of lack or non-consummation. The daemon — embodied in this case in the concept of *eros* — is that which strives to be god-like, but due to the fact that it must always lack that for which it strives, the daemon is forever the less-than-god or almost-god. This sense of lack resonates with the fact that according to Diotima love's mother is Penia: the goddess of poverty.

But what does this notion of love as daemonic have to do with Plato's ontology, and with his conception of the philosopher? The answer to this question is that for Plato, the philosopher is always in a state of lack, of less than complete knowledge, precisely because he is not a god. As Diotima explains to Socrates at 204a–b, gods are not philosophers because they are already wise. It is only those who are intermediate between knowledge and ignorance who can be called philosophers or lovers of wisdom. In other words, philosophers, as intermediaries or daemons with a desire to know the forms, can only ever be on the way. Any sense of arrival must be false, since the forms are, at least for human purposes, like a horizon that withdraws when approached: a destination without location that always spurs the philosopher on to greater heights.

Types of Divine Madness

Here it becomes apparent that for Plato, as for Empedocles, the whole notion of the daemonic is intimately connected with the task of the philosopher. Diotima teaches that all love is ultimately love of beauty as *eidos* or form, described at 211e as "beauty's very self — unsullied, unalloyed, and freed from the mortal taint that haunts the frailer loveliness of flesh and blood" (*PCD,* 563). In the *Symposium* the process of contemplating love and beauty is presented as an eminently rational procedure. The philosopher progresses from admiring beauty in things to the abstract idea of beauty in general, which then initiates him into the doctrine of the forms. But in the *Phaedrus* love and *eros* often appear to be less than rational (perhaps even non-rational) forces or cosmic principles that impose themselves upon human lives. This dialogue, which is simultaneously a reflection upon the nature of love and a discussion of the art of rhetoric, begins with Phaedrus relating to Socrates a speech given by Lysias on the subject of love.

In his speech, Lysias argues that non-lovers are to be preferred to lovers, because lovers are irrational and act under compulsion, while non-lovers are free from compulsion and are thus able to act reasonably.

Socrates' first speech in reply to Lysias's discourse confirms its central premise that non-lovers are to be preferred to lovers. At this point, it seems as though the matter has been put to rest, until (at 242b–c) Socrates is suddenly restrained from leaving the scene by his *daimonion* — a kind of divine sign or supernatural voice that comes to him at certain times. Socrates believes that the *daimonion* suggests to him that, in speaking against lovers and therefore against love and *eros,* he has committed an impiety and offended the gods. In order to make amends for this impiety, Socrates gives a second speech that argues for the contrary position: namely, that the lover is to be preferred over the non-lover. In his first speech Socrates does accept Lysias's contention that lovers often act under compulsion, arguing that love is a kind of possession or madness. But in his second speech he then goes on, at 244a, to describe a kind of madness that is a divine gift and the source of great blessings. Later in the dialogue, at 265a–b, Socrates defines this positive madness in a more specific fashion, calling it a "a divine disturbance of our conventions of conduct" that is divisible into four types: "the inspiration of the prophet to Apollo, that of the mystic to Dionysus, that of the poet to the Muses, and a fourth type that we declared to be the highest, the madness of the lover, to Aphrodite and Eros" (*PCD,* 510–11).

The Greek term for madness that Plato uses is *mania,* meaning madness, enthusiasm, or frenzy. While, in a modern context, madness as psychosis may refer to the subject's loss of contact with reality, when Plato uses *mania* in a positive sense, it refers to a heightened awareness of reality that comes upon the subject from outside, and that makes possible an encounter with the divine, absolutely real and transcendent Being.[28] It is this kind of madness that imposes itself upon the lover. By contemplating and desiring the beauty and goodness inherent in his love-object, the right-minded lover eventually comes into contact with the form of beauty and goodness. Thus, Plato implies that sexual desire may lead to a transcendent and therefore asexual realm: that of the forms.

Plato's discussion of *mania* is important because it suggests that either non-rational cosmic forces or non-rational states of mind may help one to come in contact with divine knowledge. Plato sees this kind of non-rationality or possession as comprising a method or art that Socrates describes, at 244b–d, as "mantic." Here Socrates draws attention to the etymological connection between the state of madness (*mania*) and the mantic arts of prophecy or divination, while also apparently suggesting that the "T" was unjustly introduced into the word "manic" in order to

[28] See, on this subject, E. R. Dodds, "The Blessings of Madness," in *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1951), 64–101.

remove or at least efface the sense of irrationality or frenzy that it carries. It appears, therefore, that Socrates is attempting to give *mania* a positive inflection. But how can these statements about the value of desire, possession and madness be reconciled with Plato's valorization of reason? One possible answer to this question may be that Socrates is quite consciously employing the art of rhetoric — a subject that is, after all, a central theme in the *Phaedrus* — by countering the argument, expounded by Lysias, that lovers are untrustworthy and irrational, through praising polemically manic or mantic states of mind. At certain points in the *Phaedrus,* Socrates often suggests that he himself is subject to divine inspiration or possession by nymphs while discoursing on the subject of love. Are such statements purely ironic and rhetorical? If the answer to this question is yes, then all of Plato's references to the non-rationality associated with love and poetry can be seen as having little importance to his thought. If the answer to this question is no, as I suspect it is, then the things that Plato has to say about manic or mantic states must be taken seriously, and their meaning within the context of his philosophy as a whole must be assessed.[29]

The view taken in this study is that there is a non-rational, mythological or mantic element in Plato's philosophy that operates as the dialectical opposite, of reason and logic.[30] In fact, a key argument of this chapter is that Plato's philosophy contains an erotics and a poetics. Plato's erotics are seen first in the *Symposium,* when Diotima deliberately conflates *eros* and desire with the task of the philosopher. The philosopher is a lover of wisdom, but this love carries within it an erotic element that is fundamentally non-rational, and that is emphasized in the *Phaedrus* when Socrates states his preference for the possessed lover over the sober and reasonable non-lover. Likewise, Plato's philosophy is poetic in its use of

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[29] In this regard, my reading of the *Phaedrus* concurs with that offered by Friedländer, *Platon,* 3:201–23.

[30] This view is also outlined, albeit in a decidedly more religious context than my own, by Josef Pieper in his book *"Divine Madness": Plato's Case against Secular Humanism,* trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1995). Pieper argues that academic literature has neglected to read section 244b–d of the *Phaedrus* as an important passage in Plato's works. He goes on to outline the importance of this passage in its insistence that "it is precisely in this loss of rational sovereignty that man gains a wealth, above all, of intuition, light, truth and insight into reality, all of which would otherwise remain beyond his reach. Here we are explicitly looking not at the results of human genius but at the effects of a different, a loftier, a divine power" (17).

literary devices and narratives or myths, while at the same time comprising a kind of poetics: a way of reading and understanding poems and stories.[31]

Both Plato's erotics and his poetics are related to his conceptions of the daemon and the daemonic. In Plato, *eros* also takes on an intermediary or mediating aspect that is daemonic in the following sense: the philosopher is like a daemon who wishes to mediate between the material world and the forms, and this wish is also a kind of desire, a sometimes rational, sometimes non-rational eroticism. The relationship between poetry and the daemonic in Plato is complex. In *The Republic* Plato expels or even represses poetry, only to heap praise upon it as a divine practice in two other dialogues: *Ion* (where, we shall see, such praise may admittedly be ironic) and the *Phaedrus.* Poetry is not simply the enthusiastic and irrational opposite of Socrates' logic. It is intimately linked with philosophy in that both are driven by *eros* and desire. The philosopher has a desire for wisdom and the forms, while the poet desires the poem or poetic inspiration, which in Plato is always a gift from the gods. Likewise, for Plato, poetry, or the general category of activity to which poetry belongs — *mythos,* the creation of narratives, stories, and images — functions as the form in which all philosophy, all activities of the *logos,* manifest themselves. I will turn to the problematic relationships between poetry and philosophy, and between *mythos* and *logos,* later in this chapter. For now, the erotic elements of Plato's philosophy require a closer examination.

Eros and Philosophy

Plato's concept of *eros,* while ostensibly carrying a purely corporeal and sexual meaning, also serves an important philosophical function. *Eros* is desire, and this desire translates itself into a kind of erotics of knowledge, as the forms become objects of a philosophical desire that is a kind of dis-

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[31] See, in this connection, Anthony J. Cascardi's essay "The Place of Language in Philosophy," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 16, no. 14 (1983): 217–27, particularly 223–25. Cascardi argues, with reference to the *Phaedrus,* that Plato's "philosophical concepts are couched in a language that . . . is more a kind of poetry than metaphysical jargon. Truth itself remains for Plato vigorously non-verbal, yet language, not least the 'indirect' language of poetry, remains the primordial way of expressing, teaching, reasoning, 'erecting' that truth" (225). In her essay "The Rhetorical Technique of Plato's *Phaedrus,*" *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 19, no.1 (1986): 66–72, Jane V. Curran concurs with the view of Cascardi when she writes that in the *Phaedrus:* "the dominant tone of Socrates' two speeches is a poetic one — not a good exercise in the dialectical rigor he himself demands of ideal oratory" (68).

tillation or even sublimation of normal sexual desire. He who experiences corporeal, sexual desire learns to abstract the universals of beauty and goodness from love-objects, and thus turns his gaze from the corporeal to the incorporeal: the realm of the forms. In the *Phaedrus, eros* assists *anamnesis* because the beauty inherent in objects of desire helps one to remember the original beauty that the soul once encountered in its life with the gods. The connection between *eros* and poetry will also be seen later in my discussion of the *Symposium,* in which poems are seen as the products of a kind of cerebral or non-corporeal procreation. At this point, however, it is necessary to focus upon the closing stages of the *Symposium,* where the connections between *eros* and the theme of the daemonic are revealed.

Shortly after Diotima's speech on the subject of *eros,* Alcibiades intrudes upon the discussion in a drunken state and is prevailed upon to give a speech of his own. Before Alcibiades commences his speech, we hear from Socrates at 213d that Alcibiades has a great passion for him, and that Socrates is fearful of his "amorous transports" (*PCD,* 565). Although Socrates' assertion is probably ironic, Alcibiades proceeds (at 213e) to give an ambivalent speech that praises Socrates, while at the same time depicting him as a kind of dialectical tyrant who has conquered the world with his eloquence. After promising to speak the truth, Alcibiades describes Socrates' external appearance as resembling that of a satyr. Satyrs were mythological figures, half man and half beast, who were known for their lustful natures, their animalistic ugliness, and an ability to intoxicate humans with their flute-playing. But Alcibiades then tells us (at 216d–218b) that Socrates' beastly appearance is merely a kind of outer shell; a shell that, when opened, reveals godlike, golden, and beautiful images. Here Alcibiades is continuing the comparison, initiated at 215a–b, between Socrates and popular statues of the god Silenus. Such statues could, like Russian dolls, be opened, revealing "little images of the gods inside" (*PCD,* 566). Similarly, as Alcibiades explains at 218a–b, it is Socrates' internal, spiritual, or philosophical beauty — a beauty that shines beneath his ugly exterior — that inspires in Alcibiades both a "philosophical frenzy" and a "sacred rage" (*PCD,* 569).

We immediately have a strange paradox here. Alcibiades tells us that philosophy is akin to madness and frenzy, and that this madness is inspired in him by none other than the absolute paradigm of reason, logic, and restraint: Socrates. Enraptured by philosophy, Alcibiades conceives a plan that will help him to gain access to Socrates' beautiful wisdom and satisfy his longing — a plan that is in keeping with the traditions of ancient Greek homosexuality. Earlier in the *Symposium,* Pausanias tells of the custom that approves of young men granting sexual favors to their elders in return for philosophical tuition. Within this arrangement, the

younger and more beautiful man is known as the beloved or love-object, while the older man, usually lacking in beauty, is the lover. It is this custom that the young and handsome Alcibiades intends to continue with Socrates, as he is convinced that Socrates is enamored of his beauty. But all of Alcibiades' attempts to seduce Socrates fail, and his humiliation is complete when, after having convinced Socrates to stay the night in his home, Socrates simply lies passively in his arms, refusing all of his solicitations.

What is the meaning of this strange story, and what are its implications for the daemonic? It is traditionally interpreted as an example of Socratic irony in the following sense: Socrates, an elderly man renowned for his physical ugliness, becomes the object of a strange kind of *eros* that transcends bodily desire. This is seen firstly in Alcibiades' depiction of Socrates as a satyr, an outwardly grotesque, lustful, and beastly figure who conceals an internal divine nature. The contrast between ugliness and beauty within Socrates is suggestive of the daemonic, as his ironic status as a satyr figure forms a kind of bridge between the immanent and the transcendent, between corporeal and incorporeal *eros*. Appearing as a satyr or lusty beast, he symbolizes the power of bodily desire, and Alcibiades believes that he can seduce Socrates with his physical beauty. But at the very moment in which he proffers himself to Socrates, Alcibiades discovers that this beast or monster has transcended physical *eros,* and this situation merely increases Alcibiades' longing and makes him a kind of slave to the wisdom of Socrates.

As a result of Socrates' withdrawal from the physical-erotic into the metaphysical-erotic, Alcibiades is goaded on to a more heightened sense of philosophical longing, and this is the paradoxical gift that Socrates bestows upon him: the gift of erotic/philosophical non-consummation, the gift of philosophical longing. At this point, it is useful to introduce Søren Kierkegaard's view of Socratic *eros* in the *Symposium*. Socratic *eros,* says Kierkegaard, is negative, abstract, and entirely lacking in content, in the sense that it does not focus on sensuous objects, but rather functions as pure longing and "immanent negativity."[32] For the Platonic Socrates, love represents immanent negativity because it presents one with a point of crossing or contact between the immanent and the transcendent, the substantial and the insubstantial, the positive and the negative. As Paul Friedländer comments, love or *eros* becomes the "Führer zur Idee" in that

[32] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates,* trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna N. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1989), 45–46.

it points from bodily beauty to Beauty as *eidos.*[33] For human purposes, the *eidos* or form is always the purely negative: that which is beyond human representation and consummation, and which therefore inspires humans with longing. This element in Plato is most fully achieved when Alcibiades himself recognizes, at 217c, the absurd irony of his attempts to seduce the elderly and ugly Socrates "just as if I were the lover trying to seduce his beloved, instead of the other way around" (*PCD,* 568). Socrates brings the gap between physical and metaphysical beauty to its highest pitch; his external satyr-like ugliness is merely an ironic symbol of that which lies beyond bodily *eros:* philosophical *ero*s, the desire for the forms.

The significance of Platonic philosophical *eros* for the daemonic is clear. *Eros* is associated with the non-rational, but the non-rational can be used in a rational, philosophical way when we investigate it and begin to understand its power. Our desires indicate to us something about ourselves and the world that we inhabit. The drunken and intoxicated Alcibiades, a man suffused with desire, reveals more about philosophical *eros* than do any of the other speakers in the *Symposium* apart from Socrates and Diotima. Alcibiades shows that the quickest way home, the shortest way to the forms, is often provided by desire and intoxication, provided that desire and intoxication can be retrospectively, and — to use Ronna Burger's terminology — "artfully" embraced and analyzed by reason.[34] As Kierkegaard also observes in his reading of the *Symposium,* Alcibiades' experience of love complements the more abstract speeches given by the other speakers on the dialogue, in that his desire is the flesh that covers and adorns the bones of dialectical reason, and as such it exemplifies and fills out, renders substantial, the abstract notion of *eros* outlined by Socrates and Diotima.[35] The essence of Alcibiades' speech is the theme of reflection upon desire, upon longing. The deepest desire buried in Platonic *eros,* in Platonic longing, is the desire to move from the immanent into the transcendent. As an inheritor of Kierkegaard's philosophical tradition, and, by analogy, the tradition of Plato, the young Georg Lukács, in his *Theorie des Romans* (1920) finds this eminently human desire at the heart of the daemonic:

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[33] Friedländer, *Platon,* 1:54.

[34] Burger makes this point succinctly by stating that in terms of its mantic status, Eros "would have to be understood in contrast to all human reason; its benefit would have to consist in the illusory state of self-forgetfulness it produces, and its potential blessing could be realized only through its artful transformation" (*Plato's* Phaedrus, 50).

[35] Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony,* 47.

> Es gibt eine wesenhafte Bestrebung der Seele, der es nur um das Wesenhafte zu tun ist, einerlei woher es kommt, einerlei was seine Ziele sind; es gibt eine Sehnsucht der Seele, wo der Heimatdrang so heftig ist, daß die Seele den ersten Pfad, der heimzuführen scheint, in blindem Ungestüm betreten muß.[36]

Although Lukács's definition of the daemonic is fundamentally different from that of Plato in that its central concern is the triumph of subjectivity over objectivity that announces itself in the modern novel, his definition nevertheless concurs with Plato's notion of the daemonic in the following way: for Lukács, the longing associated with the daemonic is a human response to "die Ferne und die Abwesenheit des wirkenden Gottes."[37] In this way, Lukács's definition of the daemonic is intimately connected with metaphysical longing, a longing that is directed towards an abstract, metaphysical home or origin not unlike Plato's forms. It is this idea that comes through even more forcefully in an earlier work by Lukács — the essay "Sehnsucht und Form" (1910) — in which he defines Socratic longing as a kind of *eros* that must remain forever "unerwidert" precisely because its goal is metaphysical self-perfection rather than physical consummation.[38]

Why, according to Lukács, is all longing ultimately hopeless, and why must it remain unrequited? This question brings into focus the relationship between the forms and the origin in Plato, a relationship that is the cornerstone of Platonic *anamnesis.* In *Timaeus* and in the *Phaedrus,* Plato tells us that we have become separated from our souls' original home, the realm of the forms; the soul's vocation is therefore to reunify itself with the forms through philosophical contemplation. But what are the forms? In terms of human experience, the experience of immanence, the forms do not exist; they are, like Lukács's remote and absent God, fundamentally non-existent. Their role is not to exist immanently, materially, or anthropologically, but to function as ideas or normative categories towards which humans can only travel. The significance of this for Lukács's modern interpretation of Platonic *eros* is as follows: if the forms exist beyond the bounds of human experience, then there can be no physical consummation, no contact, in Platonic *eros.* There can only ever be longing, a longing which, by virtue of the insubstantiality of its goal — the forms —

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[36] Georg Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans* (1920; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1971), 86–87.

[37] Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans,* 89.

[38] Georg Lukács, "Sehnsucht und Form," in *Die Seele und die Formen* (Berlin: Egon Fleischel, 1911), 202.

gives birth to insubstantial offspring: philosophical works, and poems. This is the theory of creativity and intellectual pregnancy proposed by Diotima at 208e–209e of the *Symposium,* and it is also this feature of Platonic *eros* — namely, "Empfängnis ohne Schwangerschaft" — that Walter Benjamin describes in his fragment "Sokrates" (1916) as being the "Geisteszeichen des männlichen Genius."[39]

Did Plato subscribe to a notion of genius? Not in the sense that Benjamin uses the term at the beginning of the twentieth century. By this time, the concept of genius had taken on a whole series of associations that were attached to it during the eighteenth century. As we will see in chapter 2, it was during this period, through figures such as Hamann, Herder, and the young Goethe, among others, that the notion of genius became inextricably linked both with the daemonic and with the subjective imagination. Despite the fact that Plato helped to inspire eighteenth-century writers on genius like Hamann, Herder, and Goethe, his notion of genius has very little to do with the imagination or subjectivity. Unlike Benjamin, Plato does not believe that poets themselves are geniuses. Rather, they are visited from outside by the Muses, which is to say, they are possessed by daemons.

The Other of *Technē:* The Art of Poetry

Plato's well known argument regarding poetry, which appears at 597e of *The Republic,* is that the poet engages in a mimesis of the already secondary material world, and thus his art represents a further departure from the truth: the divine realm of the forms. Linked to this argument is Plato's structure of the soul, which is given various representations within the dialogues, the most vivid of which appears shortly before the discussion of poetry in *The Republic*. At 588c–e, Socrates sketches a tripartite model of the soul: on the first level there exists a many-headed monster (representing irrationality and intemperance); on the second, a lion (symbolizing appetite, aggression, and hubris); and on the third, a man (the embodiment of reason or *logos*). At 589b, Socrates argues that the right-minded citizen should allow the rational element of the soul to predominate over the less rational elements, keeping the baser elements under control, "like a farmer who cherishes and trains the cultivated plants but checks the growth of the wild" (*PCD,* 817). Since, according to Plato at 605b, poetry or story-telling appeals to the inferior and irrational ele-

[39] Walter Benjamin, "Sokrates," in *BGS* 2, 1:131. For an overview of recent views on this subject, see E. E. Pender, "Spiritual Pregnancy in Plato's *Symposium,*" *The Classical Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1992): 72–86.

ments of the soul "by fashioning phantoms far removed from reality," the poet should not be admitted into a well-ordered state (*PCD,* 830).

How can these ideas be reconciled with the Plato of the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus,* the Plato who tells us that the intoxication involved in love and *eros* may assist one in achieving knowledge of the forms? In the *Phaedrus* Plato relegates the poet to the sixth position in the order of souls, behind philosophers, warriors, politicians, gymnasts, and prophets. But he also points out (at 245a of the *Phaedrus*) that the art of poetry emanates from a divine origin: the Muses. In this context, Plato argues that poetry is a kind of possession or inspiration that is to be received as a divine gift, and that is not to be confused with the conscious deployment of skill, art, or *technē*. Rather, poets compose in a state of possession or unconsciousness, a state that is a kind of madness inspired by the Muses. Why does Plato go out of his way to distinguish poetry from *technē?* In Plato *technē* refers to any conscious skill or area of professional competence: its opposites are *physis* (instinctive ability) and *tyche* (chance).[40] Clearly, Plato sees poetry as a kind of instinctive, non-rational gift. This means that it is not seen as a skill or practice involving the use of reason, and as a consequence it is ranked fairly low in his order of professions.

These ideas are more fully developed in *Ion,* in which Plato asks the following question: "Is the poet's skill genuine?" The answer to this question is no. According to Socrates, poets write in a state of madness or possession.[41] *Ion* takes as its subject Ion of Ephesus, a rhapsode renowned for his impassioned recitations of Homer's works. Rhapsodes were individuals who performed, acted, or chanted the works of particular poets, usually accompanied by music. Ion is very knowledgeable on the subject of Homer; however, he falls silent when asked about other poets. He therefore possesses no *technē* with respect to the general field of poetry. If he possessed *technē,* explains Socrates, he would be an expert on all poets, and not just Homer. The explanation for Ion's virtuosity with regard to the works of Homer, outlined at 533d–534a, is that he stands in a chain

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[40] F. E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms,* 190.

[41] Because of the connection made by Socrates between poetry and madness or possession, *Ion* is often interpreted as an explicit attack upon poetry. Julias A. Elias, for example, claims that Plato's aim in *Ion* is to demonstrate the "ignorance, incoherence, irresponsibility, and madness of the poets" (Julias A. Elias, *Plato's Defence of Poetry* [London: Macmillan, 1984], 5–6). More recently, Charles H. Kahn proposes that Plato's *Ion* is an explicit attack on poetry, the target of which is "not only the poets of contemporary Athens but their great predecessor, Homer himself" (Charles H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996], 107–8).

of divine inspiration, emerging from the divine, through the Muses, to poets and to interpreters of poets (rhapsodes, like Ion) and ending in the audiences who witness poetic performances. Within this chain, the poet is given a special status as a daemonic figure who mediates between the secular and the divine. At 534b, for example, the poet is described as a "light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him" (*PCD,* 220).

It is perhaps possible to view Plato's characterization of poets in *Ion* as positive, especially in comparison with the entirely negative view of poetry presented in *The Republic.* The mimetic artist in *The Republic* makes distorted copies of what he sees in the material world, whereas the daemonic poet described in *Ion* receives his information directly from the gods, via the Muses. Far from being a corrupter of souls, the poet in *Ion* is apparently holy. At the same time, however, Charles H. Kahn suggests that Socrates' references to the divine inspiration associated with poetry may well be ironic, suggesting that the view of poetry presented in this dialogue remains at best ambivalent.[42]

If indeed there is a significant disparity between the respective characterizations of poets in *The Republic* and *Ion,* how might such a disparity be explained? Chronologically, *Ion* precedes *The Republic,* so Plato either changed his mind about poetry in *The Republic,* or at least changed his characterization of poets to suit the context of his discussion. *The Republic* is, first and foremost, a work of political theory that responds to the question, "How should we live?" It is not primarily interested in the ontology of poetic inspiration, and its depiction of poets accords with its aim, which is to outline a rational way to construct an orderly *polis.* Even so, there is still a hint of uncertainty in Plato's condemnation of poetry in *The Republic;* when Socrates condemns poetry at 595b, his words falter on his lips, because he has always had an abiding love for Homer's works. Socrates' hesitation can perhaps be seen to spring from his — or indeed Plato's — awareness that the art of narrative is one of the chief means through which dialectical philosophy comes into being, while also being a rhetorical or persuasive mode upon which the philosopher can draw when "the logic of discourse is incapable of demonstration."[43]

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[42] Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue,* 105.

[43] Elias, *Plato's Defence of Poetry,* 2. In this connection, I am in agreement with Julius Elias's contention that "Plato is on the whole respectful of inspiration . . . The poets are mad, ecstatic, possessed, oracular and the like, and the source of their utterance is possibly divine; what they say cannot be rejected out of hand for that reason, and because Plato had his own uses, consonant with the religious practices of

This question is perhaps better answered by looking at Plato's works generally, and the way in which they function. Plato's deployment of myths (such as the "Myth of Er" or Aristophanes' account of love) to communicate his ideas, along with his predilection for metaphor — for example, the wings of the soul in the *Phaedrus* — have already been noted in this chapter. Such uses of myth and metaphor cannot be called dialectical in the traditional Platonic sense. Neither the "Myth of Er" nor Aristophanes' discourse on love could be said to be logically argued, but one nevertheless feels that these stories have philosophical importance for Plato. Plato's use of myth and metaphor points to a subject that Socrates addresses towards the end of *Ion:* namely, the nexus between poetry or poetic expression and philosophical thought.

In the closing stages of the dialogue, at 542a–b, Socrates presents Ion with a typical *aporia:* he can be either skilled or divine, but not both. In fact, Socrates seems to argue that one state precludes the other. Skill or *technē* implies consciousness and the use of *logos* — Socrates' dialectical ability is, for example, a kind of skill — while divine inspiration is associated with *mythos,* unconsciousness, instinct, and ignorance. Ion naturally chooses to be regarded as divine, and in so doing renounces any claims to possess skill or *technē*. But the following questions remain: can one be both skilled and divinely inspired? Can one deploy simultaneously the purportedly opposed faculties of *logos* and *mythos?* Socrates would seem to reply in the negative, yet there are other dialogues — *The Apology* and *Phaedrus,* for example — in which Socrates, through the assistance of his *daimonion* or divine sign, appears to possess both of these abilities simultaneously. Just as, when looking at the subject of *eros,* it becomes apparent that intoxication and desire can complement Socratic dialectics, so too it seems that the inspiration peculiar to poetry and *mythos* may operate as the other side of *technē* or dialectical skill. The connection between poetic inspiration and the daemonic can be outlined in the following way: the daemonic is intimately linked with states of possession — like poetic inspiration — that allow for a kind of mediation between the secular and the divine. But these modes of mediation are often non-rational, instinctive, or even unconscious, and must subsequently be analyzed in a rational framework if one is to understand their meaning. It is precisely this task that Socrates undertakes when speaking of his *daimonion*.

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his day, for the mysterious interventions of the gods . . . Plato was aware, surely from his own experience, of how mysterious is the process that prompts the juxtaposition of images, the organization of elements of experience into new structures, and the formulation of explanatory hypotheses to make sense of discrete data. His work is full of imagery of all kinds: similes, metaphors, analogies, isomorphisms" (212).

The Meaning of Socrates' *Daimonion*

The term *daimonion* is a contraction of the phenomenon that Socrates refers to as "the divine sign" at 496c in book 6 of *The Republic,* and at 272e in *Euthydemus.*[44] The *daimonion* appears to be a singular instance or effect of the general sensibility or conduit of the daemonic, a sensibility that mediates between the secular and the divine. The *daimonion* is not, in itself, a daemon in the same sense that *eros* is in the *Symposium,* nor is it even a specific entity with an independently functioning sentience. Indeed, scholars have puzzled over the grammatical status of the term. Kierkegaard writes that the term *daimonion* is "neither simply adjectival . . . nor is it substantive in the sense that it designates a special or unique being,"[45] while Vlastos views it as being "an adjective flanked by a semantic hole where a substantive has to be understood."[46] The *daimonion* is thus a kind of sign that exists on the boundary between adjectival and substantive signification, and as such it can only elliptically be referred to as an effect or phenomenon peculiar to the experience of Socrates, as opposed to an actual, objective thing.

The best source of information on the *daimonion* exists in *The Apology,* in which Socrates responds to the accusation of Meletus that he does not recognize the gods of the state but instead believes in divinities of his own making. At 31c–d, Socrates defines his divinity in the following way:

> You have often heard me say before on many occasions . . . that I am subject to a divine or supernatural experience [*daimonion*], which Meletus saw fit to travesty in his indictment. It began in my early childhood — a sort of voice which comes to me, and when it comes it always dissuades me from what I am proposing to do, and never urges me on. (*PCD,* 17)

We will return to the significance of this passage within *The Apology* later. At this point it is merely necessary to observe that the notion of a divine voice or sign that dissuades Socrates from particular courses of action is peculiar to Plato's representation of Socrates. Xenophon refers to Socrates' *daimonion* as something that prescribes definitive courses of action, and that also gives advice, via Socrates, to third parties in a role similar to

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[44] Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher,* 280. Vlastos offers a comprehensive discussion of the *daimonion* at 280–87.

[45] Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony,* 158.

[46] Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher,* 280.

that of the oracle at Delphi.[47] Despite the fact that we are concerned here only with Plato's version of Socrates, the distinction between a purely negative divine sign (as in Plato) and a positive, prescriptive divine voice (Xenophon) can help to clarify the status of the *daimonion*. My first reference in this chapter to the *daimonion* was from the *Phaedrus,* in the section following Socrates' first speech on the subject of love. After having, in this first speech, agreed with Lysias's proposition that non-lovers are preferable to lovers, Socrates is (at 242b–c) restrained or dissuaded from leaving the matter to rest by

> my familiar divine sign [*daimonion*] — which always checks me when on the point of doing something or other — and all at once I seemed to hear a voice, forbidding me to leave the spot until I had made atonement for some offense to heaven. Now, you must know, I am a seer — not a very good one, it's true, but, like a poor scholar, good enough for my own purposes — hence I understand already well enough what my offense was. The fact is, you know, Phaedrus, the mind itself has a kind of divining power, for I felt disturbed some while ago while I was delivering that speech. (*PCD,* 489)

In this passage, Socrates fears that he has not done justice to the subject of love, and as a result of his presentiment, he proceeds to give an encomium to lovers. What does the *daimonion* actually do in this instance? First, it should be observed that it is associated with a kind of divination or prophecy that Socrates suggests is bad, even amateurish, but that is evidently sufficient for his purposes. Its limitations may be attributed to its inherent negativity; note that the *daimonion* does not actually tell Socrates that he is guilty of impiety — Socrates merely thinks that this is the case after it has forbidden or dissuaded him from leaving the subject of love altogether. In other words, the appearance or presence of the *daimonion* alerts Socrates to something, a something that he subsequently must interpret on his own terms by exposing it to rational investigation. In this case, Socrates is induced by the *daimonion* to recognize the limitations of his first speech on love, but the recognition itself is performed by Socrates, and not the *daimonion*.[48]

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[47] See: Xenophon, *Memorabilia,* trans. Amy L. Bonnette (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1994), (1.1, 4–5), 2; Xenophon, *Conversations of Socrates,* ed. and trans. Hugh Tredennick and Robin Waterfield (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 41–44.

[48] This is the view of G. R. F. Ferrari in *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's* Phaedrus (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 116. Ferrari's view of the *daimonion* is supported by an earlier study by Edward G. Ballard entitled *Socratic*

The *daimonion* is thus, in this context, a kind of supernatural or divine hint that suggests to Socrates that something is amiss in his reasoning. In specifically associating the *daimonion* with the non-rational mantic arts of divination and prophecy, Socrates implies that it corresponds with an extra-rational or prophetic faculty within his soul. This, however, does not preclude the *daimonion* from being of assistance within the sphere of rational argumentation.[49] On the contrary, it comes in to assist him precisely when his conscious, rational resources have run dry or led him into error. In this way, the *daimonion* is, according Paul Friedländer, central to Socrates' "Erziehungswerk" in that it prevents education from becoming a purely rational pursuit.[50] To prefer rational non-lovers over irrational lovers would, of course, make perfect sense to the driest of logicians, but Socrates the educator is also an exponent of *eros,* and *eros* is, according to Diotima in the *Symposium,* a great daemon who assists one to know the forms. In the *Phaedrus,* it is also apparent that the *daimonion* corresponds with a form of inspiration that functions as the opposite pole of dialectical reasoning, and as such it can only be of use when it is analyzed retrospectively in a rational framework.[51]

At this point it is pertinent to return to the question that Plato leaves hanging at the conclusion of *Ion:* can one be both skilled — meaning, in this case, endowed with dialectical *technē* — while at the same time being divinely inspired? The answer is yes, if you are Socrates. The distinction between the divine inspiration of the poet discussed in *Ion* and the *daimonion* of Socrates lies in the fact that while, according to Plato, poets compose in a state of complete possession that prevents them from having any rational insight into their works even after they have been created, Socrates is able to analyze the *daimonion* after the fact and thereby gain some understanding of its meaning within the context of its appearance. In *The Apology,* Socrates informs us that poets, the creators of *mythoi* (narratives or stories), are by far the worst interpreters of their own compositions, and this is presumably because they are subject to what Ronna

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Ignorance: An Essay on Platonic Self-Knowledge (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 164.

[49] According to John Sallis, the *daimonion* of Socrates assists the operations of *logos* by outlining its limits. In this connection, Sallis observes that Socrates himself is "not a daimon, but rather a lover of *logos* who is subject to a daimon; and Socrates' daimon serves to restrain him within the limits appropriate to a man who seeks to mediate between god and man." See John Sallis, *Being and Logos: The Way of Platonic Dialogue* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1975), 241.

[50] Friedländer, *Platon,* 1:42.

[51] Burger, *Plato's* Phaedrus, 49.

Burger calls the "tragic flaw of possession," as a result of which he who is possessed has little or no understanding of the products that flow from his possession.[52] Socrates' *daimonion,* while corresponding with a kind of divine inspiration, if not possession, appears to be exempt from this tragic flaw, as he is always able to embrace its suggestions and apply them in an argumentative or dialectical context. This is clearly the case in the section of the *Phaedrus* mentioned above, where the *daimonion* helps Socrates to understand that he has given a one-sided — and therefore, in Socratic terms, erroneous — oration on the subject of love.

The role of the *daimonion* as an extra-rational sign that can be used as an aid to dialectical argumentation becomes clearer still when its appearance in *The Apology* is examined. At 31c–32a, Socrates tells of how he came to be a philosopher. On visiting Delphi, Socrates' friend Chaerephon is told by the oracle that Socrates is the wisest of all men. Socrates then remarks that his wisdom consists in his acknowledgement that he does not know anything, which he sees as being slightly more wise than the mistaken belief that one has positive or complete knowledge. The decree of the Delphic oracle pertaining to Socrates, combined with Socrates' own understanding of his wisdom as a purely negative phenomenon — that is, as the recognition of his ignorance — enables him to discover his role in life, which is to refute false claims to wisdom made by others (*Apology,* 23b).

The inherent negativity of Socrates' elenctic method resonates with my earlier discussion of Platonic longing. The philosopher — who is, according to Socrates, a lover of wisdom — can never possess that which he longs for, as Socrates informs us that God alone is wise. Given that Socrates is not a god, and given that, by his own admission, his knowledge is human and not superhuman (*Apology,* 20d), his role is simply to refute the misplaced presumption of wisdom in those who claim to be wise. Here it becomes necessary to determine exactly what Socrates means when he criticizes the putative wisdom of others. According to Vlastos, the misapprehension of wisdom that Socrates always seeks to refute is a wisdom that involves "the conviction that any further investigation of its truth would be superfluous," which is to say, wisdom as completeness and closure, or as absolute epistemological certainty.[53]

Although *The Apology* belongs to the earliest phase of Plato's dialogues, a period in which there is no evidence to suggest that the views of

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[52] Burger, *Plato's* Phaedrus, 49.

[53] This is an argument which Vlastos outlines in "The Paradox of Socrates," in *The Philosophy of Socrates* (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), 6–9, and then develops further in *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher,* 3–4.

Socrates are in accordance with the fully blown metaphysical theories of Plato's middle-period dialogues — *The Republic, Phaedrus,* and the *Symposium,* for example — there is nevertheless a sense in which Socrates' refutation of all wisdom can be seen to accord with the theory of the forms. As we saw earlier, in the discussion of the forms within the context of Plato's notion of *anamnesis,* the forms are — in terms of human experience — like a distant, almost mythological beyond towards which the philosopher can only travel. While traveling the philosopher must keep in mind the negative knowledge that any sense of arrival, completeness, or plenitude with regard to the forms will always be a kind of illusion that requires dialectical refutation. Existing outside time and space, and therefore beyond the boundary of human experience, the forms comprise a kind of consummate negativity. This modern interpretation of Plato's metaphysics, offered by Kierkegaard and Lukács, yields two direct consequences for the definition of human knowledge. First, all human knowledge can ever hope to be is an acceptance of the incompleteness or negativity of all epistemology. This is due to the fact that the only absolutes in Plato's metaphysics are the forms — and these absolutes can only be known negatively, in terms of their not being of the human world. This is why Socrates states, with pride, that he knows nothing. The second consequence of Plato's theory of the forms is that any belief in human knowledge as a kind of completeness must necessarily involve a kind of willful ignorance: a dark side that remains veiled in order to maintain the illusion of absolute wisdom.

At this juncture, it is necessary to reintroduce Socrates' *daimonion* by investigating its epistemological function in *The Apology.* At 31d–e, Socrates states:

> [The *daimonion*] debars me from entering public life, and a very good thing too, in my opinion, because you may be quite sure, gentlemen, that if I had tried long ago to engage in politics, I should long ago have lost my life, without doing any good either to you or myself. (*PCD,* 17)

We should initially note that, as is the case when the *daimonion* appears in the *Phaedrus,* its role is merely to assist Socrates in making a rational decision. Socrates surmises that the *daimonion* was right in opposing his participation in politics, but the decision to eschew direct political action itself is made by Socrates alone, as a result of his interpretation of the *daimonion*'s warning or opposition.[54] Now that we have established that

[54] Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher,* 283. Vlastos's view is supported, more recently, by Mark L. McPherran. McPherran argues that Socrates is "no

the *daimonion* is a sign that must be interpreted subsequently through the deployment of Socrates' dialectical *technē,* we need to ask two questions. First, why does the *daimonion* oppose his involvement in politics, and second, why is the *daimonion* only a sign of opposition or dissuasion *per se*? Very famous answers to both of these questions are offered by Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Irony,* where he writes:

> In the passage in the *Apology* where Socrates, in order to defend himself against Meletus's accusation, refers to this *daimonion,* it is clear that he has become aware of how significant it is that the *daimonion* merely warned. On this basis, he explains the remarkable circumstance that he, who privately was always ready to give advice . . . was never involved in matters of the state. But this is, as it were, the visible disclosure of the negative relation of the *daimonion* to Socrates, because in turn this had the express effect of making him relate negatively to actuality or, in the Greek sense, to the state. If the *daimonion* had been prompting as well, then precisely thereby he would have been qualified to be involved with actuality. This is essentially linked to the question: Was Socrates, as his accusers claimed, in conflict with the state religion by the assumption of this *daimonion*? Obviously he was. For one thing, it was an entirely polemic relation to the Greek state religion to substitute something completely abstract for the concrete individuality of the gods. For another, it was a polemical relation to the state religion to substitute a silence in which a warning voice was audible only on occasion, a voice that (and this about the most fundamental polemic) never had a thing to do with the substantial interests of political life, never said a word about them, but dealt only with Socrates' and at most his friends' completely private and particular affairs.[55]

Kierkegaard's view is that the purely negative character of the *daimonion* — that is, its confinement to the role of warning and dissuasion, its refusal to give positive injunctions — effectively precluded Socrates from extending its influence into the public sphere. But Kierkegaard also goes further than this, as he seems to imply that this mark of negativity is not just peculiar to the *daimonion,* and may in fact apply to the eminently human knowledge of Socrates in general. If this is Kierkegaard's contention, then he appears to be saying that Socrates refused to enter into poli-

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run-of-the-mill diviner" in that he "takes it to be obligatory to subject the occurrences of the *daimonio*n or other such signs to rational conformation (and perhaps interpretation) wherever possible." See Mark L. McPherran, *The Religion of Socrates* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996), 187.

[55] Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony,* 160.

tics precisely because of his view that human knowledge itself can only be of a negative and therefore uncertain or inconclusive character, and that for this very reason, it must remain within the rarefied realm of abstraction, never entering into what Kierkegaard calls actuality.

Does this mean that there is no sense of praxis whatsoever in Plato's philosophy? The answer to this question is no, as negative or elenctic knowledge can function as a critique of claims to positive knowledge. This kind of critique can, moreover, be of practical, political significance. Its aim is to warn political leaders against the hubris of believing that they are absolutely right — that their knowledge is superhuman and not human — in any given situation. What, then, does the *daimonion* warn against when it appears to Socrates within a political context? The *daimonion* seems to voice its opposition at the precise moment in which abstract knowledge or wisdom attempts to translate itself into concrete political action. Its warning would therefore appear to express the notion that all abstract ideas must undergo a process of compromise when they are subjected to the transition from abstraction into concrete actuality. This is not to suggest that the philosopher should eschew politics *per se:* he should, like Socrates, act politically, but his political role should always be negative, the role of elenchus or critique.

The *Daimonion* and Subjectivity

Putting the question of politics aside, Kierkegaard's comments on Socrates' *daimonion* have an even greater importance with respect to the general theme of the daemonic as a conduit that mediates between the individual and the divine. This is because his critique of Socrates' *daimonion* demonstrates that it may follow a movement from the public into the private, and — even more crucially — a movement from objectivity into subjectivity. Kierkegaard expressly points out that the "most fundamental polemic" that follows from Socrates' *daimonion* lies in the fact that it "never had a thing to do with the substantial interests of political life," but instead concerned itself with the sectional, personal interests of Socrates and his followers.

In order to communicate the full import of Kierkegaard's contention, it is necessary to say a few brief words about ancient Greek culture. As we saw earlier, in the discussion of individual fate in the thought of Empedocles and in Plato's "Myth of Er," the individual in ancient Greece was to a large degree public and objective rather than private and subjective. In the ancient Greek *polis,* for example, the whole identity of an individual was inextricably bound up with the extent to which he was seen to participate in public debate and community discussion. Similarly, as we saw in *Ion,* the ancient Greek conception of the poet as a kind of medium

who is subject to the influence of external, numinous forces reflects the extent to which individual subjectivity was seen to have little, perhaps even nothing, to do with artistic creation. Taking these factors into account, the *daimonion* of Socrates, with its apparent emphasis on subjectivity, appears to be a curious aberration within the context of ancient Greek culture. The *daimonion* appears only to Socrates and its suggestions are, to a large extent, of consequence to him alone.

Does the *daimonion* announce the birth of modern subjectivity? To maintain such a proposition would of course be going much too far. Although the *daimonion* visits Socrates alone, it still appears to come from a divine source outside him, and we are therefore not free to interpret it as a kind of subjective apparition or auditory hallucination in the same way that Shakespeare scholars may, for example, interpret the ghost of Old Hamlet. What can be said, however, is that Socrates' *daimonion* returns to philosophy as a central theme at precisely the time (roughly 1760–1850) in which modern ideas about subjectivity were being developed. As will become apparent in chapter 2, Kierkegaard — who wrote *The Concept of Irony* between 1838 and 1840 — merely represents the tail-end of a phenomenon that began in Germany in the work of figures like Hamann, Herder, and of course, Goethe.

Aristotle: *Ousia*, *Dunamis*, and *Entelecheia*

The majority of the references made by Aristotle to daemons and things daemonic occur within the context of his discussions of the life of Socrates. In the *Rhetoric,* at 1398a 15, and again at 1429a 5, Aristotle refers to the mode of argumentation used by Socrates in *The Apology* in order to refute the charge that he (Socrates) does not believe in the gods. From Socrates' assertion of the existence of his *daimonion* as the work of a god, it is inferred that Socrates does indeed believe in the gods of the state. The point made by Aristotle in this case relates to Socrates' rhetorical technique. It is not a speculation on the truth or ontological status of the *daimonion* itself.

Aristotle's starting point is always what he calls substance (*ousia*). In the *Categories,* he argues that existing things or beings can be divided into several distinct categories, including, for example, substance, quantity, quality, and relation. Of these, substance (*ousia*) is the most fundamental, since primary substances (unlike quantities, qualities, and relations) can

neither inhere in, nor be said of, other beings or subjects (2a 10).[56] So, for example, while the qualities "intelligent" and "ugly" are present in Socrates, the individual man "Socrates" is a primary substance or subject that cannot meaningfully be predicated of another entity. Hence, while Homer may be said to be "brilliant," "imaginative," "ugly," or "a poet," it makes no sense to say that he is "Socrates." By making substance the privileged category of philosophical investigation (*Categories* 2a 35–2b 7), Aristotle argues — in contradistinction to Plato — that it is incorrect to suggest that the essence or form of a thing can be located outside it, in a transcendent realm of Being, and that material things accordingly "participate" in such essences (*Metaphysics,* 991a 12–15). For Aristotle, metaphysics is the study of being as substance, and this means that he looks for that which is primary in things. Thus, unlike the material world of Plato, the Aristotelian world is not fallen and secondary.

In the *Categories,* Aristotle offers a definition of primary substances, using the "neither inhering in, nor said of a subject" criterion. In the *Metaphysics,* he returns to this issue by seeking to redefine positively what constitutes substance.[57] Here Aristotle is concerned with those elements of a thing that persist through change; for example, although Socrates may at one time be pale and then (perhaps after sun-bathing) become dark, there must be some continuous, essential elements that see him belong to the species "man," or that perhaps also make him this particular man, "Socrates."[58] In book V of the *Metaphysics,* Aristotle goes on to consider substance in relation to the concepts of matter and form, suggesting that the form of a thing may constitute its substance. Here, at 1017b 15–20, substance refers to

> that which, being present in such things as are not predicated of a subject, is the cause of their being, as the soul is of the being of animals . . . [and] . . . the parts which are present in such things, limiting them and marking them as individuals, and by whose destruction the whole is destroyed. (*CWA* 2:1606–7)

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[56] S. Marc Cohen, "Aristotle's Metaphysics," in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy Online,* http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/ (accessed December 1, 2004).

[57] Cohen, "Aristotle's Metaphysics."

[58] There is, in this connection, considerable controversy as to whether the form that constitutes the "substance" of a thing in Aristotle refers to its species (i.e., something that explains why Socrates is a man) or to its individual particularity (i.e., something that explains why Socrates is this *particular* man). See J. Driscoll, "*Eidê* in Aristotle's Earlier and Later Theories of Substance," in *Studies in Aristotle,* ed. D. J. O'Meara (Washington, DC: Catholic UP, 1981), 129–59.

In this passage, Aristotle begins to associate the notion of substance with the soul. The soul is seen by Aristotle as being the essence of the living being — at once its efficient, formal, and final cause — and the driving force behind its development and unfolding.[59] Aristotle elaborates upon these matters at some length in another text, *De Anima* (On the Soul), at 412b 3–8:

> If, then, we have to give a general formula applicable to all kinds of soul, we must describe it as an actuality [*entelecheia*] of the first kind of a natural organized body. That is why we can dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and body are one: it is as though we were to ask whether the wax and its shape are one, or generally the matter of a thing and that of which it is the matter. (*CWA* 1:657)

Here Aristotle contradicts the Homeric conception of the soul as "breath" or "breath of life" — a notion that sees the soul as being a kind of airy metaphysical essence that departs the physical body after death and is capable of inhabiting other bodies.[60] Aristotle's view that the soul is at one with the body is also fundamentally at odds with Plato's doctrine of the transmigration of souls, a doctrine dependent upon a conception of the soul as an entity that is entirely separable from matter.[61] Yet Aristotle does go on to suggest (at 413a 6) that some parts of the soul may be separable, a suggestion that will be explored shortly in relation to his understanding of the human intellect or reason. For now, it is important to note that a crucial term is also deployed in this passage: *entelecheia* (*entelechy* in English, and *Entelechie* in German). Arising out of a combination of three words — *en* (meaning "in"), *tel* (coming from *telos* meaning "end," "target," or "goal"), and *echeia* (meaning "to have") — *entelecheia* (often interchanged with *energeia*) is usually translated as "actuality," and is used by Aristotle in combination with *dunamis* (potentiality).[62]

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[59] Michael Frede, "On Aristotle's Conception of the Soul," in *Essays on Aristotle's* De Anima, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), 93–106.

[60] See B. Mojsisch, U. R. Jeck, and O. Pluta, "Seele," in *HWP* 9:1. The authors comment that, for Homer, *Seele* constitutes the "Lebensodem, der durch den Mund oder die Wunde den Sterbenden verläßt."

[61] With regard to the separateness of the soul, Michael Frede observes, "Aristotle rejects the notion of the soul as a distinct entity" (Frede, "On Aristotle's Conception of the Soul," 103).

[62] W. Franzen, K. Georgulis, and H. M. Nobis, "Entelechie," in *HWP* 2:506–9.

Dunamis refers to a thing's power or potentiality to change into a more completed state, into a completed actuality or *entelecheia*.[63] For example, with reference to non-living matter, a statue may be seen as the *entelecheia* (actuality, or completed actuality) of a block of marble. In the above passage from *De Anima,* however, it is clear that Aristotle also uses *entelecheia* in relation to organic beings. Thus, while with reference to an instance of inorganic matter like a block of marble it may well be the case that potentiality (*dunamis*) precedes actuality (*entelecheia*), this temporal order does not necessarily hold with respect to living beings.[64] In fact, etymologically speaking, the presence of the term *telos* (goal) within *entelecheia* may suggest that some beings (that is, organic beings) are akin to teleological processes that move toward biologically predetermined goals, since, when translated literally according to its different components, *entelecheia* may be rendered as "having the end within,"[65] or as Aristotle puts it at 1050a 9–17 of the *Metaphysics:* "the actuality is the end, and it is for the sake of this that potentiality is acquired" (*CWA* 2:1658).

The relationship between *dunamis* and *entelecheia* in Aristotle is extraordinarily complex, and remains subject to an on-going scholarly debate that cannot be entered into, let alone resolved, here.[66] The importance of the term *entelecheia* for this study lies in its relevance for Goethe's use of the concept *Entelechie* (entelechy) in relation to the daemonic, most notably in the conversation with Eckermann dated 11 March 1828 (*FA* 2,12:656). The article on "Entelechie" written by W. Franzen, K. Georgulis, and H. M. Nobis that appears in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* shows that from the middle ages onwards this term gradually became separated from its original Aristotelian association with *dunamis* and the analysis of change. In fact, by the early modern period, the term came to designate, in polemical opposition to purely mechanistic explanations of life, an indwelling teleological orientation possessed by living organisms that determines their development. This tendency also expresses itself in Leibniz, who famously calls his monads entelechies,[67]

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[63] G. Plamböck, "Dynamis," in *HWP* 2:303–4.

[64] Here I am paraphrasing Cohen.

[65] This translation is offered by George A. Blair in Energeia *and* Entelecheia: *"Act" in Aristotle* (Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1992), 78–82.

[66] For a more detailed discussion of these issues, see Blair, Energeia *and* Entelecheia: *"Act" in Aristotle.*

[67] See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Monadology,* trans. Nicholas Rescher (Pittsburgh, PA: U of Pittsburgh P, 1991), §18, 87.

and who found in the doctrine of preformation support for his theory that monads are like the souls of individual organisms — souls that regulate and predetermine the organism's development.[68] According to H. M. Nobis, Henri Lichtenberger, and Dietrich Mahnke,[69] it was due to the influence of Leibniz's *Monadology* (a text that will briefly be considered in chapter 2) that Goethe came to associate the concept of the daemonic with the term *Entelechie,* a term that first appears in Aristotle's notion of *entelecheia*.

Intellect (*Nous*) in Aristotle

Although Aristotle's notion of *entelecheia* exerted, via Leibniz's *Monadology,* an indirect influence upon Goethe's conception of the daemonic, there is at the same time absolutely no direct connection between Aristotle's concept of *entelecheia* and the Platonic notion of the daemon. There is, however, another route via which Aristotle might be seen to have influenced the Stoic and Neo-Platonic discussions of the daemonic to be considered later in this chapter. This possible influence can be seen in Aristotle's notion of *nous* (intellect or reason), which he describes as a divine or god-like faculty immanent in man. In the *De Anima,* Aristotle defines the soul as something that displays perceptive and intellectual faculties. At 413b 25–27, he then raises the question as to whether the intellectual faculties of the soul exist within, or separately from, the organism:

> We have no evidence as yet about thought or the power of reflection; it seems to be a different kind of soul, differing as what is eternal from what is perishable; it alone is capable of being separated. (*CWA* 1:658–59)

These sentiments are echoed in *De Generatione Animalium* (Generation of Animals) at 736b, where Aristotle suggests that *nous* emanates from a source outside the soul that is separate from the soul's bodily faculties or *energeia*.

Despite these statements, the ontological status of *nous* in Aristotle is a complicated matter that has fueled scholarly debate over decades.[70]

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[68] Franzen, *HWP* 2:508.

[69] Nobis in Franzen, *HWP* 2:508; Mahnke, *Leibniz und Goethe: Die Harmonie ihrer Weltansichten* (Erfurt: Kurt Stenger, 1924), 14; Lichtenberger, "Le démonique chez Goethe," *Revue de l'Allemagne* 6 (1932): 149–62; here, 149–50.

[70] For a relatively recent survey of the differing scholarly positions in this debate, see Michael V. Wedin, "Tracking Aristotle's *Nous,*" in *Aristotle's* De Anima *in Focus,* ed. Michael Durrant (London: Routledge, 1993), 128–59.

These complications have emerged from section III.5 of the *De Anima,* in which Aristotle distinguishes between two varieties of *nous:* the passive (*nous pathetikos*) and the active, called *nous poietikos* by Aristotle's successors.[71] At *De Anima* 430a 10–25, Aristotle describes *nous pathetikos* as the "matter" of the intellect, which passively receives impressions from the external world, and is accordingly inseparable from the body and "perishable" (*CWA* 1:684). On the other hand, *nous poietikos* is the active and efficient cause of all thinking,[72] a cause that is, in the words of Aristotle at 430a 18, "separable, impassible, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity" (*CWA* 1:684). While Aristotle does not elaborate elsewhere upon the concept of *nous poietikos* as it appears in *De Anima* III.5, this passage went on to exert a profound influence upon some of his commentators. A case in point is the peripatetic philosopher and commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias (born ca. 200 C.E.), who compares Aristotle's *nous poietikos* with the First Mover of the *Metaphysics,* thereby associating this Aristotelian version of *nous* with God.[73]

Notwithstanding the complications arising from *De Anima* III.5, I am inclined to agree with Arthur Hyman's view that, in relation to the topic of *nous,* Aristotle seems to display an enduring affinity with the thought of Plato.[74] In this respect, Aristotle's discussions of *nous* may have been influenced by Plato's tripartite structure of the soul, outlined at 588c–e of *The Republic* and elsewhere,[75] in which the intellect or reason stands at the top of the soul's structure, and is required to regulate the baser human faculties. This is made clear at 30b in the *Timaeus,* where we are told of how God: "when he was framing the universe . . . put intelligence [*nous*] in soul, and soul in body, that he might be the creator of a work which was by nature fairest and best" (*PCD,* 1163).

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[71] This is the view of Jonathan Barnes in his essay, "Aristotle's Concept of Mind," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 72 (1971/72): 101–14; see page 111.

[72] This interpretation of *De Anima* III.5 is supported by Jonathan Barnes and Richard Sorabji. See Barnes, "Aristotle's Concept of Mind," 111; Richard Sorabji, "Myths About Non-Propositional Thought," in *Language and Logos: Studies in Ancient Greek Philosophy Presented to G. E. L. Owen,* ed. Malcolm Schofield and Martha C. Nussbaum (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982), 295–314.

[73] Alexander's interpretation of *De Anima* III.5 is discussed by Sorabji on page 305 of his "Myths About Non-Propositional Thought." For a further discussion of Alexander's position on *nous* in Aristotle, see the entry on *nous* in Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms,* 132–39; in particular, 135–36.

[74] Arthur Hyman, "Aristotle's Theory of the Intellect and Its Interpretation by Averroes," in O'Meara, *Studies in Aristotle,* 161–91. See, in particular, 165–66.

[75] See, for example, *The Republic,* 435e–444e, and *Phaedrus* 246a–b, 253c–255b.

But how close is Aristotle's concept of *nous poietikos* to the Platonic daemon? In order to answer this question we need to look back to another section of the *Timaeus* — section 90a–d — in which the daemon is also seen as a divine principle, planted in man by God, which resides at the top of the soul:

> We should consider that God gave the sovereign part of the human soul to be the divinity [*daimon*] of each one, being that part which, as we say, dwells at the top of the body . . . [and] . . . raises us from earth to our kindred who are in heaven . . . he who has been earnest in the love of knowledge and of true wisdom, and has exercised his intellect more than any other part of him, must have thoughts immortal and divine, if he attain truth, and in so far as human nature is capable of sharing in immortality, he must be altogether immortal, and since he is cherishing the divine power and has the divinity [*daimon*] within him in perfect order, he will be singularly happy. (*PCD,* 1209)

Plato's argument is that the daemon, having been planted in the soul by the divine, is the most god-like human faculty. The daemon can also, says Plato, be looked after or strengthened by devotion to learning and "thoughts immortal and divine." Another feature of this daemon is its separation from the bodily aspects of the soul, from corporeal lusts, and from mortal opinion. But the crucial characteristic of the Platonic daemon of *Timaeus* 90a–d is that of immanence. Although the source of this daemon is divine and external, it is nevertheless contained within the human soul. In fact, this particular instance of the Platonic daemon seems to be very far indeed from the unconscious, non-rational, or mantic states of intoxication seen in the *Symposium, Phaedrus,* and *Ion*. In short, this Platonic daemon of *Timaeus* 90a–d and Aristotle's notion of *nous poietikos* outlined in the *De Anima* appear to correspond with the human faculties of reason and rationality, faculties that originate from, and help the individual to know, the divine, while at the same time remaining at least partially immanent in the human soul.[76] It is, moreover, arguably these features of the daemon that carry over into the Stoic and Neo-Platonic interpretations of the term, which seem to be a synthesis of Platonic and Aristotelian perspectives.

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[76] Here I am paraphrasing the view of Stephen R. L. Clark in his essay, "Reason as *Daimon,*" in *The Person and the Human Mind,* ed. Christopher Gill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), 187–206. See in particular page 193.

The Daemon in Stoicism and Neo-Platonism: Readings of *Timaeus* 90a–d

Plato's discussion of the daemon at 90a–d of the *Timaeus* seems to have exerted more influence upon subsequent interpretations of the term than any of his other sources. The chief consequence of this phenomenon has been that, given the association of the daemon with *nous* in *Timaeus* 90a–d, most Stoic and Neo-Platonic interpreters of the term seem to have followed Plato's example in regarding the daemon as a kind of indwelling intellect or rationality. These interpretations exist in stark contrast to the mantic, erotic, poetic, and mythological modes of the daemonic outlined by Plato in the *Symposium, Phaedrus,* and *Ion*. A possible reason for this privileging of *Timaeus* 90a–d over the myriad of other, comparatively non-rational, daemonic sources within the Platonic corpus may be that this particular representation of the daemon as indwelling and rational is most in accord with Aristotle's emphasis upon *nous* or reason.

In considering the concept of the daemon in Stoicism, it is necessary first of all to note that the Stoics are materialists, who, like the Epicureans but in contradistinction to Plato, see the divine as being both material and immanent.[77] This feature of Stoicism can be found in one of the earliest and most prominent Stoic treatments of *Timaeus* 90a–d, in the works of Posidonius (ca. 130–50 B.C.E.). Posidonius describes the daemon as an indwelling fragment or portion of the "One." The "One" is essentially concomitant with an immanent God: it is the underlying principle from which all phenomena emanate, while also being a rational force or *logos* that regulates and directs the universe. As a fragment of the One, the daemon is thus seen as the seat of god-like rationality and goodness within the soul, and accordingly Posidonius argues that one should rigorously follow the dictates of one's daemon, since "not to follow in everything the daimon in oneself, which is akin and has a similar nature to the one which governs the whole universe . . . [is to] . . . be swept along with what is worse and beastlike.[78]

In his analysis of fragment 187, I. G. Kidd suggests that Posidonius views the daemon as being an internal faculty which, when followed, places the soul in tune with the immanent order and rationality of the

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[77] Keimpe Algra, "Stoic Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics,* ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 166–70.

[78] Posidonius, *Posidonius,* ed. and trans. L. Edelstein and I. G. Kidd, 3 vols., vol. 2, bk. 2, *The Commentary, Fragments 150–293* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), 675.

universe. Kidd also observes that it "seems highly probable" that Posidonius had *Timaeus* 90a–d in mind during the composition of fragment 187.[79] Posidonius places the daemon in direct opposition to the non-rational or beastlike elements of the soul, arguing that following one's daemon is the key to living a rational, ordered, and happy life. Once again, this treatment of the daemon appears to be in direct opposition to Plato's other representations of the daemonic as the non-rational or mantic side of the soul.

A similar characterization of the daemon appears in the *Meditations* of another Stoic: Marcus Aurelius (ca. 121–180 C.E.). In book 5, section 27 of the *Meditations,* the daemon is characterized in a fashion that is reminiscent both of *Timaeus* 90a–d and of Posidonius, being seen as a fragment of an immanent divinity that has been planted — in this case by Zeus — in man.[80] As is the case in Posidonius's treatment, the daemon is the principle of reason that enables men to master their passions and leads them to happiness or *eudaimonia*. The development of the daemon that occurs in Marcus Aurelius is alluded to by A. S. L. Farquarson, who refers to the daemon as a genius:

> The old Roman belief was that the genius is the numen residing in a man, that is, the man's own power. The Greek belief in the *δαίμων* gave the Romans the novel idea of an indwelling deity coming from outside, and their native belief in genius and numen made it easier for them to use *δαίμων* in the double sense which we meet in Stoic literature. . . . The doctrine in M. [Marcus Aurelius], however obscure, affords a kind of compromise between reliance upon the higher or idealized self, which is the spur to individual moral progress, and the assurance of divine grace and protection, the conviction of the religious consciousness.[81]

The crucial point to be grasped from Farquarson's observations is that the Romans saw the daemon as "the man's own power." This is clearly a development of Plato's notions about mantic inspiration, as Plato always maintained the view — a view expressed in *Ion* and *Phaedrus,* for example — that divine inspiration is completely beyond the control and understanding of those who are subject to it. Consequently, there is no sense in which the Platonic version of the daemon could be described as belonging to men, as it always remained a property of the gods to be bestowed

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[79] Posidonius, *The Commentary,* 676–77.

[80] Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus,* ed. and trans. A. S. L. Farquarson, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1944), 1:91–93.

[81] Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations,* 2:529.

upon them as a gift. There is, however, one exception to this rule, and it is arguably this exception that influences Marcus Aurelius's interpretation of the daemon: Socrates.

Earlier in this chapter I argued that Socrates' *daimonion,* despite its inherent negativity, is in one sense under his control, and this is because he is able to subject it to rational analysis and interpretation. The *daimonion* is Socrates' own power in the sense that he alone can understand it and relate its dissuasions to concrete events in his life. In Socrates' *daimonion* we can see an early blurring between the ancient notion of genius as an external, transcendent, and divine power or guardian spirit, and a more modern conception of genius as immanent rationality or subjective creativity. Like the *daimonion* of Socrates, Marcus Aurelius's daemon is also both internal (as the higher self) and external (as divine grace). But the overall impression that it leaves upon the reader is that of a rational faculty that is immanent in man.

Compared to the depictions of the daemon in Stoic literature, Neo-Platonic discussions of the Socratic *daimonion* in particular, and the notion of the daemon in general, are far more complex and ambivalent. An interesting case in point is the essay "On Socrates' Personal Deity" written by Plutarch (ca. 46–120 C.E.). At 589b–c, Plutarch offers what seems to be a standard reading of *Timaeus* 90a–d,[82] in which the *daimonion* is described as a kind of higher intelligence or "more divine mind which impinges on . . . [the rational mind] from elsewhere by making the kind of contact which is as natural between rational minds as reflection is to light."[83] Plutarch's discussion of the *daimonion* is noteworthy because of the physical, almost organic, imagery that it employs. He variously likens the *daimonion* to a "weight" that pushes "a weighty mind towards action" (321, l. 581a), to "rudders which make huge ships change direction" (337, ll. 588–89), and to a "vibration in the intellective faculty" (337, l. 589a). All of these explanations involve a physicality and substantiality that is absent in Plato's treatment of the *daimonion,* and which therefore gives us the impression of a phenomenon that is perhaps both immanent and transcendent.

The Neo-Platonic thinker Plotinus (204–269 C.E.) also addresses the Platonic daemon of *Timaeus* 90a–d in a section of the *Enneads* entitled "Our Tutelary Spirit." At III.4.5 of the *Enneads,* Plotinus observes:

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[82] Plutarch. *Essays,* trans. Robin Waterfield (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992). Here I am paraphrasing the view of Ian Kidd in his introduction to the essay, in which he states that "Plato even once (*Tim.* 90a) applied the term to our rational directing capacity situated at the top of our body" (305).

[83] Plutarch, *Essays,* 338.

> The *Timaeus* indicates the relation of this guiding spirit [*daimon*] to ourselves: it is not entirely outside of ourselves; is not bound up with our nature; it is not the agent of our action; it belongs to us as belonging to our Soul, but not in so far as we are particular human beings living a life to which it is superior: take the passage in this sense and it is consistent; understand this spirit otherwise and there is contradiction. And the description of the spirit, moreover, "the power which consummates the chosen life," is also in agreement with this interpretation; for while its presidency saves us from falling much deeper into evil, the only direct agent within us is something neither above it nor equal to it but under it: Man cannot cease to be characteristically Man.[84]

In this complex and ambiguous passage, Plotinus is also referring to the "Myth of Er" in *The Republic,*[85] in which the choice of lots or lives is presented. The soul chooses its daemon, lot, or guiding spirit, and this choice determines its fate or destiny. To this extent Plotinus is in agreement with standard Platonism. Beyond this, however, Plotinus's comments on the daemon of *Timaeus* 90a–d need to be understood in relation to his own philosophical system and in particular, his conception of soul.

For Plotinus, soul refers to both the "cosmic force that unifies, organizes, sustains, and controls every aspect of the world,"[86] and to a multiplicity of individual souls associated with particular bodies, the latter partaking of the former transcendent and all-encompassing conception of soul.[87] In the above passage, the daemon appears to serve a mediating function between these two interrelated levels or manifestations of soul. The daemon is seen as "belonging to" the soul of the individual, but only insofar as the individual's soul partakes of soul in the generalized, transcendent, and all-encompassing sense. Plotinus also points out that the daemon is not actually an integrated part of the individual ("it is not bound up with our nature"), but rather touches upon the individual from above, without actually being located within the

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[84] Plotinus, *The Enneads,* trans. Stephen MacKenna (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 170.

[85] See Plato, *The Republic,* 614–20. The relationship between this portion of the *Enneads* and *The Republic* is alluded to by MacKenna in the commentary accompanying his translation. See Plotinus, *The Enneads,* 166.

[86] Dominic J. O'Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the* Enneads (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), 17.

[87] O'Meara, *Plotinus,* 67.

body.[88] As John M. Rist convincingly observes, Plotinus's rather confusing argument that the daemon is both internal (belonging to us) and distinct (not bound up with our nature) may also be attributed the fact that he is trying, in *Enneads* III.4.5, to reconcile two very different Platonic formulations of the daemon: the first being the internal daemon as *nous* in *Timaeus* 90a–d, the second the external guardian divinity of *The Republic* 614b–621d.[89]

For Plotinus, the function of the daemon is to connect the individual soul with the transcendent soul, which in turn is linked to the divine intellect or *nous* and ultimately to the Platonic forms, the latter being the thoughts or "thinking activity" of the divine intellect.[90] In this sense, the daemon or tutelary spirit is the "Rational Being" (*Enneads,* III.4.3) that connects man with the divine intellect and the forms, and which may prevent him from being restricted by bodily desires and appetites, thereby saving him "from falling much deeper into evil" (*Enneads* III.4.5).

The general tendency to be found in the presentations of the daemon in the Stoics (Posidonius and Marcus Aurelius), and the early Neo-Platonists (Plutarch and Plotinus) is the valorization of Plato's rational daemon — the daemon as a divine intellect or *nous,* seen in *Timaeus* 90a–d — over the non-rational daemonic modes found in dialogues like the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus.* This valorization also manifests itself along the lines of a dualism between mind and body, as particularly for Posidonius, Marcus Aurelius, and Plotinus the daemon is that part of the self that is best able to resist corporeal appetites and desires.

It is here that a tension in the conceptual history of the daemon can be detected: a tension that exists in the philosophy of Plato itself, as well as in the transition of the daemon from the philosophy of Plato into Stoicism and early Neo-Platonism. On the one hand, Plato's notion of the daemonic, as it is outlined in dialogues like the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, corresponds with fundamentally non-rational modes like the poetic and the erotic, and with the non-rational or extra-rational voice or sign that is the Socratic *daimonion*. On the other hand, however, the predominant tendency in Stoicism and early Neo-Platonism is to associate the daemon with *nous* as it is outlined by Plato in *Timaeus* 90a–d. This tension between the rational soul and the non-rational soul, the rational

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[88] This is the view of Thomas Alexander Szlezák, *Platon und Aristoteles in der Nuslehre Plotins* (Basel: Schwabe, 1979), 187.

[89] John M. Rist, "Plotinus and the Daimonion of Socrates," in *Man, Soul and Body: Essays in Ancient Thought from Plato to Dionysius* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), 13–24. See in particular page 14 for Rist's treatment of *Enneads* III.4.5.

[90] O'Meara, *Plotinus,* 36.

genius and the non-rational genius, continues to manifest itself in discussions of the daemonic and its philosophical background during the period of the European Enlightenment.

The gradual process of internalization and secularization to which the daemon is subjected in the thought of Plato, Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, and early Christianity is summed up by Jane Chance Nitzsche in her book *The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages:*

> The regions in between the gods and men were . . . believed to be inhabited — by cosmic messengers or *daemons*. . . . Eventually the Greek concept of the *daemon* influenced the Roman *genius,* so that each man was said to possess a "soul" (*genius* or *daemon*) born with him. . . . The messenger *daemon,* under the influence of Christianity, became an evil demon or renegade angel connected with astrology, dreams, and the black arts, and was itself replaced by the good angel.[91]

Nitzsche's comments anticipate one of the central concerns of chapter 2: the sense in which the daemon and the daemonic began, in the second half of the eighteenth century, to be associated with an aesthetic notion that had previously — in the *daimonion* of Socrates, and in Stoic and Neo-Platonic thought — been associated with the forces of the divine. Here I am referring to the notion of genius. One of the most authoritative commentators on the history of the concept of genius, Penelope Murray, has observed that more than any other classical figure, the "daimonic Socrates" influenced the way in which the notion of genius was reconfigured during the eighteenth century — a reconfiguration that would challenge the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and rationality.[92] In chapter 2 I will turn to this eminently non-rational and aesthetic conception of genius, and to the philosophical contexts in which Hamann, Herder, and the young Goethe began to deploy it.

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[91] Jane Chance Nitzsche, *The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia UP, 1975), 4–5.

[92] Penelope Murray, "Poetic Genius and its Classical Origins," in *Genius: The History of an Idea,* ed. Penelope Murray (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 27–28.

2: The Daemonic in the Philosophy of the *Sturm und Drang:* Hamann and Herder

> Man ahndete hier einen tiefdenkenden gründlichen Mann, der mit der offenbaren Welt und Literatur genau bekannt, doch auch noch etwas Geheimes, Unerforschliches gelten ließ, und sich darüber auf eine ganz eigne Weise aussprach. (*FA* 1,14:558)

So wrote Goethe of Johann Georg Hamann's *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* (Socratic Memorabilia, 1759), a volume that brought the Socratic *daimonion* back to life within the context of the European Enlightenment. Hamann is the key historical figure in the resurgence of the classical concept of the daemon, and the general sensibility of *das Dämonische,* in the *Sturm und Drang* period of German literature and philosophy, and Hamann's influence upon the young Goethe also exerted itself through his (Hamann's) chief disciple: Johann Gottfried Herder. Following an analysis of Hamann's *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten,* this chapter will examine the role played by Herder in Goethe's early literary and philosophical development, by way of an analysis of various essays by Herder written during the 1760s and 1770s concerning the theory of language and particularly the concept of genius, a concept that Herder, like Hamann, connected with the classical concept of the daemon.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the tendency to associate the concept of the daemon with that of genius can already be found in some Stoic and Neo-Platonic texts. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, the relationship between these concepts was reconfigured as part of a broader process of secularization associated with the European Enlightenment — a process in which Herder would come to play a key role. In order to understand this process of secularization, it is first of all necessary to offer a brief account of the transformation undergone by the concept of genius in England, France, and Germany during the early to mid-eighteenth century.

Genius in the Eighteenth Century

As late as the middle of the eighteenth century, the notion of genius still retains traces of its ancient manifestation as an external, numinous force that visits, or possesses, certain favored individuals. A glance at Samuel

Johnson's *Dictionary* (first published in 1755) demonstrates the extent to which this notion of genius still held some, albeit limited, sway. Johnson's first definition of genius as "The protecting or ruling power of men, places or things" is clearly derived from Neo-Platonism and Stoicism, as — or at least, as Johnson would have us believe — are the examples of this definition that he invokes from Shakespeare and Milton:

> There is none but he
> Whose being I do fear: and, under him,
> My genius is rebuk'd; as it is said
> Anthony's was by Caesar.
>
> And as I awake, sweet music breathe,
> Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
> Or the unseen genius of the wood.[1]

The example taken from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and quoted above is ambiguous, despite Johnson's attempt to characterize it after the manner of the ancients. As is the case with the ghost of Old Hamlet that haunts the famous Dane, it is not clear, in the above example, whether this genius or spirit is innate or external, congenital or numinous. Milton's "genius of the wood," taken from the poem "Il Ponseroso," is less complex, and clearly belongs to the species of tutelary spirits and local divinities that abound in Neo-Platonism. But just as the example quoted from *Macbeth* begins to show how easily the earlier understanding of genius as external and numinous began to blur with a new interpretation of it as internal and subjective, so too it was the author of that play who became the first prototype for the Romantic notion of genius as an innate creative power.[2] Writing in 1765, only a few years after Wieland's first translations of Shakespeare into German, the great German dramatist and drama-theorist of the latter half of the eighteenth century, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81), sees Shakespeare as the example of genius *par excellence:*

> Das wahre Genie arbeitet, gleich einem reißenden Strome, sich selbst seinen Weg durch die größten Hindernisse. Shakespeare, der zu einem Handwerk erzogen worden, ward ein großer Poet, ohne

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[1] Samuel Johnson, *Johnson's Dictionary* (London: Harrison, 1786), s.v. "Genius."

[2] On this subject, see: Jonathan Bate, "Shakespeare and Original Genius," in *Genius: The History of an Idea,* ed. Penelope Murray (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 76–97.

> irgend eine Aufmunterung zu haben, ja sogar, ohne selbst es zu wissen.[3]

Lessing presents Shakespeare as the creative soul who fights, and wins, a battle against the forces of fate. The image of the individual or genius as a torrential stream opposed and diverted by external circumstances will appear again in chapters 3, 4, and 6 of this study, particularly in Goethe's extensive use of water imagery in a number of texts: the poem "Mahomets Gesang," in certain sections of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther,* and in the sonnet "Mächtiges Überraschen." Lessing is drawn to the example of Shakespeare because, in his view, it was the force of Shakespeare's genius — genius in the sense of an innate, subjective power — that saw him transcend social origins that were less than propitious.

As the examples offered by Johnson's *Dictionary* demonstrate, the early eighteenth century was a period of transition for the concept of genius.[4] On the one hand, the term was still often used in its earlier Neo-Platonic sense. An example of this tendency can be found in the entry under Genius in Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Großes vollständiges universal Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (Great and Complete Universal Dictionary of all the Sciences and Arts, 1735), which gives an extensive history of the term, but a history in which the modern connection with artistic production and individual subjectivity is rarely made.[5] Significant too is Zedler's entry under *Dämon,* in which he makes an explicit connection between the ancient Greek conception of the term and "das lateinische Wort Genius."[6]

On the other hand, in eighteenth-century England and France, genius was increasingly associated if not with outright blasphemy then at least with a kind of abnormality, waywardness, or even pathology. When Dryden writes, as early as 1693, that "Genius alone is a greater Virtue . . . than all other Qualifications put together," he cites "Blaspheming Shake-

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[3] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Literaturbriefe,* in *Gesammelte Werke,* ed. Paul Rilla, 2nd ed., 10 vols. (Berlin: Aufbau, 1968), 4:434.

[4] See R. Warning, B. Fabian, and J. Ritter, "Genie," in *HWP* 3:282–301. The authors observe that the concept of genius in the eighteenth century tended to be a meeting ground for two opposed fields of inquiry: aesthetics and science. In Fabian's opinion in particular, two factors influenced its development: "das Shakespeare-Problem und die Erfolge der Wissenschaftsbewegung" (282).

[5] Johann Heinrich Zedler, "Genius," in *Großes vollständiges universal Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste,* 64 vols. (Halle and Leipzig: Verlag Johann Heinrich Zedlers, 1735), 10:878–83.

[6] Zedler, "Dämon," 8:34.

spear" [*sic*] as the prime example of this phenomenon.[7] Likewise, the article devoted to *Génie* in Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (published between 1751 and 1772) associates genius with "strength," "abundance," and "a certain kind of roughness." The genius, the *Encyclopédie* tells us, is one who breaks the "rules and laws of taste . . . to soar to what is sublime, pathetic or noble."[8]

The eminent Diderot scholar, Herbert Dieckmann, sees the increasing focus on the subject of genius in the mid- to late eighteenth century as a consequence of the French Enlightenment.[9] No longer, Dieckmann argues, were Enlightenment thinkers able to accept the vague aesthetic notion of Genius (a notion roughly allied with excellence in the arts, and consequently with artistic sensibility or taste) that had prevailed during the seventeenth century. As Jochen Schmidt has also shown in his two-volume study *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik, 1750–1945* (The History of the Idea of Genius in German Literature, Philosophy, and Politics), in an attempt to understand the origins of genius, the Enlightenment turned away from the artwork, and away from Genius as an aesthetic category, towards the artist; that is to say, towards the genius as a subjective and psychological phenomenon.[10] This approach had already been taken by the Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1765) in his "Letter Concerning Enthusiasm" (1707), a work in which the author aims to expose enthusiasm and artistic inspiration to rational inquiry, in order to judge "rightly its natural Force." Taking as his approach the "plain home-spun Philosophy, of looking into our-selves" in order to gain "knowledge of our Passions in their very Seeds," Shaftesbury sees enthusiasm as a kind of illness or pathology that is intimately connected with melancholy.[11] The sources of

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[7] Dryden to John Dennis, 3 March 1693, in *The Letters of John Dryden,* ed. Charles E. Ward (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1942), 71–72.

[8] Denis Diderot, "Genius," in *The Encyclopedia: Selections,* ed. and trans. Stephen J. Gendzier (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 120–21. The article on Genius in the *Encyclopaedia,* once attributed to Diderot, is now understood to have been written by Saint-Lambert.

[9] Herbert Dieckmann, "Diderot's Conception of Genius," in *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 2 (1941): 151–82.

[10] Jochen Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik, 1750–1945,* 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschafliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), 1:9.

[11] Shaftesbury, "A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm," in *Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury Standard Edition, Complete Works, Selected Letters and*

enthusiasm, Shaftesbury argues, are more often than not found in human passions, and not in the numinous forces so often invoked by ancient mystics and poets. This tendency to see the source of genius as immanent and natural continues in Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759), in which he writes that: "An Original may be said to be of a vegetable nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of Genius; it grows, it is not made."[12]

But the phenomenon of genius ultimately resisted the powers of the Enlightenment to explain it in rational terms. Despite the fact that the products of genius — in the sense of an extraordinary artistic or creative ability — abounded in the eighteenth century, genius itself remained resistant to scientific explanations. Even when figures like Young posited natural metaphors to encapsulate genius, these accounts amounted to rhetorical images, thereby falling short of the Enlightenment's scientific criteria of empirical evidence, while attempts like Jean Baptiste DuBos's physiological explanation of genius as "a happy arrangement of the organs of the brain" were likewise unacceptably vague and speculative.[13] It was precisely this inability of reason, science, and the eighteenth-century Enlightenment to account for genius in rational terms that allowed the non-rational thinkers who fueled the fires of the *Sturm und Drang* movement to revivify, and elaborate upon, the ancient Greek notion of genius as a numinous power associated with the Muses and the gods. In fact, this revival also amounted to a resurgence of the theme of the daemonic as a bridge between the secular and the divine, and as a source or conduit of artistic inspiration.

The *Daimonion* as Genius: Johann Georg Hamann

The most influential figure among these non-rationalists was undoubtedly Johann Georg Hamann (1730–88) whose book *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* (1759) was conceived as a *Kampfansage* against the values of German rationalism, and, in particular, the strictly mathematical and rigidly

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Posthumous Writings, ed. and trans. Gerd Hemmerich and Wolfram Benda. 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Fromman-Holzboog, 1981), 1,1:360.

[12] Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759; Leeds: The Scholar Press, 1966), 12.

[13] Jean Baptiste DuBos, French art critic and literary theorist (1670–1742). This is Herbert Dieckmann's translation of a passage taken from DuBos's *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting), 3 vols., (Paris: 1755), 2:14. See Dieckmann, "Diderot's Conception of Genius," 162.

deductive thought of Christian Wolff (1679–1754) along with the early works of Hamann's friend and would-be mentor, Immanuel Kant.[14] Born in the East Prussian town of Königsberg, Hamann enjoyed a mildly pietistic upbringing and education, and became, in his youth, a follower of the practical ideals of the Enlightenment. During a failed mercantile expedition to London in 1757, Hamann fell into dissolute ways, before undergoing a typical pietistic conversion experience as a result of reading the Bible. Returning to Königsberg in 1759, Hamann met with his friend Christoph Berens and one of Berens's acquaintances: Immanuel Kant. Horrified by Hamann's conversion to evangelical Christianity and his abandonment of enlightenment methodology, Kant suggested that Hamann translate some articles from the French *Encyclopédie* in order to reacquaint himself with rational modes of thought. In his famous reply to Kant's suggestion, Hamann wrote that it is "Eitelkeit und Fluch . . . einen Theil der *Encyclopédie* durchzublättern" and then proceeded to give Kant a modest piece of advice in return:

> Sind Sie Sokrates und will Ihr Freund [Berens] Alcibiades sein: so haben Sie zu Ihrem Unterricht die Stimme eines Genii nöthig. Und diese Rolle gebührt mir. . . . Erlauben sie mir also, daß ich so lange Genius heißen und als ein Genius aus einer Wolke mit Ihnen reden kann.[15]

Speaking, or rather writing, from the clouds, Hamann composed *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten,* dedicating the book ironically to Kant and Berens, and attacking the very enlightenment ideals that they sought to foster in him. *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* focuses upon the life of Socrates, or at least Hamann's eminently idiosyncratic view of Socrates.[16] Holding that Christianity is a continuation of, rather than a break with, the philosophy and culture of ancient Greece, Hamann compares the life

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[14] Here I am paraphrasing the analysis of Hamann's *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* undertaken by Erwin Metzke in *J. G. Hamann's Stellung in der Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), 36–46.

[15] Johann Georg Hamann to Immanuel Kant, 27 July 1759, in Johann Georg Hamann, *Briefwechsel,* ed. Walther Ziesemer und Arthur Henkel, 7 vols. (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1955–56), 1:373.

[16] It is noteworthy that Hamann had not read Plato or Xenophon before writing *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten*. He was acquainted with Socrates through secondary works dealing mainly with Xenophon's account of Socrates. Among these were included *Das Leben Socratis* written by M. Charpentier and translated from the French into German by Christian Thomas, and *The Life of Socrates* by John Gilbert Cooper (London, 1749). On Hamann's Socrates sources see: Eva Koczisky, *Hammans Kritik der Moderne* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2003), 13–42.

of Socrates with that of Christ. In this regard, he deploys the literary device of typology; a form of allegory that seeks out recurrent patterns in history, while at the same time attempting to overcome the historicity of these patterns. Hamann's use of typology takes on a tripartite structure, in which Socrates, Christ, and Hamann himself are unified as inspired geniuses, prophets, or daemonic intermediaries.

The implications of Hamann's typological maneuver are threefold. First, in identifying Socrates with Christ, Hamann argues for a kind of unity between pagan Greece and Christianity. Second, Hamann's analogy between Socrates and Christ implicitly seeks to portray the former as a religious or mystical figure, as opposed to the logician so often valorized by the Enlightenment. Finally, in comparing himself to Socrates, Hamann implies that there is a similarity between his relationship with Enlightenment thinkers like Wolff, Kant, and Berens, and Socrates' relationship with the Sophists. Accordingly, Hamann's aim is to construct a critique of rationalism, just as Socrates sought to expose the charlatanism of the Sophists. For this reason, Hamann maintains that:

> Der Philosoph ist dem Gesetz der Nachahmung so gut unterworfen als der Poet. Für diesen ist seine Muse und ihr Hieroglyphisches Schattenspiel so wahr als die Vernunft und das Lehrgebäude derselben für jenen. (*SM,* 168)

Here we can detect Hamann's ambivalent position with respect to the European Enlightenment. He clearly proposes that the deductive mathematical and geometrical truths of the rationalist philosophers and the mythological phantasms of the poets and mystics of ancient Greece are not at all distant from one another; both, he argues, are ultimately imitations derived from sense experience. Yet while this passage demonstrates that Hamann was vehemently opposed to the rationalist side of the Enlightenment embodied in the deductive and mathematical philosophical systems of Leibniz and Wolff, it also shows that he was one of the first German philosophers to be attracted by the empiricist skepticism of David Hume (1711–76).[17] Hamann agreed with Hume's view that rationalist ideas cannot exist *a priori,* but must be copies or imitations derived from the vivacity of external impressions. Even more important for Hamann was Hume's contention, outlined in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), that the ultimate source of these sense impressions is "perfectly inex-

[17] Hans Graubner, "Erkenntnis oder Bildersprache: Hamann und Hume," in *Johann Georg Hamann: "Der hellste Kopf seiner Zeit,"* ed. Oswald Bayer (Tübingen: Attempto, 1998), 133–55. See in particular 135–36.

plicable by human reason,"[18] and must instead be an article of faith or belief. Hamann made this aspect of Hume's thought central to his critique of the rationalist Enlightenment, arguing that the ultimate source of all sense impressions — namely, faith in the existence of an external world of objects — is "kein Werk der Vernunft und kann daher auch keinem Angriff derselben unterliegen; weil Glauben so wenig durch Gründe geschieht als Schmecken und Sehen" (*SM,* 168).

In Hamann's opinion, the rationalist Enlightenment can no more claim reason as its basis than can the ancient poets who cite divine inspiration as the source of their creativity. In order to have a world, we must first believe in one, and this belief, according to Hamann, has nothing at all to do with reason. In fact, he sees reason itself as a fragile construct erected by an inherently one-sided, skeletal, and ossified rationalism — a worldview that always values the universal model over the particular instance, and that attempts to simplify and contain the world within concepts, rather than experiencing sensuous phenomena in their infinite complexity. Accordingly, nature is for Hamann "ein Räthsel, das sich nicht auflösen läßt, ohne mit einem andern Kalbe, als unserer Vernunft zu pflügen" (*SM,* 150).

In its emphasis upon the obscurity and ultimate inaccessibility of deep truths, Hamann's philosophy echoes and revives the approach of another thinker encountered in chapter 1 of this study: Plato, and more specifically, the Plato who speaks through, and makes a philosophical example of, Socrates' life and deeds. In chapter 1, I argued that Plato's philosophy contains an erotics and a poetics, both of which enter into a relationship with the daemonic. In Plato, the daemonic brings into effect a kind of mediation between the material world and the transcendent realm of the forms, and this mediation can be performed by two non-rational means. The first of these means is Platonic *eros,* a kind of metaphysical longing or desire that is a sublimation or development of sexual, corporeal *eros,* while the second is poetry (the composition of narratives, images, or *mythoi*), which is seen as a non-rational supplement to the faculties of *logos* and *technē* (reason, and consciously deployed skill).

The similarities between Plato and Hamann can be seen in the goals of their respective philosophical enterprises, and in the means by which they would achieve them. In chapter 1 we saw that, according to modern interpreters of Plato such as Kierkegaard and Lukács, Plato's forms are abstract and normative ideas that can be approached and approximated by humans, but that recede and disappear as soon as humans attempt to em-

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[18] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* ed. L. A. Selbey-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978), 84. Quoted in Graubner, 144.

body them materially or politically. The forms always remain partially veiled and obscured, and can only be known negatively, as the other of what is positively or materially known. When Plato's thought is seen in this light, Socrates' task of refuting and exposing false claims to knowledge, and his admission that the greatest knowledge possible lies in the recognition of one's own ignorance, become logical components of Plato's view of philosophy as a normative journey without an end.

Hamann, like Plato, is a philosopher of longing, both stylistically and thematically, and accordingly he begins *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* with the following statement: "Ich habe über den Sokrates auf eine sokratische Art geschrieben. Die Analogie war die Seele seiner Schlüsse, und er gab ihnen die Ironie zu ihrem Leibe" (*SM,* 142). Hamann's use of analogy implies a methodology that hints at comparisons and connections, without seeking exact correspondences, while his deployment of irony attests to the impossibility of absolute knowledge *per se*. As Isaiah Berlin observes in his study of Hamann, *The Magus of the North: J. G. Hamann and the Origins of Modern Irrationalism,* Hamann believes that since the cognitive capacities possessed by human beings are necessarily limited and finite, our understanding of phenomena can also only ever be partial and fragmentary, as opposed to the systematic and comprehensive claims to knowledge made by rationalist thinkers like Leibniz and Wolff.[19] Accordingly, Hamann celebrates the mythological image of Socrates — presented by Alcibiades in the *Symposium* — as "die Gestalt eines ziegenfüßigen Satyrs" (*SM,* 180); a figure whose beastly external appearance conceals ironically an inner divinity that exceeds any corporeal representation. Given Hamann's all too obvious predilection for irony, and his disdain for the certainties so often invoked by the rationalist Enlightenment, it is no surprise that he celebrates Socrates' admission of ignorance as one of his greatest virtues. In fact, Hamann cryptically views Socrates' professed ignorance as being the source of his genius:

> Was ersetzt bey Homer die Unwissenheit der Kunstregeln, die ein Aristoteles nach ihm erdacht, und was bey einem Shakespear die Unwissenheit oder Übertretung jener kritischen Gesetze? Das Genie ist die einmüthige Antwort. Sokrates hatte also freylich gut unwissend seyn; er hatte einen Genius, auf dessen Wissenschaft er sich verlassen konnte, den er liebte und fürchtete als seinen Gott, an dessen Frieden ihm mehr gelegen war, als an aller Vernunft der Egypter und Griechen, dessen Stimme er glaubte, und durch dessen

[19] Isaiah Berlin, *The Magus of the North: J. G. Hamann and the Origins of Modern Irrationalism,* ed. Henry Hardy (London: John Murray, 1993), x.

> Wind . . . der leere Verstand eines Sokrates so gut als der Schoos einer reinen Jungfrau, fruchtbar werden kann. (*SM,* 170)

There are, suggests Hamann, some miracles that cannot be accounted for rationally, and that are divine blessings precisely because they exceed logical explanations: one of these is the birth of Christ by way of Immaculate Conception, the other — Socrates' *Dämon* or *daimonion:*

> Ob dieser Dämon des Sokrates nichts als eine herrschende Leidenschaft gewesen und bey welchem Namen sie von unsern Sittenlehrern geruffen wird, oder ob er ein Fund seiner Staatslist; ob er ein Engel oder Kobold, eine hevorragende Idee seiner Einbildungskraft, oder ein erschlichner und willkührlich angenommener Begriff einer mathematischen Unwissenheit; ob dieser Dämon nicht vielleicht eine Quecksilberröhre oder den Maschinen ähnlicher gewesen, welchen die Bradleys and Leuwenhoeks ihre Offenbarungen zu verdanken haben; ob man ihn mit dem wahrsagendem Gefühl eines nüchternen Blinden oder mit der Gabe aus Leichdornen und Narben übelgeheilter Wunden die Revolutionen des Wolkenhimmels vorher zu wissen, am bequemsten vergleichen kann: hierüber ist von so vielen Sophisten mit so viel Bündigkeit geschrieben worden, daß man erstaunen muß, wie Sokrates bey der gelobten Erkenntnis seiner Selbst, auch hierinn so unwissend gewesen, daß er einem Simias darauf die Antwort hat schuldig bleiben wollen. Keinem Leser von Geschmack fehlt es in unsern Tagen an Freunden von Genie, die mich der Mühe überheben werden weitläuftiger über den Genius des Sokrates zu seyn. (*SM,* 170)

Ever an opponent of the rationalist Enlightenment, Hamann sets out, in this bizarre passage, to affirm the sense of mystery and divinity that the ancient Greeks attached to the Socratic *daimonion*. The efforts to render immanent and demystify the *daimonion,* beginning, as we saw in chapter 1, with Aristotle and continuing through Neo-Platonism and Stoicism, culminated in Diderot's attempt to conscript it into the projects of science and Enlightenment philosophy. According to Diderot, Socrates was, in difficult situations, able to align himself with an internal *combinaison* (body), which enabled him to make accurate forecasts concerning future events. Such abilities, argues Diderot, are also apparent in the exponents of experimental science, since these people have seen nature so often and at such close range that they can guess, with a good deal of precision, the course that it will follow under experimental conditions. In this way scientists are able to introduce into modern research the ancient spirit of divi-

nation displayed by Socrates.[20] Working against Diderot's approach, Hamann associates the *daimonion* with the ancient mythological phenomenon of possession by external, divine forces: "Ein wenig Schwärmerey und Aberglauben," says Hamann, "würde hier nicht nur Nachsicht verdienen, sondern etwas von diesem Sauerteige gehört dazu, um die Seele zu einem philosophischen Heroismus in Gährung zu setzen" (*SM,* 146).

In chapter 1 of this study, I considered three recent interpretations of the Socratic *daimonion:* namely, those of Paul Friedländer, G. R. F. Ferrari, and Gregory Vlastos.[21] All of these commentators see the *daimonion* as a non-rational hint that assists Socrates' rational arguments by reminding him that his knowledge is human and not divine, and by suggesting that there is a non-rational realm that extends beyond the cognitive bounds of reason. In comparison with these views, Hamann's portrait of Socrates, composed some forty-five years before the appearance of Schleiermacher's first translations of Plato into German,[22] must be assessed within the philosophical and religious contexts in which it appears. As was mentioned earlier, Hamann's intentions in *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* are clearly polemical: his aim is essentially to portray Socrates as a religious figure who has access to inexplicable, non-rational sources of divine inspiration. For this reason, Hamann does not focus upon Socrates' habitual use of logic against his opponents, as this central aspect of the Socratic sensibility does not accord with Hamann's portrait of him as a possessed, god-intoxicated prophet. Instead of discussing Socrates' relentless use of reason — a tendency of his character much vaunted by Enlightenment figures like Diderot — Hamann isolates, and magnifies, the hint of non-rationality in Socrates' nature: his *daimonion*. In this connection, Hamann's aim is to conflate his image of Socrates with that of

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[20] Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes des Diderot,* ed. J. Assézat and M. Tourneux, 20 vols. (Paris, 1857–1877), 2:24, quoted in Dieckmann, 172–73. For a further account of the image of Socrates propagated by Diderot, Voltaire, and Rousseau, see Katherine Carson, "Socrates Observed: Three Eighteenth-Century Views," *Diderot Studies* 14 (1971): 273–81.

[21] See Paul Friedländer, *Platon,* 3 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1928), 1:36; Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 116–17; Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1991), 283.

[22] The first volume of Schleiermacher's translations of Plato was published in 1804. See Richard B. Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 7–9.

Christ, and with his own religiously informed project or war against German rationalism.

Despite its limitations, the influence of Hamann's portrait of Socrates upon Herder and Goethe cannot be overestimated. Hegel once commented that Hamann represents an approach to thought — a style or form of thinking — rather than thought in itself, as content.[23] This appears to have been the sense in which Goethe received Hamann. In a section of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* published in 1814, Goethe attempts to summarize the tenor of Hamann's thought, and sees the concepts of unity and wholeness (*Einheit*) as being his hallmarks:

> Das Prinzip, auf welches die sämtlichen Äußerungen Haman's [*sic*] sich zurückführen lassen, ist dieses: "Alles was der Mensch zu leisten unternimmt, es werde nun durch Tat oder Wort oder sonst hervorgebracht, muß aus sämtlichen vereinigten Kräften entspringen; alles Vereinzelte ist verwerflich." (*FA* 1,14:560)

In Goethe's view, the *Einheit* that Hamann seeks is something that resists all of his attempts to embody it linguistically and conceptually; thus Goethe argues that Hamann eventually came into conflict "mit seinem eignen Stil" because his philosophy was, like all systems of thought, confined to the logic of language, a logic that requires words to be separated and differentiated from one another if they are to signify anything at all (*FA* 1,14:560). But it was precisely this idea of a non-rational unity beyond language, and therefore beyond human powers of representation, that preoccupied Hamann, and that informs his notion of the world as a divine presence that exceeds all human attempts to rationally explain it. Goethe argues that Hamann attempts to produce the impossible: a language beyond language — a language that could express the divine plenitude of the world, without fragmenting this plenitude in the very act of its expression (*FA* 1,14:560). As we saw in chapter 1 of this study, quests that have as their aim impossible goals often produce a feeling of longing in those who undertake them: this feeling is inspired by Plato's forms, and likewise by Hamann's conception of the world as an inexplicable divine presence. Without prematurely drawing any conclusions, it is apposite to note that this very notion of the impossible would become crucial for one of Goethe's most definitive statements on the daemonic as something

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[23] "Hamanns Schriften *haben* nicht sowohl einen eigenthümlichen Styl, als daß sie durch und durch Styl *sind*" (G. W. F. Hegel, "Hamanns Schriften," in *Werke,* ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols., vol. 11, *Berliner Schriften 1818–1831* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970], 281).

that seemed at home "nur im Unmöglichen" and that banished the possible from itself with contempt (*FA* 1,14:840).

The Genius and Nature: The *Genielehre* of Johann Gottfried Herder

According to Herder's biographer, Robert T. Clark, Herder is perhaps best understood as a secularizer of Hamann's thought.[24] Herder's secular tendency and his preoccupation with the natural world are already present in his *Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769* (Journal of my Voyage in the Year 1769), which reads like a manifesto of the *Sturm und Drang* movement. In Herder's *Journal,* nature is praised only insofar as its immediacy and sensuousness exceed all rational attempts to explain it, while reason is seen as "der Anschein eines Augenblicks" that cannot touch or destroy the intuitive dreams and beliefs of childhood (*HW* 9,2:25). Herder extols youth, spontaneity, sensitivity, and an affinity with nature as desirable human characteristics, and it is likewise these attributes that come to the fore in his early conception of genius:

> Das ist der Weg, Originale zu haben, nehmlich sie in ihrer Jugend viele Dinge und alle für sie empfindbare Dinge ohne Zwang und Präokkupation auf die ihnen eigne Art empfinden zu lassen. Jede Empfindung in der Jugendseele ist nicht bloß was sie ist, Materie, sondern auch aufs ganze Leben Materie: sie wird nachher immer verarbeitet, und also gute Organisation, viele, starke, lebhafte, getreue, eigne Sensationen, auf die dem Menschen eigenste Art sind die Basis zu einer Reihe von vielen starken, lebhaften, getreuen, eignen Gedanken, und das ist das Original Genie. (*HW* 9,2:119–20)

The connection between genius and originality made by Herder is, almost without doubt, derived from a source that was encountered earlier in this chapter: Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759), in which the "Original" is seen to spring from "the vital root of Genius." Young's use of vegetative metaphors in order to explain genius also exerted an important influence upon Herder,[25] as for Herder the genius mediates be-

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[24] Robert T. Clark, *Herder: His Life and Thought* (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1955), 49.

[25] Jochen Schmidt comments that Herder was the first German thinker to follow the ideas about genius presented in Young's *Conjectures:* Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens,* 1:120. On this subject, see also Michael Beddow, "Goethe on Genius," in *Genius: The History of an Idea,* ed. Penelope Murray (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 76–97.

tween the human and the natural — not, as in the cases of both Plato and Hamann, between the human and the transcendent or divine. But in order to make this point it is necessary to revisit two terms: immanence and transcendence.

The terms immanence and transcendence have, up to this point in this study, been used in their traditional senses, as opposites: immanent referring to that which is in the world, transcendent to that which is beyond, or separate from, the world. This understanding of immanence and transcendence as opposites was largely propagated by Immanuel Kant in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason,* A edition 1781, B edition 1787), a work that characterizes the world of phenomena — and the faculty of the understanding that seeks to know these phenomena — as immanent, while seeing the faculty of pure reason as transcendent, in that it extends beyond the limits of human experience.[26] Although Plato never used the terms immanence and transcendence in this way, they have retroactively been applied to his philosophy: the material world is seen as immanent and substantial, the forms as transcendent in that Plato describes them as being beyond and ontologically superior to the corporeal world. This immanence/transcendence dualism has also, of course, been located in Judeo-Christian theology, which traditionally has seen God as a transcendent creator who is separate from the world.

In Herder's thought, these terms can only be useful to a limited extent, and this is because he makes no thorough-going distinction between the immanent or the *natural* — the things of the world — and the transcendent or divine. In this respect, Herder more or less follows the so-called pantheism propagated by the Dutch philosopher Benedict de Spinoza (1632–77),[27] who, by virtue of his famous formulation *Deus sive Natura* (God or Nature) sees God as the "immanent, and not the transitive cause of all things."[28] Spinoza's philosophical definition of God is a

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[26] "Wir wollen die Grundsätze, deren Anwendung sich ganz und gar in den Schranken möglicher Erfahrung hält, immanente, diejenige aber, welche diese Grenzen überfliegen sollen, transzendente Grundsätze nennen" (*KW* 2:309–10).

[27] Although Spinoza's view of God has often been understood to coincide with the term pantheism, there is some debate as to whether his philosophy is in fact pantheist. On this subject see Genevieve Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1996), 38–41. Similarly, there has also been a relatively significant controversy concerning the question as to whether Herder's descriptions of God can be seen as pantheist. On this subject, see: Wulf Koepke, *Johann Gottfried Herder* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1987), 73–77.

[28] Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics,* ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1996), 16.

specific refutation of the Judeo-Christian tendency to see God as an intelligence that is separate from the world, and whose interventions in worldly events are interpreted anthropomorphically as the expression of a human or quasi-human intentionality.[29] If, according to Spinoza, God were a separate, transcendent intelligence that created the world according to the dictates of a human intentionality, then the world would be separate from or "outside" God or substance. This is, for Spinoza, a logical impossibility, since God is extended infinitely and can therefore have no "outside." Spinoza also referred to substance as *Natura naturans* (nature naturing, nature as *cause*): nature that is *causa sui* or conceived through itself. A second conception of nature — *Natura naturata* (nature natured, nature as *effect*) — is then coupled with the first.[30] This latter conception of nature refers to those natural objects that are seen as the secondary, extended modes of substance or *Deus sive Natura*.[31]

Spinoza's conception of God as an indwelling, natural presence created a degree of controversy in German religious circles, being seen by some to amount to atheism instead of pantheism. The most prominent objector to Spinoza's alleged atheism was Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819), a highly emotional and sentimental thinker who associated with the *Stürmer und Dränger* during the 1770s. In 1783, Jacobi reported to his colleague Moses Mendelssohn a piece of news that was, at least in Jacobi's view, terrible. When Jacobi visited Lessing shortly before his death, Lessing informed him that he was a follower of Spinoza's pantheism. Jacobi then saw fit to communicate this important and (for him) distressing fact to Herder, who was, by the time of his reply to Jacobi (in February 1784), quite convinced that Spinoza was right in decreeing that God exists in and through, and not beyond, the things of the world. Herder's reply to Jacobi demonstrates the extent to which the immanence/transcendence binary is too divisive, too simplistic and cumbersome, to be applied to his (Herder's) philosophy:

> Das *proton pseudos,* lieber Jacobi, in Ihrem und in aller Antispinosisten System ist das, daß Gott, als das große *Ens entium,* die in allen Erscheinungen ewig wirkende Ursache ihres Wesens ein O, ein abstrakter Begriff sei, wie wir ihn uns formiren; das ist er aber nach Spinoza nicht, sondern das aller reellste, thätigste Eins. . . . Was Ihr, lieben Leute, mit dem: außer der Welt exsistiren wollt, begreife ich nicht; exsistirt Gott nicht in der Welt, überall in der Welt, u.

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[29] Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics,* 43–45.

[30] Spinoza, *Ethics,* 20–21.

[31] Richard Mason, *The God of Spinoza* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 29.

> zwar überall ungemeßen, ganz u. untheilbar, (denn die ganze Welt ist nur eine Erscheinung seiner Größe für uns erscheinende Gestalten) so exsistirt er nirgend . . . [Gott] ist das höchste lebendigste thätigste Eins — nicht in allen Dingen, als ob die was außer ihm wären; sondern durch alle Dinge.[32]

Herder did not agree with Jacobi's contention that Spinoza's philosophy represents atheism. In fact, the respective aims of the two thinkers were radically opposed: Jacobi was trying to draw a definitive line between the Judeo-Christian tradition and Spinozism, while Herder effectively wanted to unify them. This dispute eventually led to major works by both thinkers: in Jacobi's case, his anti-Spinozist book *Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung* (Of Matters Divine and Their Revelation, 1811), for Herder, his short but important work explaining Spinozism entitled *Gott: Einige Gespräche* (God: Some Conversations, 1787). In *Gott: Einige Gespräche,* Herder speaks of God as "die ewige Wurzel vom unermeßlichen Baum des Lebens, der durch das Weltall verschlungen ist," maintaining that God can only exist insofar as he manifests himself in a realm of immanence — the sphere of nature (*HW* 4:770). For Herder, the minutiae of nature, and the organic interrelations between different species, attest to God's divine presence, as God is active in "jeder lebendigen Kraft des Weltalls" (*HW* 4:772).

When Herder invokes the concept of individual forces or *Kräfte,* he shows his debt to another interpreter of Spinoza who also plays a significant role in *Gott: Einige Gespräche:* the German rationalist philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716). Like Spinoza, Leibniz begins with his own particular conception of substance. While Spinoza's definition of substance is strictly monist, Leibniz divides substance into individual, spiritual forces or *Kräfte,* which he calls monads. The monad is a simple, immaterial entity that is not susceptible of division, and that operates as the basic building block for all composites.[33] Each monad or force is absolutely unique and develops internally according to its own inner law. This internal development is described by Leibniz as being a kind of appetite or striving, since each simple substance or monad is directed towards achieving what it perceives, from its own perspective, to be the ap-

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[32] Johann Gottfried Herder to F. H. Jacobi, 6 February 1784, in *Johann Gottfried Herder: Briefe Gesamtausgabe 1763–1803,* ed. Karl-Heinz Hahn, 11 vols., vol. 5, ed. Wilhelm Dobbek und Günter Arnold (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger: 1979), 28–29.

[33] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Monadology,* trans. Nicholas Rescher (Pittsburgh, PA: U of Pittsburgh P, 1991), § 1, § 3, 17. See also Nicholas Jolley, *Leibniz* (London: Routledge, 2005), 5.

parent good.[34] In being simple, spiritual, immaterial, and directed towards the good, individual monads are seen by Leibniz as mirroring the qualities of God,[35] and in this respect they are at least theoretically capable of expressing the whole universe, albeit from within the limitations of their own particular points of view. Monads also develop in complete isolation: described by Leibniz as being windowless, they are not susceptible of alteration by external sources, and do not enter into direct relationships with other monads.[36] Thus, while separate monads appear to interact with one another causally, Leibniz's eminently rationalist doctrine concerning the *harmonie preétablie* (preestablished harmony) between all forces or substances guarantees that each monad develops independently and yet in perfect interconnectedness and coexistence with other monads.[37] As Charles Taylor observes, Leibniz's monads

> can be seen as particulars which have, to a higher or lower degree, a purpose which they are bent to encompass. Leibniz thus combines something of Aristotelian teleology, in the notion that the nature of a thing provides for its unfolding in a certain fashion, with the modern idea that the nature of a thing is within it. Because the forms are internal, in a way that they are not with Aristotle, the harmony of the world has to be "pre-established" by God.[38]

In §18 of the *Monadology,* Leibniz acknowledges his debt to Aristotle by associating his idea of the monad with the Aristotelian entelechy, encountered in chapter 1 of this study:

> One could give the name *entelechies* to all simple substances or created monads. For they have in them a certain perfection . . . there is a certain self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) that makes them sources of their own internal actions and, so to speak, incorporeal automata.[39]

For Leibniz, the monad operates as the organism's biological prototype or *telos* of its full development or perfectibility. In the case of conscious organisms like animals and humans, Leibniz holds that the monad is in fact the soul — the internal souorce of appetite, striving or *Kraft* that

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[34] Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays,* ed. and trans. R. Ariew and D. Garber (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1989), 181. Quoted in Jolley, *Leibniz,* 67.

[35] Leibniz, *Monadology,* § 56, 198.

[36] Leibniz, *Monadology,* § 7, § 9, 17–18.

[37] Leibniz, *Monadology,* § 78, 27.

[38] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), 276–77.

[39] Leibniz, *Monadology,* 87.

animates the organism and regulates its development. As will become apparent in chapter 8, Goethe's deployment of the Aristotelian concept of the entelechy in relation to the daemonic, appearing in the conversation with Eckermann dated 11 March 1828 (*FA* 2,12:656), is in all likelihood derived from Leibniz's usage of this term in the *Monadology* and its subsequent influence upon Herder's neo-Leibnizian concept of *Kraft.*[40]

Through his extensive deployment of the concept of *Kraft,* Herder shares with Leibniz a dynamic view of the cosmos as the realm in which a divine logic expresses itself through natural forces. Herder scholars such as Robert T. Clark, H. B. Nisbet, and Robert E. Norton have shown that the concept of *Kraft* is central to Herder's thought, while also agreeing that its probable origin lies in the philosophy of Leibniz,[41] and Herder himself seems to confirm this hypothesis in *Gott: Einige Gespräche,* through his acknowledgement of Leibniz's theory of monads as "wirkende Kräfte" associated with individual souls (*HW* 4:708–9).

Herder's use of the concept of *Kraft* is in fact so various and widespread that only a brief, schematic account can be offered here[42] — an account that will focus upon its implications for Herder's theorizations of subjectivity and genius, as well as his remarks concerning daemons and the daemonic. A text from Herder's *Nachlaß* shows that as early as 1769 he attributes the formation of the human body to the presence of an inner, causal principle associated with the concepts of *Kraft* and *Seele.*[43] Later, in Herder's *Metakritik* to Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* — published in 1799, some eighteen years after the first edition of Kant's text — Herder observes that the human being "findet sich am innigsten als *Kraft,* als *Ursache*" (*HW* 8:452). As both H. B. Nisbet and Robert E. Norton observe, this usage of the concept of *Kraft* is most definitely at odds with the tenor of Kant's critical philosophy, since Herder saw *Kraft* as being an inherent causal principle that is resident in the empirical world

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[40] See, in this connection, Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens,* 1:131–32.

[41] Robert T. Clark, "Herder's Conception of *Kraft,*" in *PMLA* 57 (1942): 737–52; H. B. Nisbet, *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science* (Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1970), 9; Robert E. Norton, "Herder's Concept of *Kraft* and the Psychology of Semiotic Functions," in *Johann Gottfried Herder: Academic Disciplines and the Pursuit of Knowledge,* ed. Wulf Koepke (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1996), 22–31.

[42] For a general account of the various conceptualizations of *Kraft* in Herder's works, see the very useful overview provided by Nisbet in *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science,* 8–16.

[43] Hans Dietrich Irmscher, "Aus Herders Nachlaß," in *Euphorion* 54 (1960): 281–94. Discussed by Nisbet in *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science,* 10.

and in individual subjects, rather than as a subjective category of the understanding.[44]

This general, metaphysical understanding of *Kraft* as an indwelling causal principle permeates other areas of Herder's thought. Of particular interest for the purposes of this study is Herder's use of this concept in relation to the theory of language, particularly in his *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (Treatise on the Origin of Language, 1772), a text written in response to a question proposed by the Prussian Academy of Sciences in 1770: "Was it possible for man to invent language solely by his own natural faculties?" Herder eventually won the prize offered by the Academy, and his answer, perhaps best summed up in the following phrase, is an odd compromise between the transcendent mysticism of Hamann, and Herder's immanent concept of *Kraft:* "Der Ursprung der Sprache wird also nur auf eine würdige Art göttlich, so fern er menschlich ist" (*HW* 1:809).

Language, argues Herder, is the expression of a "Naturgesetz" (*HW* 1:698) and as such it emerges from an animal origin (*HW* 1:704). Seen in this way, the earliest, most primitive languages represent the attempts of human animals to conceptualize their environment. Thus, the letters of the alphabet emanated, in the first instance, "nicht aus Buchstaben der Grammatik Gottes," but were belatedly and secondarily developed by humans "aus wilden Tönen freier Organe" (*HW* 1:705). Human language is differentiated by Herder from the sounds made by animals, but only insofar as it develops beyond the animal's instinctive language of feeling into a speech that, when combined with the *Kraft* associated with reason, has the capacity to form reflective concepts (*HW* 1:697). Thus, while animals remain largely determined by instinct, it is humans, according to Herder, who, through "die ganze Einrichtung aller menschlichen Kräfte," are able to obtain a limited measure of freedom from determination by natural forces (*HW* 1:717).

Herder wishes to attribute the origin of language to visible, empirical, and human causes, as opposed to the spiritual, higher-origin-argument put forward traditionally by religious thinkers like Hamann, stating that, at least insofar as a rational account of the origin of language is concerned, "Ein hörendes, aufhorchendes Geschöpf is kennbar, aber kein himmlischer Geist" (*HW* 1:736). Humans, Herder argues, differ from animals in that they are endowed with the combined *Kräfte* of "Verstand, Vernunft, Besinnung" (*HW* 1:717). While animals make sounds that can express emotions arising from sensations like pleasure or pain, only hu-

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[44] Nisbet, *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science,* 9; Norton, "Herder's Concept of *Kraft,*" 27.

mans, says Herder, are capable of reflecting abstractly upon these sensations, and naming or conceptualizing them in language. Language, therefore, arises from the human capacity to reflect upon sensations. Insofar as this capacity for reflection is an eminently human characteristic, Herder maintains that language arises from human sources alone. But in light of Herder's subscription to the Christian belief that humans were originally created by God, he is unable to rule out the contention that the human capacity for reflection — and therefore for language — emanates, in the first instance, from the divine.

Predictably, Hamann received Herder's arguments coolly, responding to them in a number of articles that are too numerous and complex to be dealt with here.[45] An indication of the core of Hamann's objections to Herder's *Treatise* can, however, be gleaned from the second of his responses to it, an essay cryptically entitled "Des Ritters von Rosencreuz letzte Willensmeynung" (The Last Will and Testament of the Knight of the Rose-Cross, 1771), in which he asserts his belief that since the whole of existence has its origin in God as the Divine Creator, then language itself is merely an emanation from the divine Word of God, the ineffable language of revelation:

> Jede Erscheinung der Natur war ein Wort, — das Zeichen, Sinnbild und Unterpfand einer neuen, geheimen, unaussprechlichen, aber desto innigern Vereinigung, Mittheilung und Gemeinschaft göttlicher Energien und Ideen. Alles, was der Mensch am Anfange hörte, mit Augen sah, beschaute und seine Hände betasteten, war ein lebendiges Wort; denn Gott war das Wort. Mit diesem Worte im Mund und im Herzen war der Ursprung der Sprache so natürlich, so nahe und leicht, wie ein Kinderspiel. . . .[46]

Hamann's response to Herder on the issue of language is to be expected, given his opposition to the secularizing tendencies of the Enlightenment, but what is the significance of this dispute, and of Jacobi's argument with Herder regarding Spinoza, for the related concepts of the genius and the daemonic?

In chapter 1 of this study, we saw that Plato's conception of the daemonic serves an intermediary function by allowing for communication between the material world and the transcendent realm of the forms. In

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[45] For an in-depth discussion of Hamann's response to Herder's arguments, see James C. O'Flaherty, *Johann Georg Hamann* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), 123–35.

[46] Johann Georg Hamann, "Des Ritters von Rosencreuz letzte Willensmeynung," in *Sämtliche Werke,* ed. Joseph Nadler, 6 vols., vol. 3 (Vienna: Herder, 1951), 32.

Stoic and Neo-Platonic thought, the Platonic notion of the daemon as outlined in *Timaeus* 90a–d is then partially secularized through being associated with the indwelling faculty of *nous* or reason. In Herder, this process of secularization continues as a result of the influence of Spinoza. When Spinoza asserts that God exists through nature, he effectively bypasses the Platonic split between the corporeal world and the forms. As a consequence, the genius, or the daemonically inspired individual, is no longer required to mediate between a higher, divine realm, and the lower, human level of existence. On the contrary, the Herderian genius is a medium who relays information about a divinely-infused nature, by deploying the eminently human, and eminently natural, faculties of language and artistic expression.

Herder's conceptualization of the daemonic genius is presented most comprehensively in the *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität* (Letters for the Advancement of Humanity, 1792–97), a work commenced some twenty years after the publication of the *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*. Of particular interest for Herder's understanding of the daemon and its relation to the concept of genius is the sixty-third letter appearing within the "Sechste Sammlung" (sixth collection) of the *Briefe,* published in 1795.

Letter 63 begins with the proposition that ancient Greek art is a "Schule der Humanität" (*HW* 7:363). The origins of Herder's conception of *Humanität* can be traced back to the *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache,* in which human beings are differentiated from animals by virtue of their capacity for self-reflection and the formation of concepts expressed through language. This understanding of *Humanität* is then elaborated upon by Herder in the *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind, 1784–91) in which he associates human rationality and linguistic capability with freedom, autonomy, self-determination, morality, and the capacity for progressive historical development or *Bildung* (*HW* 6:154).

In the sixty-third letter of the "Sechste Sammlung," Herder sees the human individual as being akin to a mirror in which the various individual *Kräfte* of nature are brought together, ordered, and valued, and in which nature as a totality reflects upon itself. In this sense, nature sees through human eyes, thinks behind the human brow, feels in the human breast, and works with human hands (*HW* 7:363). Nature is thus akin to a great "Künstler": it underpins all human creative activity, and it expresses itself in the artistic productions of human beings (*HW* 7:363–64). For Herder, ancient Greek art constitutes the most authentic and primordial expression of this relationship between human *Kunst* and the *Kräfte* of nature. This valorization of classical culture is closely bound up with a polemic directed against those elements of Christianity that associate Greek art with

Satanism and evil *Dämonen*. The prejudices of these Christian "Barbaren," proclaims Herder, prevent them from recognizing the true daemon resident in Greek art: the "Dämon der Menschennatur," which expresses "das Ideal der Menschenbildung in ihren reinsten Formen" (*HW* 7:365).

For Herder, the *Dämon* represents that aspect of humanity through which the pantheistic *Kräfte* of nature come to expression. It is for this reason that he often uses the terms *Dämon* and *dämonisch* as synonyms for genius throughout the *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität*.[47] This is not to suggest, however, that Herder is calling for a regression or reversion to primitive levels of expression. On the contrary, the *Dämon* embodies for Herder the human capacity for *Bildung* or development, since it is through harnessing the natural *Kräfte* immanent within each individual that the full potential of humanity is realized. Thus, while the aesthetics of the ancient world represent a high-point in human history, Herder believes that similar artistic achievements are also possible within the context of modernity. Consequently, he observes that "nicht in Athen und Rom allein wurden *dämonische, göttliche* Männer geboren" (*HW* 7:519).

Herder elaborates upon the connections between the modern concept of genius and the classical concept of the daemon in the following passage from his *Kalligone*, written between 1799 and 1800. The ancients, writes Herder,

> sprachen vom Genie weniger, ehrten aber und kultivierten es vielleicht mehr als wir. Die höhere Macht, die einen Menschen zu Hervorbringung *seines* Werks belebet, das wir als unnachahmlich, als unerreichbar erkennen, aber mächtig oder sanft auf uns wirkend fühlen, diese auszeichnende Himmelsgabe nannten sie *Geist, Genius*. Ein mit uns geborner Geist, *δαίμων*, [daimon] vis animi divinior, von dem sie Kultur, Kunst, Fleiß so wenig ausschlossen, das sie vielmehr Ihn als Vater, Stifter, Beleber und Schutzgott aller Kultur und Menschenbelebung anerkannten, priesen, verehrten. (*HW* 8:835)

Here the classical daemon is described, after the manner of Plato and Hamann, as a *Himmelsgabe* that is born with each individual. Yet only a few paragraphs later, this *Himmelsgabe* is associated by Herder with the pantheistic "Naturgeist" (*HW* 8:837). Eventually, a kind of compromise is reached, and genius becomes "ein höherer, himmlischer Geist, wirkend unter Gesetzen der Natur" (*HW* 8:838).

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[47] See, for example, letters 14, 15, and 93 in the *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität* (*HW* 7:85, 519).

Despite this apparent compromise, Herder's adoption of the pantheism of Spinoza displaces Hamann's presentation of the Socratic *daimonion* as transcendent and external. Thus, as Jochen Schmidt observes with respect to the history of the concept of genius in middle to late eighteenth-century Germany, the more decisively the idea of the genius as a creative power of nature gained the upper hand, the more completely the ancient theory of genius as inspiration from an external source was marginalized.[48] In a similar way to the concept of genius, the daemonic also came increasingly to be associated with forces inherent in nature, a process that found its most decisive expression in the works of Goethe.

It is necessary, however, to be wary about seeing Herder's comments pertaining to daemons in both the *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität* and *Kalligone* as direct and definitive influences upon Goethe's concept of the daemonic. By the time that Herder had written both the "Sechste Sammlung" of the *Briefe* (1795) and the relevant passage on genius from *Kalligone* (1799–1800), he had ceased to be a significant intellectual influence upon Goethe. This is due to the fact that from around 1795 onwards Herder disapproved of Goethe's association with Schiller and his increasing interest in Kant's critical philosophy. This philosophical antipathy was then further compounded by personal complications, arising in December 1795, from a financial agreement brokered by Goethe in 1788 between Herder and Goethe's employer, Duke Carl August of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach.[49] Accordingly, by the end of 1795, the formerly close personal and intellectual relationship between Goethe and Herder had come to an end. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the philosophical basis behind Herder's theory of the daemon was already present in his texts of the *Sturm und Drang* period, texts that exerted a profound influence upon the young Goethe.

Herder, Goethe, and the Historical Theory of Genius

The early Strasbourg exchanges between the young Goethe and Herder have been documented at length.[50] My purpose here is merely to establish the extent to which Goethe was convinced by the arguments presented in Herder's *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache,* and by Herder's call for a German national genius after the models of Shakespeare and the

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[48] Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens,* 1:134–35.

[49] For an account of this matter see Boyle, *BGA* 2:288–91.

[50] See, for example, book 10 of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and Boyle, *BGA* 1:94–100.

dubious literary construct known as Ossian. In *Goethe: The Poet and the Age,* Nicholas Boyle writes that Goethe "read each installment" of Herder's *Abhandlung* "as it was written" (*BGA* 1:96). Goethe also mentions Herder's *Treatise* in book 10 of *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* observing that the question posed by the Berlin Academy and answered by Herder seemed to him to be

> einigermaßen müßig: denn wenn Gott den Menschen als Menschen erschaffen hatte, so war ihm ja so gut die Sprache als der aufrechte Gang anerschaffen; so gut er gleich merken mußte, daß er gehen and greifen könne, so gut mußte er auch gewahr werden, daß er mit der Kehle zu singen, und diese Töne durch Zunge, Gaumen und Lippen noch auf verschiedene Weise zu modifizieren vermöge. War der Mensch göttlichen Ursprungs, so war es ja auch die Sprache selbst, und war der Mensch in dem Umkreis der Natur betrachtet, ein natürliches Wesen, so war die Sprache gleichfalls natürlich. Diese beiden Dinge konnte ich wie Seel' und Leib niemals auseinander bringen. (*FA* 1,14:442–43)

Although there is no evidence to suggest that Goethe had been exposed to the thought of Spinoza before 1773,[51] and despite the fact that, according to Robert T. Clark, Herder's first serious mention of Spinoza occurs as late as 1775 (four years after he completed his *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*),[52] Goethe's comments appear to concur with Spinoza's contention that God and nature are effectively identical. In fact, this passage appears to demonstrate quite clearly that Goethe was already something of a pantheist during his time in Strasbourg — that is, if one is prepared to accept the retrospective testimony that he offers in *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* published between 1811 and 1833.

When considered in relation to the spatial dynamics of the daemonic as a conduit between the earthly and the divine, the issue of Goethe's exposure to Spinozism gives rise to some important questions. Did Goethe believe that the divine manifests itself in and through the natural, and that the task of the poet or genius is to give voice to this immanent divinity? Or did he rather hold that God is beyond or above the world, and that the genius must, as it were, bridge the chasm between heaven and earth, bringing the divine light down to humanity? These questions are perhaps best answered when the full extent of Herder's influence

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[51] Boyle writes, "Goethe is known in 1773 to have become acquainted with some of the ideas of Spinoza" (*BGA* 1:160).

[52] Robert T. Clark observes that Herder's first serious mention of Spinoza appears in a letter to Gleim dated February 15, 1775. See Clark, *Herder: His Life and Thought,* 205.

upon the young Goethe is investigated. In *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* an older, wiser and more circumspect Goethe describes his meeting with Herder as having yielded weighty consequences for the trajectory of his life, while at the same time making note of the "abstoßende Puls" of Herder's propensity for sarcasm and bitterness (*FA* 1,14:439). But when the letters that the twenty-two-year-old Goethe wrote to Herder (five years his senior) in 1771 are considered, the picture is much clearer: "Herder, Herder. Bleiben Sie *mir,* was Sie *mir* sind. Binn ich bestimmt Ihr Planet zu seyn so will ich's sein, es gern, es treu seyn. Ein freundlicher Mond der Erde."[53]

If Goethe saw himself as Herder's satellite in 1771, then those works by Herder that convinced Goethe to adopt such a role must be investigated. The tendency toward immanence in Herder's thought has already been seen in his *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache,* a text with which the young Goethe was acquainted. But Herder had also developed a decidedly immanent and historical concept of genius in the 1760's, before his first meeting with Goethe in 1770. In this connection, two texts are particularly noteworthy: Herder's *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode* (Fragments of a Treatise on the Ode, 1765) and his *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur. Fragmente* (Fragments on Recent German Literature, 1765–67).

Written in 1764, Herder's *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode* contains many of the ideas that he began to instill in the young Goethe during their first meetings in Strasbourg in 1770. The ode, argues Herder, is the most primitive, natural, and pure form of poetry known to humankind. Springing from a divine inspiration that "raset trunken den Weg des Affekts," the ode appears to flow from *Kräfte* that are both natural and holy (*HW* 1:80). Herder tells us that the "Geist der Ode ist ein Feuer des Herrn" (*HW* 1:79), while at the same time maintaining that it emerges from a mysterious, apparently human *Kraft* that he calls *Affekt,* a term that is perhaps best translated as emotion or feeling:[54]

> Der Affekt, der im Anfange stumm, inwendig eingeschlossen, den ganzen Körper erstarrete, und in einem dunkeln Gefühl brausete, durchsteigt allmählig alle kleine Bewegungen, bis er sich in kennbaren Zeichen predigt. Er rollt durch die Mienen und unartikulierte Töne zu der Vernunft herab, wo er sich erst der Sprache bemächtigt: und auch hier durch die genausten Merkmale

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[53] Goethe to Herder, October 1771 (*FA* 2,1:246).

[54] Grimms' *Deutsches Wörterbuch,* 16 vols. (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1854–1954), gives the following synonyms for *Affekt:* "Begierde, Neigung, Gefühlsaufwallung" (s.v. "Affekt").

> der Absteigerung sich endlich in eine Klarheit verliert, die ihm schon sein Selbstgefühl frei läßt. . . . In ihm [Affekt] empfindet man die sinnlichgrößte Einheit, ohne sie mit der Übereinstimmung des Verstandes vergleichen zu können. (*HW* 1:88–90)

This discussion of *Affekt* seems to confirm Jochen Schmidt's view that Herder's theory of poetic inspiration was essentially organic.[55] In spatial terms, *Affekt* appears to be a *Kraft* that originates from deep within the human subject, a subject that partakes in a close relationship with his or her natural surroundings. As *Affekt* rises to the surface of one's conscious awareness, its natural force is inevitably diminished, or at the very least transformed, by the demand for logical, linguistic representation. Herder argues that the ode is the literary form that best approximates the surging, natural force of *Affekt*.

While this discussion of *Affekt* brings to light Herder's comparatively vague and rudimentary account of the psychology of poetic creativity, it also involves an implicit history of the stages of a culture's literary development. According to Herder, the ode is one of the most ancient forms of poetic expression. As a culture reaches maturity, the natural, primitive, almost animal characteristics of the ode are gradually replaced by more rational forms of expression, since

> die Poesie stets sinken *muß* von der goldnen Höhe ihres Ursprunges. . . . Je mehr sich die Gegenstände erweitern, die menschlichen *Geistes*kräfte sich entwickeln, desto mehr ersterben die Fähigkeiten der sinnlichen Tierseele. Die Ausbreitung der Wissenschaften verengert die Künste, die Ausbildung der Poetik die Poesie; endlich haben wir Regeln, statt poetischer Empfindungen; wir borgen Reste aus den Alten und die Dichtkunst ist tot. (*HW* 1:85)

Herder laments the German preoccupation with classical themes and motifs. In looking obsessively to the past, Herder implies that German literature neglects its present and its future. For Herder, this state of affairs can only be remedied by a figure capable of renewing German literature by writing exclusively German odes:

> Wenn im Morgenländer der Sohn der Götter, im Griechenland der freie Held; im Römer der bürgerliche Soldat — was schläft im Deutschen? . . . Metamorphosen eines Deutschen sollten nicht Ovidisch sein; so wenig als der Held Homers Aeneas wurde. — Shakespeares Schriften und die nordische Edda, der Barden und Skaldrer Gesänge müssen unsere Poesie bestimmen: vielleicht

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[55] Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens,* 1:132.

> würden wir alsdenn auch Originalstücke von Oden haben, ohne daß sie durch eine antike Stellung sich einen Wert geben dörfen. (*HW* 1:85–86)

The situation, then, appears to call for a genius, and it is this call that Herder endeavors to answer in the second collection of fragments from *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur*. In the introduction to this collection, Herder points out that genius cannot be roused by analyzing it as a concept, as such an analysis would result only in the institution of theoretical prerequisites for its creation. In a later fragment from the third collection, it becomes quite clear that Herder associates genius with the idea of *Kraft,* and with the transgression of rules and principles, observing "wenn . . . das Genie hevorbricht: so ists rasend, reißt alles nieder, und schreckt Gelehrte und Ungelehrte" (*HW* 1:411).

If we keep in mind Herder's historical understanding of cultures and national literatures, it becomes apparent that in calling for a new German genius, he effectively is asking for nothing less than a complete renewal of German language and culture, a renewal that would arrest the historical inertia of poetic decline outlined in his *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode*. But Herder's imagined renewal was simply not possible in late eighteenth-century Germany. In proposing a return to a kind of *Ursprache* or primal-language, a language steeped in nature and rustic innocence, Herder's philosophy runs up against a problem also encountered by the thought of Rousseau: the difficulty, if not impossibility, of returning to nature via the path of culture. The task of writing a new, original and originary German poetry that could at once bypass the thought of the Enlightenment, the cultural relics of antiquity, and an increasingly international and cosmopolitan literary milieu, was an impossible one. As a result, Herder's proposed return to a poetics of nature may have led only to more sophisticated forms of culture — forms that specialized in the process of manufacturing counterfeit versions of natural or earthy poetic artifacts.

One of these developments can be seen in the cultural fieldwork undertaken by Goethe at Herder's suggestion. In the first half of 1771, Goethe toured Alsace with the aim of collecting local songs and poems that might live up to Herder's ideal of the authentic German ode. A heady dispatch from the cultural researcher to his master, in which he reports that he has snatched ancient folk-songs from the throats of old mothers, is indicative of Herder's great influence upon the young Goethe.[56] But the fact that these songs ceased to be innocent and natural

[56] Goethe to Herder, September 1771, in *FA* 2,1:239.

at the very moment in which they were collected as cultural artifacts — artifacts intended to lend support to Herder's program of national literary renewal — appears to have escaped the young Goethe. Likewise, Goethe was also drawn in by another example of constructed primitivism and earthiness: the songs of Ossian. Written by James Macpherson, and published under various titles such as *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland* (1760) and *The Poems of Ossian* (1763), these songs were purportedly translations of ancient Gaelic originals, written by the Celtic bard known as Ossian. Rudolf Tombo, the scholar whose *Ossian in Germany* is the most definitive study of the cult of Ossian in German literature, reveals that Macpherson was no more than a modern artificer who created the poems of Ossian out of fragments from old Irish folk-songs. Nevertheless, this highly artificial and self-conscious construction was "accepted as genuine by a credulous age in a moment of blind enthusiasm."[57]

Goethe was subject to the blind enthusiasm with which Ossian was received in Germany, an enthusiasm that likewise infected Klopstock, Tieck, and Novalis, among others. Keen to share his new interest with Herder, Goethe sent him an English edition of Ossian, along with some of his own translations of other Ossianic fragments, in 1771.[58] But Herder was at that time already an ardent follower of the Ossian cult, as is evident in his *Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker* (Extract from a Correspondence about Ossian and the Songs of Ancient People), a pro-Ossianic piece written in 1771, and based upon Herder's readings of German translations of Macpherson's text. In short, Herder's piece sees Ossian as the prototype of the people's poet — the poet who, at least in Herder's view, speaks in a common, sensuous language that lies far closer to nature, and to Germanic cultural heritage, than do imitators of Homer or Ovid. The fact that Ossian was a fabrication was not the point. Rather, as Robert T. Clark puts it, Ossian was invented in order to suit the aesthetic preoccupations of the late eighteenth century — preoccupations that lie at the heart of the organic understanding of culture that would come to infuse European Romanticism.[59]

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[57] Rudolf Tombo, *Ossian in Germany* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 66–67.

[58] Herder's biographer, Robert T. Clark, reports that Goethe sent Herder an English edition of Ossian in 1771 (*Herder: His Life and Thought,* 146). Goethe's translations of Ossian from Celtic into German and English can be found in letter to Herder written in 1771. See Goethe to Herder, September 1771, in *FA* 2,1:240–5.

[59] Clark, *Herder: His Life and Thought,* 143.

If the rapturous reception received by Ossian from minds like those of Herder and Goethe can be seen to reflect the cultural anxieties and preoccupations of mid- to late eighteenth-century Germany, then what implications does this have for an understanding of the daemonic? The answer to this question is that Ossian was an artificially constructed prototype of the genius, the daemonically inspired individual. Our concern here is particularly with the purported sources or origins of Ossian's apparent inspiration. Unlike the Socrates of Plato, and Hamann's Christian version of Socrates, Ossian is not a god-intoxicated poet who receives divine inspiration from an external, extra-worldly deity. Rather, if there is a God at work in Ossian — or at least in the Ossian championed by Herder, and, after him, Goethe — then it could only be the God of Spinoza: the pantheistic *Kraft* that is immanently located in nature, and discernable as the efficient cause of all things natural.

Herder's literary adaptation of pantheism is crucial for an understanding of Goethe's notion of the daemonic. This is because Herder transplanted Spinoza's natural, pantheistic conception of God into the realm of culture, and, more specifically, into German literary culture. Herder insistently asked: "Was schläft im Deutschen?" Given the fact that Herder often associated nature with culture by seeing all literary production as a kind of emanation from the natural seeds of language, his image of the genius was likewise simultaneously natural and cultural. Ossian was thus, for Herder, the poet of nature, a kind of conduit or medium who gave voice to natural forces, while at the same time representing a kind of artistic zenith, in that he fulfilled Herder's program for art: the expression of the natural, the organic, and the provincial, in an appropriately rustic literary form: the song or dithyramb. The only problem was that Ossian, like Herder's other model of the genius — Shakespeare — did not live in Germany. The German genius continued to slumber. The fact that Herder's image of the genius was colored by the decidedly unnatural, cultural construct of Ossian did not matter. Far from personifying an organic conception of nature, this notion of genius would become the cultural construct par excellence, a construct that would unify the disparate forces that made up German cultural life in the second half of the eighteenth century: the pantheism of Spinoza, the monadism of Leibniz, the inward-looking tendencies of pietism, and the cult of *Empfindsamkeit* (sensitivity). As will become apparent in chapters 3 and 4, all of these forces would find their expression in poems by Goethe like "Mahomets Gesang" and "Prometheus," as well as in his novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* — texts that would have been inconceivable without Herder's influence upon the young Goethe.

3: Romanticism and Unlimited Subjectivity: "Mahomets Gesang"

THIS CHAPTER WILL DEMONSTRATE the way in which Goethe's early understandings of subjectivity and poetic genius are influenced by texts written by Herder in the late 1760s and early 1770s — texts that were examined in the previous chapter of this study: *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode, Über die neuere deutsche Literatur,* and *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*. It is, I will argue, Herder's pantheistic-Leibnizian conceptualizations of *Affekt, Kraft,* and language that inform Goethe's early depictions of daemonic genius in works such as "Von deutscher Baukunst" (1772) and particularly the poem "Mahomets Gesang" (1773). But before embarking upon an exploration of these texts, it is necessary to address some questions in relation to the aesthetic movement known as Romanticism.

Excursus on Romanticism I

A central contention of this study is that the European Romantic movement offers one of the richest veins of artistic and philosophical material relating to the daemonic in the history of Western culture. This contention is substantiated by a number of studies that focus upon the theme of the daemonic in relation to the works of key figures in the history of both English and German Romanticism.[1] But in order for the term Romantic to have any functional meaning within the context of this study, it is necessary to endow it with a degree of specificity — not so much in terms of the vexing issue of its exact periodization, but rather with regard to its thematic and philosophical content, as well as its role within the history of

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[1] See, for example: Stefan Zweig, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon: Hölderlin, Kleist, Nietzsche* (Leipzig: Insel, 1928); J. B. Beer, *Coleridge the Visionary* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959); Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1964), 49, 61; Charles I. Patterson Jr., *The Daemonic in the Poetry of John Keats* (Urbana, IL: U of Illinois P, 1970); Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence,* 2nd ed. (1973; New York: Oxford UP, 1997), 100; Harold Bloom, *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1976), 209.

ideas. Such a task becomes particularly difficult when one seeks to speak about Romanticism in Western literature *per se,* as opposed to its manifestations within the confines of a particular national culture.

When we consider periodization alone, the traditional approaches to Romanticism in German and Anglo-American literary scholarship are often fundamentally at odds.[2] In his classic study of the period, *Die romantische Schule* (The Romantic School, 1833), Heinrich Heine writes that German Romanticism arose during the last years of the eighteenth century, having August Wilhelm (1767–1845) and Friedrich (1772–1829) Schlegel as its directors.[3] Significantly, this more or less official model of German literary history refuses to see the earlier *Sturm und Drang* movement and some of its key figures — namely Herder, the young Goethe and the early Schiller — as having belonged to the movement known as *Romantik*. Although Heine points out that Goethe's early works were much admired by the Schlegels and by other early Romantics like Novalis (1772–1801), Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773–98), he sees Goethe nevertheless as having stood at a critical distance from the German Romantic movement proper. Even Walter Benjamin, in his essay "Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik" (The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism, 1920) sees the core of German Romanticism, not in the early Herder, Goethe, or Schiller, but rather in the works of Friedrich Schlegel (particularly the *Athenäum,* which appeared between 1798 and 1800) and Novalis.[4] Apart from the early Romantics mentioned above, standard texts on German Romanticism often go on to describe two further periods: a middle or high phase of the *Heidelberger Romantik,* taking place between 1805 and 1808, and involving figures like Clemens Brentano (1778–1842), Achim von Arnim (1781–1831), Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm (1786–1859) Grimm, along with Joseph Freiherr von Eichen-

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[2] See, for example, Arndt Bohm, "Goethe and the Romantics," in *The Literature of German Romanticism,* ed. Dennis F. Mahoney, 35–60 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), vol. 8 of *The Camden House History of German Literature,* 10 vols.

[3] Heinrich Heine, *Die romantische Schule,* in *Werke,* ed. Helmut Schanze, vol. 4, *Schriften über Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1968), 180. Rudolf Haym's later work *Die romantische Schule* (1870), also confines the movement to the Jena Romantics: the Schlegels, Novalis, and Tieck. Rudolf Haym, *Die romantische Schule: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Geistes* (1870; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961).

[4] Walter Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik,* in *BGS* 1.1:14–15.

dorff (1788–1857); followed by a late *Berliner* period characterized by writers such as E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822), Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843), and Adelbert von Chamisso (1781–1838), among others.[5]

The picture in Anglo-American criticism is very different. Most Anglo-American scholars of Romanticism would see the Romantic movement as beginning in the 1780s with the early works of William Blake (1757–1827), continuing through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in key writers like William Wordsworth (1770–1850), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), Lord Byron (1788–1824), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797–1851), along with John Keats (1795–1821), before tapering out during the 1830s.[6] It has also now become a commonplace of Anglo-American literary criticism to see the works of Goethe and Schiller as part of this broader Romantic movement, beginning with the influence exerted upon English audiences by *Sturm und Drang* works like *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* and Schiller's *Die Räuber* (The Robbers, 1781), and continuing into the phase of German literary history known as *Weimarer Klassik* (Weimar Classicism, roughly 1786–1805),[7] which falls within the broader period described by Anglo-American scholars as Romantic.[8] In fact, when used in English-language criticism, and particularly when used by critics like Harold Bloom, the term Romantic often refers more to a kind of sensibility or mode of thinking than to a finite period in literary history.[9] In-

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[5] See, for example, J. G. Robertson, *A History of German Literature* (London: William Blackwood, 1966); *Erläuterungen zur deutschen Literatur: Romantik,* ed. Kurt Böttcher (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1967); and, most recently, Dennis F. Mahoney's introduction to *The Literature of German Romanticism,* 1–24.

[6] See, for example, Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 333–98.

[7] Here I follow the periodization offered by Simon Richter in his introduction to *The Literature of Weimar Classicism,* ed. Richter, 3–44 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), vol. 7 of *The Camden House History of German Literature.*

[8] On the issue of Goethe's position in relation to Romanticism, see: Arndt Bohm, "Goethe and the Romantics," 35; Robert C. Holub, "The Romanticizing of Goethe: A Study in the Acquisition of a Label," in *English and German Romanticism: Cross-Currents and Controversies,* ed. James Pipkin (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1985), 349–61.

[9] Bloom is renowned for holding the comparatively radical view that Romanticism constitutes a literary dialogue that extends from Homer, through the Renaissance and European Romanticism, to twentieth-century American poets such as Wallace Stevens (1879–1955) and Hart Crane (1899–1932). Identifying the core of Ro-

evitably, the historical breadth of the Romantic movement depends upon how Romanticism is defined, but it is not my intention to give an exhaustive list of such definitions here.[10] Rather, I intend to pose two interrelated questions. First, can the early works of Goethe be seen — in a broader European context — as Romantic and if so, why? And second, what is the connection between this so-called Romanticism and the theme of the daemonic?

Given that one of the broader themes of this study is the process through which Platonic and Neo-Platonic patterns of thinking were modified and secularized in modern European literature, it is useful to deploy a theory of Romanticism that uses secularization as its cornerstone. At the beginning of his book *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (1971), M. H. Abrams makes the following statement on the subject of Romanticism, a statement worth quoting at length:

> It is a historical commonplace that the course of Western thought since the Renaissance has been one of progressive secularization, but it is easy to mistake the way in which that process took place. Secular thinkers have no more been able to work free of the centuries-old Judaeo-Christian culture than Christian authors were able to work free of their inheritance of classical and pagan thought. The process — outside the exact sciences at any rate — has not been the dele-

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manticism in the literary *topos* of the quest-romance, Bloom argues that the Odyssey is the "first Romantic poem," a poem that is subsequently reworked ad infinitum in the Western tradition. Bloom outlines this view most clearly in *The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1971).

[10] On this issue, see Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1983). In part 1, chapter 2 of McGann's study — entitled "Some Current Problems in Literary Criticism" — the author gives an account of twentieth-century debates regarding the definition of Romanticism. In short, McGann contends that this debate centers upon the contrasting views of two key figures, A. O. Lovejoy and René Wellek. On the one hand, Lovejoy argues for a "discrimination of Romanticisms," contending that the features of the Romantic movement resist all attempts at a unified historical or thematic analysis. See A. O. Lovejoy, "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms," *PMLA* 39 (1924): 229–53. Wellek, by contrast, argues for a holistic view of the Romantic movement as it manifested itself in England, France, and Germany. For Wellek, Romantic literature is the "kind of literature produced after Neoclassicism." See Wellek, "The Concept of Romanticism in Literary History," in *Concepts of Criticism,* ed. Stephen G. Nichols (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1963), 128–98, particularly 161.

> tion and replacement of religious ideas but rather the assimilation and reinterpretation of religious ideas, as constitutive elements in a world view founded on secular premises. Much of what distinguishes writers I call "Romantic" derives from the fact that they undertook, whatever their religious creed or lack of creed, to save traditional concepts, schemes, and values which had been based on the relation of the Creator to his creature and creation, but to reformulate them within the prevailing two-term system of subject and object, ego and non-ego, the human mind or consciousness and its transactions with nature. Despite their displacement from a supernatural to a natural frame of reference, however, the ancient problems, terminology, and ways of thinking about human nature and history survived, as the implicit distinctions and categories through which even radically secular writers saw themselves and their world, and as the presuppositions and forms of their thinking about the condition, the milieu, the essential values and aspirations, and the history and destiny of the individual and of mankind.[11]

Abrams presents the reader with a complex model of history in which the Enlightenment's values of progress and revolution are problematized. Progress, according to Abrams, is never absolute. Deep-seated and ancient human tendencies, particularly religious ways of thinking about the individual and his or her role in history, are never completely abandoned in the march towards enlightenment and secularization. Rather, these modes of thought remain within individual and collective consciousness as a kind of cultural memory or palimpsest that is often subsequently altered and reformulated in the attempt to accommodate ancient ways of thinking to newer, increasingly secular, cultural mores. Abrams sees Romanticism as representing an attempt to reconcile ancient religious values — and when he uses the term religious he refers not only to the Judeo-Christian tradition, but also to classical, Platonic, and Neo-Platonic thought systems — with enlightenment modes of thought. In short, Abrams contends that the Romantics sought "to naturalize the supernatural and to humanize the divine."[12] When characterized in this way, Romanticism is seen not so much as a reaction against the Enlightenment, but rather as a particular cultural tendency situated securely within, or at least alongside, the Enlightenment tradition, in that its role is essentially that of secularizing the religious patterns of thought that have recurred

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[11] M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971), 13.

[12] Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism,* 68.

throughout Western history. In this context, Romanticism and the Enlightenment are united by a shared sense of modernity.

It is, however, necessary to add to this definition of Romanticism the following proviso offered by Charles Taylor in his book *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity.* The term secularization, according to Taylor, is "more a locus of questions than a source of explanations."[13] By this I take Taylor to mean that the project of secularization is not susceptible of completion — that it may open up new questions in its attempts to resolve old ones. In this connection, we should not forget that Abrams calls his book "Natural *Supernaturalism,*" maintaining that, despite the forces of secularization associated with the Enlightenment, Romanticism nevertheless retains a sense of the numinous, the supernatural, and the mythological within nature. In this way, Romanticism resists that purely rationalist element of the Enlightenment uncovered by Horkheimer and Adorno — perhaps best embodied in Bacon's conception of *una scientia universalis* and in Leibniz's notion of *mathesis universalis* — which holds that all phenomena can be accounted for in terms of universal, rational principles (*AGS* 3:23).[14] This rationalist view subscribes to the notion that a complete passage from *mythos* to *logos* can be accomplished without there being what Hans Blumenberg refers to as an "ungelöste Rest" in human experience, a remainder that can only be named and approached through *mythoi* (images or narratives; *BAM,* 437).

Likewise, if it is to acknowledge Taylor's contention that the project of secularization is not susceptible of completion, Abrams's definition of Romanticism would have to account for both a *pantheistic* and a *panentheistic* understanding of existence. On the one hand, the doctrine of pantheism — which, as was seen in chapter 2, is more or less embodied in Spinoza's famous formulation *Deus sive Natura* (God or Nature) — holds that "God's absolute being is identical with the world," that God is in fact reducible to being as it is manifested within the world.[15] The concept of panentheism, by contrast, does not allow for a complete secularization

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[13] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989), 309.

[14] Horkheimer and Adorno find in Bacon's notion of *una scientia universalis* a worldview in which nature is understood to be something that can be "commanded" through the discovery of "the happy match between the mind of man and the nature of things." See Francis Bacon, "In Praise of Human Knowledge," in *The Works of Francis Bacon,* ed. Basil Montague, 16 vols., vol. 1 (London: William Pickering, 1825), 254, cited in *AGS* 3:20.

[15] Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Dictionary of Theology,* trans. Richard Strahan (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 360.

of the divine within the world. Instead, it argues that God cannot simply be identified with the world in a monistic fashion; rather, it sees the world as existing within God, while at the same time not confining God, the divine, or the supernatural within the world's totality.[16]

In reading the works of Goethe in conjunction with M. H. Abrams's broad definition of Romanticism, my intention is not to ignore completely traditional German literary-historical periodizations like the *Sturm und Drang* and *Weimarer Klassik*. Nor do I wish to efface the many differences between the respective *Weltanschauungen* of the later Goethe and his younger German Romantic contemporaries like the Schlegels and Novalis. In this connection, we should not forget Goethe's often virulent objections to the productions of many of his Romantic contemporaries,[17] while also keeping in mind the ambiguous light in which many of these selfsame contemporaries viewed Goethe's works — in particular *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.[18] These differences, which arose partly as a result of Goethe's adoption of Weimar Classicism following his first journey to Italy in 1786, will be addressed in chapter 5. Yet by the same token, critics as various as Walter Kaufmann, Nicholas Boyle, Ernst Behler, David E. Wellbery, Hans Blumenberg, and Nicholas Saul have all found it impossible to ignore the affinities and similarities between Goethe and Romantics such as the brothers Schlegel; especially the young Goethe who, in addi-

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[16] Rahner and Vorgrimler, *Dictionary of Theology,* 359–60.

[17] Take, for example, the following passage from Goethe's *Maximen und Reflexionen:* "Das Romantische ist schon in seinen Abgrund verlaufen, das Gräßlichste der neuern Productionen ist kaum noch gesunkener zu denken" (*FA* 1,13:239).

[18] An example of what Heine sees as the ambiguous role played by Goethe with regard to the Romantic movement can be seen in the various ways in which Novalis received *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. On the one hand Novalis sees the text as the Romantic novel par excellence: "Die Philosophie und Moral des Romans sind romantisch" (Novalis, "Aus dem allgemeinem Brouillon, 1798–1799," in *Werke,* ed. Gerhard Schulz, 2nd ed. [Munich: C. H. Beck, 1981], 469). Later, however, Novalis sees Goethe's novel as: "im Grunde ein fatales und albernes Buch — so prätentiös und preziös — undichterisch im höchsten Grade . . . *poetische Maschinerie*" (Novalis, "Fragmente und Studien, 1799–1800," in *Werke,* 545). For a recent discussion of the Romantic reception of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre,* see Gerhart Hoffmeister, "From Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* to Anti-*Meister* Novels: The Romantic Novel between Tieck's *William Lovell* and Hoffmann's *Kater Murr,*" in *The Literature of German Romanticism,* ed. Dennis F. Mahoney, 79–100 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), vol. 8 of *The Camden House History of German Literature.*

tion to his lyrics, also composed works like *Götz von Berlichingen, Werther,* and *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.[19]

It is also important to note that since the publication of *Natural Supernaturalism* in 1971, Abrams's broad and synthetic approach to the European Romantic movement has been exposed to a profound critique by new historicist theoreticians such as Jerome J. McGann. In *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (1983), McGann argues that the study of Romanticism is infused with the ideology of Romanticism to such an extent that any possibility for a critique of Romantic literature and the discourses — both historical and contemporary — that surround it is rendered impossible. Behind this argument lies McGann's understanding of literary works as ideological texts with their own particular social and cultural determinations. The purpose of McGann's book is thus not so much to erect a theory of Romantic poetry as it is to subject what he calls the ideology of Romantic poetry and criticism to a thoroughgoing critique. In this regard, McGann finds noteworthy precursors to his critical procedure in Karl Marx's *Die deutsche Ideologie* (The German Ideology, 1846–48), and particularly in Heinrich Heine's aforementioned study of the Romantic period in Germany, *Die romantische Schule*.

In *The Romantic Ideology,* McGann argues that Abrams's theory of Romanticism is itself deeply Romantic in character. He asserts that by emphasizing the notion that Romanticism is primarily concerned with spiritual issues regarding the relationship between the self and its natural surroundings, Abrams's theory of Romanticism simply repeats and reifies a number of key Romantic self-conceptualizations. The most troubling of these self-conceptualizations, according to McGann, is the notion that human progress is primarily a non-political, internal, private matter played out between the creative soul of the poet and his or her natural surroundings, having little to do with broader social issues.[20]

There is little doubt that McGann is correct when he asserts that the Romantic period was more complex, more contradictory, and more sub-

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[19] See Walter Kaufmann, "Goethe versus Romanticism," in *From Shakespeare to Existentialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1959), 77–78; Boyle, *BGA* 1:ix; Ernst Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 165–80; Wellbery, *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1996), 7–27; Hans Blumenberg, *Goethe zum Beispiel,* ed. Hans Blumenberg-Archiv and Manfred Sommer (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1999), 219; and Nicholas Saul, "The Twentieth Century Reception of Romanticism," in Mahoney, *The Literature of German Romanticism,* 327–59.

[20] McGann, *The Romantic Ideology,* 32.

ject to internal ideological and political tensions than any of its twentieth-century critical characterizations suggests, including that offered by Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism*. In particular, I am inclined to agree with McGann's contention that the literature of the Romantic period, far from being characterized by a sense of unity or singleness of purpose, is more like "a theatre for the conflicts and interactions of the ideologies of Romanticism."[21] At the same time, however, and as McGann has acknowledged since the publication of *The Romantic Ideology* in 1983, in completely doing away with the synthesizing efforts of criticism like those offered by Abrams, one runs the risk of throwing the baby out with the bath water. The baby in this case is an object that is particularly useful to scholars of comparative literature: a historical-critical model through which to contrast and compare the products of European, and not just English or German, Romanticism. Such models or historical theses as that suggested by Abrams are of course necessarily limited in their verisimilitude, but without them both literary history and comparative literature might cease to be possible.

It is significant that McGann himself has, in recent years, sketched out a possible solution to this critical impasse. In his 1992 essay "Rethinking Romanticism," McGann likens literary-historical periodizations in general, and broad synthetic approaches to Romanticism in particular, to Goethe's notion of the *Urphänomen* (primal phenomenon).[22] As we shall see in chapter 5, when Goethe formulated the notion that an *Urpflanze* may exist that could function as a universal type for all forms of botanical life, he only briefly entertained the idea that such a primal plant could exist as a material object. After recovering from this episode of scientific hubris, Goethe came to see the *Urpflanze* as an abstract theoretical model — in more precise philosophical terms, a Neo-Kantian idea of pure reason — against which to map the infinite variations in botanical phenomena. Mirroring Kant's philosophical position in relation to the ideas of pure reason,[23] Goethe did not assert the literal truth of his primal

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[21] McGann, "Rethinking Romanticism," *English Literary History* 59, no. 3 (1992): 735–54.

[22] McGann, "Rethinking Romanticism," 166.

[23] Kant writes of the ideas of pure reason: "Ich verstehe unter der Idee einen notwendigen Vernunftbegriff, dem kein kongruierender Gegenstand in den Sinnen gegeben werden kann." Thus, for Kant, the function of the ideas of pure reason is not to refer to actual, empirical objects, but rather "die Richtung auf eine gewisse Einheit vorzuschreiben, von der der Verstand keinen Begriff hat, und die darauf hinaus geht, alle Verstandeshandlungen, in Ansehung eines jeden Gegenstandes, in ein absolutes Ganzes zusammen zu fassen" (*KW* 2:331).

plant — rather, he demonstrated its contingent and provisional theoretical utility.

In a similar way, the call being made here is not for new historicist approaches to the Romantic period to be discarded completely and replaced by the older history of ideas approach that characterizes books by Abrams like *Natural Supernaturalism*. It is rather a request for a kind of double vision that is particularly apposite when applied to the case of Goethe's position with respect to the often vastly differing elucidations of Romanticism to be found in German and Anglo-American scholarship.

The new historicist critique of the traditional history of ideas approach to literature is by and large correct in its assertion that there can be no cultural domain or set of texts that exist in isolation from nontextual forces like, say, the economy, developments in technology, or general socio-political conditions.[24] It would also now seem to be incontrovertible that the processes of canon formation upon which the history of ideas has traditionally relied are likewise embedded in broader sociocultural issues that exceed strictly literary questions, as McGann has conclusively demonstrated through his explanation of why Byron was always a problematic figure for Anglo-American theorists of Romanticism such as René Wellek.[25]

All of this has led to the view, recently summarized by Gerhard Sauder, that literary epochs and periods are — in a similar way to Kant's ideas of pure reason — "not phenomena that can claim existence in their own right," but rather constructs and hypotheses that require constant revision and reevaluation.[26] At the same time, however, such literary-historical periodizations, theories, and categories also have a provisional use that can be demonstrated when they are brought into confrontation with one another. A case in point exists in the complexities that attend the literary-historical categorization of Goethe. As has already been observed, by traditional German standards Goethe is at best a marginal figure in the history of Romanticism: a figure whose early works inspired some so-called real Romantics like Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, but who later became a famous critic of the pathological elements in Romanticism and a proponent of Weimar Classicism. For Anglo-American critics

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[24] Claire Colebrook, *New Literary Histories: New Historicism and Contemporary Criticism* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997), 23–30.

[25] McGann, "Rethinking Romanticism," 162–63.

[26] Gerhard Sauder, "The *Sturm und Drang* and the Periodization of the Eighteenth Century," in *Literature of the Sturm und Drang,* ed. David Hill, 309–31 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), vol. 6 of *The Camden House History of German Literature*.

like Abrams and René Wellek, Goethe is central to Romanticism, but his anti-Romantic polemics are seldom confronted or understood. Finally, a figure like Heine is able to demonstrate quite clearly the very specific cultural and personal politics behind Goethe's opposition to his younger Romantic contemporaries, and in this respect McGann is right in seeing Heine's socio-political approach as a kind of early prototype for new historicist critical practices.[27]

In short, all of these differing positions regarding Goethe hold some truth, while at the same time being inadequate when left in isolation: the traditional German account fails to see Goethe's significant affinities with major figures in English Romanticism; the Anglo-American position tends to gloss over Goethe's often extreme reactions to his Romantic contemporaries; while Heine's discussion of Goethe is so deeply embedded in both the German *Goethezeit* and the European Romantic period that it is unable to appreciate the latter's contribution to European Romanticism in historical terms.

Where, then, does this leave Abrams's secularization thesis and its application to Goethe's works? The answer to this question lies in the strategic advantages that such a thesis might yield when used as a means to question and broaden the traditional German understanding of Goethe's position with respect to Romanticism, and to assess Goethe's contribution to the Romantic movement in comparison with the works of authors from other national literatures. Such a deployment of Abrams's secularization thesis in *Natural Supernaturalism* would not assert its literal truth, nor its merits at the exclusion of all other theoretical paradigms; rather, it would suggest its strategic potential for opening new perspectives in relation to works of a particular author.

Abrams's understanding of Romanticism as the modern secularization of ancient religious and philosophical thought systems provides a broader ground upon which to theorize the Romantic movement in Germany, and particularly the role played by Goethe and his older contemporaries like Hamann and Herder within that movement. Thus, while keeping in mind the complexities involved in Goethe's relationship to both German Romanticism and to European Romanticism generally, I wish to suggest that when Abrams's broad definition of Romanticism is applied to the German tradition alone, it becomes quite clear that the secular or immanent tendencies to which he alludes in his definition are already present in the epoch referred to as the *Sturm und Drang* period.[28] In fact, when one

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[27] McGann, *The Romantic Ideology,* 11.

[28] Abrams in fact points out in an earlier work, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford UP, 1953), that there is

looks back at the different figures who dominated the *Sturm und Drang* movement through the lens of Abrams's theory of Romanticism, it becomes apparent that they were primarily concerned with religious issues, and, more particularly, with the question of how much ground religious ways of thinking should cede to the processes of secularization. On the one hand, Hamann sought to retain a mystical and mythological notion of the divine by focusing upon the Socratic *daimonion* as a kind of numinous, extra-rational spirit. In this way he sought to show the limits of enlightenment or rationalist thinking, in that the *daimonion* remained, at least for Hamann, a logically inexplicable phenomenon — in Blumenberg's terminology, an "Ungelöste Rest" — in the life of Socrates. On the other hand, Hamann's erstwhile disciple (Herder) was proposing, contra figures like Hamann and Jacobi, that God or the divine exists within the world, within nature, and within the self, and that the role of the artist is to harness the natural, divine energies within the self through the deployment of an eminently human faculty: that of language.

The decisive influence in this process of secularization was the philosophy of Spinoza, which held that nature is a unified whole infused with the divine presence of an indwelling God. The role of what I want to call Romanticism, defined here in the terms laid out by M. H. Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism* and applied heuristically to Goethe's early involvement with Hamann and Herder, then continuing into Goethe's early lyric poetry and the major artistic accomplishment of his youth (*Die Leiden des jungen Werther*), was to interpret and give expression to this divine immanence through the artistic modes of poetry and song — that is to say, through subjective linguistic expression. This is the program developed by Herder and communicated to Goethe in the early 1770s, a program that exerted an enormous influence upon Goethe's early artistic productions, and a program that, as we shall see in chapters 5 and 6, the later Goethe attempted to develop, refine, and refashion in the period of Weimar Classicism. Thus, while keeping in mind Abrams's broad definition of European Romanticism, I am in agreement with both René Wellek and Ernst Behler when they observe that, despite the ideological conflicts between Goethe and his younger Romantic contemporaries, it nevertheless makes perfect sense to place Goethe at the very center of the European Romantic movement.[29]

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fundamental continuity between the ideas of figures like Herder and the productions of later German authors like Wackenroder and Novalis, both of whom belong to the official period of German Romanticism (88–94).

[29] Wellek, "The Concept of Romanticism," 161; Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory,* 2.

Wellek isolates three characteristics peculiar to this movement: "a view of poetry as knowledge of the deepest reality, of nature as a living whole, and of poetry as primarily myth and symbolism."[30] The last of these features appears to concur with Abrams's understanding of Romanticism as a movement that sought to preserve religious *mythoi* by humanizing and secularizing them. Taking Milton's *Paradise Lost* as their model, many Romantic poets sought to rework both classical and Christian religious myths, often with a secular emphasis. One need only mention Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound,* and Goethe's *Faust* in this connection. But Abrams's view is also useful in that it questions two fundamental assumptions that characterize the more cursory treatments of the Romantic period. First, the view that Romanticism is a reactionary and irrational opposite of the Enlightenment, and second, the notion that the Romantic movement was an aesthetic rebellion against classical art forms and, in a broader sense, against classical culture *per se*.

The first view — originating in Heine's *Die romantische Schule* and championed more recently by Isaiah Berlin, among others — equates Romanticism with Catholicism, anti-Rationalism, and perhaps even with the emergence of reactionary politics.[31] The Romantics, its proponents argue, represented an attempt to subvert the Enlightenment and return to the religious obscurantism of the Middle Ages and the chivalric romance. Worse still, they say, Romantics like Rousseau advocated a kind of cultural regression through their valorization of primitive or natural ways of life. But the Rousseau who composed the *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality among Men, 1755) knew that humans could not return to natural innocence. The Romantics were acutely aware that humankind cannot return to a state of nature. The split between human consciousness and the natural world, a split that is at the center of, and inspires, much Romantic literature and philosophy, could be overcome neither by way of cultural regression nor through a primordial reunion with the earth enacted in the process of death. Instead, Romantic philosophy developed a method of projecting the past into the future, as a normative *telos*.

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[30] Wellek, "The Concept of Romanticism," 161.

[31] See Berlin's discussion of Romanticism as "The Counter Enlightenment" in *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas,* ed. Henry Hardy (London: Pimlico, 1997), 1–21. Berlin also reiterates this view in *The Roots of Romanticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1999).

In chapter 1 of this study I discussed one of the earliest examples of the daemonic in the thought of Empedocles. The daemon, in Empedocles' *Katharmoi,* has been exiled from the realm of divinity, and his life thus constitutes an attempt to return to his divine origin. This essentially circular pattern of Paradise or Divinity, succeeded by a fall from this state — often attributable to a transgression of divine law, or simply to Necessity — followed by the protagonist's attempt to return to his or her former divine status, is a central characteristic of Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy. M. H. Abrams has shown that in Romantic thought, this ancient model of Paradise/Fall/Return remains as a kind of palimpsest, overwritten by a major post-classical development in Western thought: a linear understanding of history, partly attributable to Christian eschatology, and partly due to the Enlightenment's notion of progress. In the Romantic period, the daemonic becomes an amalgam of these two models: the circular and linear understandings of history. Whereas the Platonic daemon strove for a reunion with the forms, and thus with the divine origin, *logos,* or Father, the Romantic daemon is the Poet-as-Genius who strives for a reunion with his lost mother, the natural world, which is separated from the human subject as a precondition of consciousness, but which may be re-approximated in poetry and song through humankind's rediscovery of nature, or the natural voice, within the self. It is this secularized sense of the daemonic that this chapter will seek to uncover in Goethe's early works, and particularly in the poem "Mahomets Gesang."

But the task of returning to nature via culture and poetic consciousness points to a central contradiction in the Romantic philosophy referred to by Abrams. In the very act of discovering his or her poetic voice, and of transforming it into language, the Romantic poet/genius must recognize the painful truth that the very precondition of his or her poetry or song — human consciousness — also represents the barrier that divides the human from a complete reunion with the natural. Humans cannot go back to a preconscious, pre-linguistic state of nature precisely because they possess what Herder calls *Humanität* — the capacity to speak, think abstractly, and engage in the process of *Bildung* or development. What humans can do is conceive of the positive aspects of nature as a *telos* towards which they can travel, just as the Platonic daemon strives for the perfection of the forms by leading the philosophical life, represented in the deeds of Socrates. In this way, the origin, which for the Romantics is a divinely infused, pantheistic conception of nature, becomes the end or goal of Romantic art and philosophy. God/Nature is the beginning and end of us all. Such a philosophy does not advocate a blind, Dionysian celebration of nature as the mystical, chthonic goal of all art: rather, it urges humans to recognize nature and the natural aspects of the self while

also respecting that there is a necessary barrier between the human subject and its other: the natural world. M. H. Abrams describes this model of history as "Progress by reversion," differentiating it explicitly from the Neo-Platonic cycle of Paradise/Fall/Return. He writes:

> In the most representative Romantic version of emanation and return, when the process reverts to its beginning the recovered unity is not, as in the school of Plotinus, the simple, undifferentiated unity of its origin, but a unity which is higher, because it incorporates the intervening differentiations. . . . The self-moving circle, in other words, rotates along a third, a vertical dimension, to close where it had begun, but on a higher plane. It thus fuses the idea of the circular return with the idea of linear progress, to describe a distinctive figure of Romantic thought and imagination — the ascending circle, or spiral.[32]

The Romantic return to nature does not necessarily involve a surrender of human rationality and consciousness — a return to primordial unconsciousness. Rather, it involves a kind of Hegelian *Aufhebung* or sublation, through which the other of nature (consciousness, and more specifically, reason) becomes reintegrated with nature, a reintegration that leads to nature being reaffirmed on a higher level. Through this process, humankind aims towards a cultural idea of nature: a conception of nature that has been exposed to a process of conscious, rational reflection, and then subsequently reconceived as a cultural, poetic ideal. This credo is of course nowhere more clearly expressed than in Schiller's essay "Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung" (On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry, 1795), in which Schiller asks:

> Was hätte . . . eine unscheinbare Blume, eine Quelle, ein bemooster Stein, das Gezwitscher der Vögel, das Summen der Bienen etc. für sich selbst so gefälliges für uns? Was könnte ihm gar einen Anspruch auf unsere Liebe geben? Es sind nicht diese Gegenstände, es ist eine durch sie dargestellte *Idee,* was wir in ihnen lieben. Wir lieben in ihnen das stille schaffende Leben, das ruhige Wirken aus sich selbst, das Dasein nach eignen Gesetzen, die innere Notwendigkeit, die ewige Einheit mit sich selbst. Sie *sind,* was wir *waren;* sie sind, was wir wieder *werden sollen*. Wir waren Natur, wie sie, und unsere Kultur soll uns, auf dem Wege der Vernunft und der Freiheit, zur Natur zurückführen. (*SW* 8:707–8)

A corollary of the process outlined by Schiller is that the concept of the human is also naturalized; although humans are not necessarily identical

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[32] Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism,* 184.

with, or indistinguishable from, nature, they nevertheless emanate from and dwell within the natural world. Nature is thus within the human and constitutes at least partially what it means to be human; even though human consciousness, the very precondition of our ability to conceive of a concept called nature, in some way separates or differentiates humans from their natural surroundings.

Romanticism does not descend inexorably into irrationalism as long as it recognizes boundaries and limits: in particular, the boundary that divides human consciousness from the external world and that therefore constitutes the very ground of human subjectivity — the ego or self. Indeed, as Jerome J. McGann observes in *The Romantic Ideology,* Romantic poetry is sometimes capable of mounting "an implicit — sometimes even an explicit — critical position toward its subject matter."[33] When applied specifically to Goethe, these statements require a good deal of argument and elucidation. In this connection, chapters 4, 5, and 6 of this study will attempt to demonstrate that Goethe can be seen to offer a simultaneous depiction and critique of the model of unlimited subjective longing that prevailed in the earliest phases of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, a mode of subjective longing also referred to by Paul De Man in his discussion of Romanticism as a kind of radical "subjective idealism."[34] Here we need to pay attention to the logical connection between Abrams's broad definition of Romanticism as the secularization of religious ideas, and De Man's later and more specific suggestion that Romanticism (in both Germany and England) may constitute a subjective idealism. In his essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality," De Man observes that in Romantic poetry the relationship between subject and object referred to by Abrams is often displaced by an unlimited mode of subjectivity that completely appropriates and internalizes external objects. In this way, the dialectic between subject and object is transformed, and priority passes from the realm of external objects to the internal world of the subject, creating "something that resembles radical idealism."[35]

As will become apparent in chapter 4, following the discussion of *Werther,* the secularization of religious ideas pointed to by Abrams led to a situation in which the Romantic subject — often understood to be a genius — came to be seen as a secular and human God; a God who creates reality through the subjective imagination, and who harnesses the

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[33] McGann, *The Romantic Ideology,* 2.

[34] Paul De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight* (1971; Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1983), 187–228; here, 198.

[35] De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," 196.

divine forces of nature that exist within the self. The contention of this chapter is that early lyrics by Goethe like "Mahomets Gesang" and "Prometheus" depict precisely the notion of the radical, unlimited, and unbounded subject alluded to by De Man,[36] while (as we shall see in chapter 4) *Werther* begins to critique it. At the same time, however, Goethe's critique of Romanticism does not necessarily preclude the fact that he nevertheless exists within a broad European tradition that I have, following Abrams, described as Romantic. Likewise, it is also a central contention of this study that Goethe, and particularly Goethe's conception of the daemonic, plays a crucial role in the history of Western culture in precisely this field: that is to say, in the recognition and observance of the limits of human subjectivity, and the limits of human reason. But these points will be addressed at a later stage. For now, it is necessary to turn to the second commonplace assumption about Romanticism: namely, that it constitutes an aesthetic rebellion against or rejection of so-called classicism.

A typical example of this view occurs in Hegel's introduction to the *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (Lectures on Aesthetics, 1835–38) in which he endeavors to outline the characteristic features of classical and Romantic art. Hegel begins his discussion with the premise that art attempts to represent ideas by giving them a sensuous shape.[37] Art, argues Hegel, functions as a kind of container that holds (renders formal) the idea, with a greater or lesser degree of success. Classical art represents the perfect unity of the idea and its form, and is the "freie adäquate Einbildung der Idee in die der Idee selber eigentümlich ihrem Begriff nach zugehörige Gestalt."[38] Thus, Hegel argues that classical art is the art of form and of limits. With Romantic art, however, the situation is quite different. Because Romantic art more often than not takes as its subject the theme of the self's regarding of itself, something that Hegel calls "absolute Innerlichkeit," it must always exceed any completed, sensuous representation. This is due to the fact that subjective reflection is an infinite process — it is beyond shape, color, or tone.[39]

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[36] De Man also discusses this notion of the unlimited subject, in *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism,* as the delusion of Romantic individualism that valorizes "the cult of the self as the independent and generative center of the work, the Promethean claim to confer upon the human will absolute attributes reserved to divine categories of Being" (Paul De Man, *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism* [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993], 6).

[37] Hegel, *Werke,* vol. 13, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik,* 103.

[38] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik,* 109.

[39] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik,* 111–14.

For Hegel, Romantic art retreats into the realm of the idea, of inwardness, whereas classical art concerns itself primarily with external and objective forms. Hegel derives this distinction from Schiller, whom he acknowledges as an important precursor in the field of aesthetics.[40] In Schiller's essay "Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung," the naïve resembles Hegel's notion of classical, and the Sentimental is something like the Romantic. In naïve poetry, nature functions as an undivided unity, in the sense that the naïve poet dwells within nature intuitively and unconsciously: he does not abstract an idea of nature from natural phenomena, rather he effectively *is* nature, or at least a medium through which nature expresses itself in an unmediated fashion. This conception of the naïve poet is very close indeed to the notion of genius propagated by Herder. In fact Schiller confirms this by stating that "Naïv muß jedes wahre Genie sein, oder es ist keines" (*SW* 8:718).

So who are these naïve poets? Schiller, like Herder, calls them the ancients, specifically mentioning figures like Homer, while also conceding that Shakespeare is the best example of a naïve poet among the moderns. The sentimental poet, however, is fundamentally different. Unlike the naïve poet, he does not enjoy a kind of primordial oneness with nature. Rather he reflects upon and celebrates nature as a concept, and longs for it as for a lost mother. The sentimental poet is characteristically elegiac. He composes elegies about nature that, for the very reason that they conceptualize nature as an abstract idea, always fall short of being nature. Forever divided from nature, the sentimental poet is characteristically modern. His feeling for nature is, says Schiller, like the "Empfindung des Kranken für die Gesundheit" (*SW* 8:727), and in the next chapter of this study I will examine his apotheosis in the figure of Werther — the sentimental individual par excellence.

But now it is necessary to establish the extent to which the images of the ancients propagated by both Schiller and Hegel are in fact accurate. Did classical culture always manifest an absolute unity between form and content? Or did the beginnings of metaphysical abstraction, of inwardness and the absolute idea, actually begin in the classical age, particularly in the works of Plato? In order to answer this question, one must examine what the term classical actually meant in the eighteenth century, as it clearly did not simply refer to the culture of ancient Greece.

In this connection, a distinction that is far more obvious in German literary criticism than in its Anglo-American counterpart needs to be made: the distinction between *Klassizismus* and *Klassik*. To a large extent *Klassizismus* (or what is commonly understood by the term classicism) has

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[40] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik,* 89–92.

its origins in French neo-classicism, a movement that valorized the aesthetics of figures like Aristotle, Quintilian and Longinus, among others, and that sought to formalize and codify art in a series of classically derived aesthetic norms. The predominant literary credo of *Klassizismus* was the Aristotelian concept of *mimesis:* the notion that art works should present typical scenes or literary *topoi* from the everyday lives of noble individuals. The key literary figures in French neo-classicism were Corneille, Racine, Molière, and La Fontaine, while in Germany eighteenth-century *Klassizismus* received its chief impetus from the works of Lessing and Winckelmann.[41] On the other hand, *Weimarer Klassik* (Weimar Classicism) — an aesthetic credo developed by Goethe and Schiller, but also to a certain degree implicit in Hegel's later *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* — did not place precisely the same emphasis upon the imitation of ancient models. Although Weimar Classicism was clearly influenced by the likes of Lessing and Winckelmann,[42] it was nevertheless more concerned with establishing a progressive, modern program of aesthetics that endeavored to adapt classical notions of form to modern subject matter and in particular, to late-eighteenth-century understandings of subjectivity.[43]

In his study of Hellenism in modernity, David S. Ferris contends that eighteenth-century Hellenism (a category that for Ferris begins with the *Klassizismus* of Winckelmann and extends into the later period of Weimar Classicism) has "written the history of a promise and not a history of Greece."[44] By this Ferris means that the eighteenth-century image of classical culture propagated by the likes of Schiller and Hegel — a culture that is purely formal, sensuous, clear, and complete, and a culture in which a perfect unity is achieved between artistic form and content — is,

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[41] Robert L. Montgomery, "Neo Classical Poetics," in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* ed. Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993), 825–31.

[42] See Simon Richter's discussion of the respective interpretations of the Laocoön statue offered by Lessing and Winckelmann (Richter, "Introduction," in *The Literature of Weimar Classicism,* ed. Richter, 9–13 [Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005], vol. 7 of *The Camden House History of German Literature*).

[43] For discussions of the distinction between *Klassizismus* and *Weimarer Klassik,* see Alexander Heussler, *Klassik und Klassizismus in der deutschen Literatur* (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1952); René Wellek, "The Term and Concept of Classicism in Literary History," in *Discriminations: Further Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1970), 55–89; and Gerhard Schultz, *Die deutsche Literatur zwischen französischer Revolution und Restauration* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1983), 59–69.

[44] David S. Ferris, *Silent Urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2000), xiii.

at least in part, an idealization of, and therefore also a misreading of, ancient Greece.

Following the suggestions of Ferris, I also wish to suggest that eighteenth-century classicism tended to overlook the fact that, insofar as the works of Plato are concerned, there can be no absolute coincidence between form and content in the work of art. The artwork, at third remove from the realm of the *eide* or forms, is forever less than complete, partial, and distorted. This is due to the fact that, like Hegel's absolute Idea, the *eide* themselves exceed any sensuous or corporeal representation; they are in effect formless forms in the sense that they do not yield themselves up to earthly, this-worldly, human experience. Seen in this way, the so-called classical culture propagated by Plato was very far indeed from the formal, sensuous, complete, and unified versions of classicism that we find in both Schiller and Hegel. The Greeks, like the German Romantics, also had a sense of limitlessness, of the sublime. Just as Romantic humanity feels a melancholy longing for a lost oneness with nature, so does classical, Platonic humanity long for the essential unity of the *eide,* a unity distantly remembered by way of *anamnesis.* Both of these types of humanity (the classical-Platonic and the Romantic) wish to revisit, or at least to reapproximate, a Golden Age of unity from which they have somehow fallen. Thus, to reiterate Abrams's notion of Romanticism as a secularized reinterpretation of ancient religious myths, the Romantic longs for an immanent alternative to the Platonic forms — an alternative that manifests itself as a pantheistic, culturally constructed idea of nature.

The existence of an affinity between the worldviews of European Romanticism and Weimar Classicism is confirmed by the transnational phenomenon popularly known as Romantic Hellenism. This phenomenon is perhaps more obviously present in English Romanticism than in its German counterpart, and this is perhaps largely due to the fact that Germanists have tended to see German Romantic Hellenism as Weimar Classicism, particularly with reference to the works of Goethe and Schiller. For now it is merely necessary to point out that the preoccupation with ancient Greek myths, motifs, and sources is a general feature of European Romanticism that can be found in both English and German texts produced during the period of Weimar Classicism (1786–1805).[45] Indeed, as René Wellek has argued, the distinction made by German literary critics

[45] Bernard Herbert Stern argues that by 1786 Romantic Hellenism was "definitely established in English literature." See Bernard Herbert Stern, *The Rise of Romantic Hellenism in English Literature, 1732–1786* (Menasha, WI: George Banta, 1940), 167. See also Timothy Webb, *English Romantic Hellenism, 1700–1824* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1982).

between Romanticism and Weimar Classicism is problematized when one considers that Hellenistic elements can be found in texts from both movements.[46]

It is not possible to resolve the complexities surrounding the relationships between Romanticism, classicism, and Weimar Classicism within the confines of this study.[47] What I do intend to suggest is that there is a fundamental continuity between Goethe's early works and the works of his *Zeit der Klassik,* and that this continuity presents itself quite clearly when one views Goethe's oeuvre through the thematic lens of the daemonic. In considering the influence of the daemonic upon Goethe's early works, a specific question arises: Was there a sense in which the daemonic permeated Goethe's earliest works — works like "Mahomets Gesang" and *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* — before Goethe himself had begun consciously to speculate upon its influence and effects? Or, more specifically, was the young Goethe an exponent of the daemonic before he had formulated his own conception of the term in later works like "Mächtiges Überraschen," "Urworte. Orphisch," *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* and Eckermann's *Gespräche*? As we saw in the introduction to this study, one possible answer to this question is offered by Benno von Wiese, when he suggests that the daemonic is something experienced by the early Goethe of the *Sturm und Drang* period, and then subsequently theorized by the later Goethe in his *Zeit der Klassik*.[48] At this point, then, in preparation for a discussion of the early Goethe, it is necessary to consider a theme that I have already addressed in connection with the works of Plato: the concept of longing and the constellation of German terms that are attached to it in Goethe's writings: *Verlangen, Sehnsucht, Streben*.

Goethe's Early Romanticism, and the Concepts of Youth and Longing

In *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* writing with the benefit of hindsight and the circumspection of old age, Goethe makes the following comments with regard to the concept of *Jugend*. *Jugend,* according to Goethe

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[46] Wellek, "The Concept of Romanticism," 165.

[47] For an account of recent debates and theoretical positions in this field, see Klaus L. Berghahn, "Das Andere der Klassik: Von der 'Klassik-Legende' zur jüngsten Klassik-Diskussion," *Goethe Yearbook* 6 (1992): 1–27.

[48] Wiese, "Das Dämonische und seine Gegenkräfte in der Tragödie Goethes," in *Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel,* 81.

> darf man . . . nur gewähren lassen; nicht sehr lange haftet sie an falschen Maximen; das Leben reißt oder lockt sie bald davon wieder los. . . . Soviel ist aber gewiß, daß die unbestimmten, sich weit ausdehnenden Gefühle der Jugend und ungebildeter Völker allein zum Erhabenen geeignet sind, das, wenn es durch äußere Dinge in uns erregt werden soll, formlos, oder zu unfaßlichen Formen gebildet, uns mit einer Größe umgeben muß, der wir nicht gewachsen sind. (*FA* 1,14:244–45)

Of interest here is not the autobiographical verity of Goethe's testimony, nor am I concerned with the accuracy or inaccuracy of Goethe's characterization of *Jugend*. Rather, I am interested in what might be called, to borrow the title of an early essay by Walter Benjamin, Goethe's "Metaphysik der Jugend": the way in which the term *Jugend* carries a certain rhetorical force in Goethe's oeuvre.[49] Evidently, Goethe associates *Jugend* not only with wildness, inconsistency, and changeability, but also with imaginative and artistic power, expansiveness, the capacity to commune with nature or external objects, and an affinity with the sublime. In a later source, the *Gespräche* with Eckermann, Goethe discusses *Jugend* in relation to his own artistic productivity:

> Ich habe auch meine Liebeslieder und meinen *Werther* nicht zum zweitenmal gemacht. Jene göttliche Erleuchtung, wodurch das Außerordentliche entsteht, werden wir immer mit der Jugend und der *Produktivität* im Bunde finden. (*FA* 2,12:652)

Jugend, then, is also associated by Goethe with divinely inspired productivity. In response to Goethe's linking of youth and productivity, Eckermann remarks: "Sie scheinen . . . Produktivität zu nennen, was man sonst Genie nannte" (*FA* 2,12:652). A few lines on, and in the same entry (dated Tuesday, 11 March 1828), Goethe replies to Eckermann, and his reply comprises one his most comprehensive statements on the concept of the daemonic:

> Jede Produktivität *höchster Art* . . . jede Erfindung, jeder große Gedanke der Früchte bringt und Folge hat, steht in Niemandes Gewalt und ist über aller irdischen Macht erhaben. Dergleichen hat der Mensch als unverhoffte Geschenke von oben, als reine Kinder Gottes, zu betrachten, die er mit freudigem Dank zu empfangen und zu verehren hat. Es ist dem Dämonischen verwandt, das übermächtig mit ihm tut wie es beliebt und dem er sich bewußtlos hingibt, während er glaubt, er handele aus eigenem Antriebe. In

[49] See Walter Benjamin, "Metaphysik der Jugend," in *BGS* 2,1:91–104.

> solchen Fällen ist der Mensch oftmals als ein Werkzeug einer höheren Weltregierung zu betrachten, als ein würdig befundenes Gefäß zur Aufnahme eines göttlichen Einflusses. (*FA* 2,12:657)

In this entry of Eckermann's *Gespräche,* Goethe begins with a retrospective analysis of his own artistic creativity during the 1770s, an analysis that then becomes a meditation upon the ontology of artistic inspiration *per se*. Here Goethe invokes the higher, mythological, external origin argument — the ancient, essentially Platonic, conception of divine inspiration — that Herder was seen to question and undermine in the previous chapter of this study. By the late 1760s, the theory that artistic inspiration emanates from an external, divine source was well on the way to being surmounted by organic theories of genius. These theories were acceptable to Enlightenment sensibilities precisely because they posited the natural individual as the sole source of his or her artistic productivity.

It seems, then, that even at this late stage in his life Goethe had not been able to free himself completely from religious or transcendent explanations for his own apparently preternatural creative power. This is an issue that will be reconsidered at a later stage of this study. For now, I wish merely to draw attention to the fact that, in a single entry of Eckermann's *Gespräche,* the subject of *Jugend* seems to trigger a chain of rhetorical associations that might be characterized as follows: *Jugend,* a time of great productivity, is often a stage of one's life in which genius most readily manifests itself, and genius is always connected with a mythological sense of inspiration — with the daemonic. What then, are the peculiar characteristics, the underlying themes connected with Goethe's conception of *Jugend*? *Jugend,* Goethe suggests, is a stage of life characterized by longing (*Verlangen, Sehnsucht*) and striving (*Streben*). It is this constellation of themes that comes through most strongly in the writings of the young Goethe, particularly in the correspondence of the *Sturm und Drang* period.[50]

It is not, however, my intention to indulge in biographical speculation as to the sources of Goethe's longing. What I do intend to do is outline an aesthetics of longing that can be related to the theme of the daemonic, and then to see how such an aesthetics permeates those works by Goethe that belong to both the *Sturm und Drang* and *Klassik* periods. In chapter 1 of this study, I demonstrated how the theme of longing relates to the daemonic in the philosophy of Plato. Longing represents the philosopher's desire to know the transcendent forms, and this longing is

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[50] See, for example, Goethe to Salzmann, Sesenheim, 19 June 1771 (*FA* 2, 1:230–31).

expressed in two non-rational forms: through *eros,* an erotics of knowledge though which the philosopher is led from the contemplation of physical beauty to beauty as *eidos* or form; and through *poiesis,* the poetic theories outlined particularly in *Ion* and the *Phaedrus,* which see the poet as an intermediary between the material world and the realm of the forms.

In a discussion of Plato that appears in *Zur Farbenlehre* (The Theory of Color, 1810), Goethe too portrays Plato as a philosopher of *Sehnsucht* who is suspended between the forms and the material world. All of Plato's attempts to explain and explore earthly phenomena are, Goethe suggests, ultimately superseded by his metaphysical worldview, his prioritization of, and yearning for, spirit and essence over matter (*FA* 1,23/1:618). But Platonic longing and Goethe's form of longing are very far indeed from being the same thing. A letter that Goethe wrote to Herder at the beginning of 1772 reveals that he was planning to write a drama about the life of Socrates, but was undecided about whether to use Plato's *Symposium,* Hamann's *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten,* or Xenophon as source material. The fact, however, that Goethe's letter contains an extended quotation from Hamann's text, as well as a reference to Hamann's emphasis on the genius of Socrates, suggests that the *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* was uppermost in his mind (*FA* 2,1:252–53). Later in the same letter, Goethe's preoccupation with the Platonic Socrates is further emphasized, when he states (rather melodramatically) that he would happily die if only, like Alcibiades in the *Symposium,* he could spend just one day and one night in the company of Socrates (*FA* 2,1:253). Finally, in July of the same year, Goethe reports to Herder that he is still in the process of researching the life of Socrates through reading both Plato and Xenophon (*FA* 2,1: 255–58). All of this suggests that Socrates — mediated by Plato, Xenophon and Hamann's *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* — was very much on Goethe's agenda in 1772.

In fact, if one is to believe the retrospective testimony that appears in *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* Goethe had, as early as the period spanning 1768–70, already formed his own personal religion based on his acquaintance with Neo-Platonic sources (*FA* 1,14:382).[51] Although this account of Goethe's early religious development was written in 1811, over forty years after the events that it describes,[52] it is nevertheless thematically significant that the young Goethe portrayed in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* subscribes to a Christian adaptation of the Paradise/Fall/Return pattern

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[51] See, in this connection, Nisbet, "Religion and Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe,* ed. Lesley Sharpe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 219–31; here, 225.

[52] See Lieselotte Blumenthal's and Erich Trunz's commentary, *HA* 9:705–6.

of existence — a pattern that has already been encountered in chapter 1 of this study in the philosophy of Plato. According to this worldview, observes Goethe: "die ganze Schöpfung nichts ist und nichts war, als ein Abfallen und Zurückkehren zum Ursprünglichen" (*FA* 1,14:384). On the other hand, an earlier passage from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (also written in 1811) betrays a theology that sounds rather more secular and modern, suggesting that Goethe was viewing his Christian and Neo-Platonic past through a Spinoza-inspired present. Goethe calls this theology "natürliche Religion," and for a young man moving in enlightenment circles, such a theology had certain advantages, since the notion that there is concealed behind nature "ein großes, hervorbringendes, ordnendes und leitendes Wesen" (*FA* 1,14:153) required only the five senses, and not the faith associated with revealed religion.

Goethe's religion was a theology of modernity: caught between Neo-Platonism and Pietism on the one hand and the secular tendencies of the Enlightenment on the other, he formulated a third creed that, as we saw earlier in this chapter, M. H. Abrams identifies as the central characteristic of Romanticism: the preservation of ancient religious thought systems within a secular framework. Thus, Goethe's longing could not direct itself towards the insubstantiality of Plato's forms. Rather, like a true modern, he longed for that from which modern humanity is — or at least imagines itself to be — separated: nature, or, to be more precise, a cultural conception of nature as the mother and source from which humanity has sprung, and to which it must return if it is to be cured of its modern malaise.[53]

In an essay that displays an acute understanding of how the Platonic concept of love-as-longing made its way into Romantic thought — an essay that was also discussed briefly in chapter 1 of this study — the young Georg Lukács accurately diagnoses what we might call Goethe's condition:

> Die Liebe liebt über sich selbst hinaus; "sie will," sagt Sokrates, "im Schönen zeugen und das Schöne gebären." Dahin hatte Sokrates sein Leben hinaufgezwungen und dazu hat er die Jünglinge verführt und getäuscht. Sie sind an ihm aus Geliebten zu Liebenden geworden und der Liebende ist göttlicher als der Geliebte: weil seine Liebe immer unerwidert bleiben muß, weil seine Liebe nur ein Weg der Selbstvollendung ist. "Sie sind," sagt Schiller von den Gegenständen der Sehnsucht, "was wir waren; sie sind was wir wieder werden sollen." Aber das Vergangene und Verlorene ist dadurch ein Wert geworden, daß wir unser Verlorenes, einen Weg und ein Ziel aus seinem Niegewesensein schaffen: dadurch erhebt

[53] Nisbet, "Religion and Philosophy," 225.

> sich die Sehnsucht über ihren Gegenstand, den sie selbst gesetzt, und verliert ihre Gebundenheit an ihr eigenes Ziel.[54]

Lukács's observations serve a double function within the scope of this study. In chapter 1, the above passage was used to elucidate the extent to which Platonic longing directs itself toward a *telos* that is both empty and formless: the forms, argues Lukács, are, at least for human purposes, essentially non-existent and absent, in the sense that they are defined in terms of their not being of this world. Of interest is the way in which Lukács associates Platonic anthropological longing with the arguments outlined in Schiller's essay "Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung." Schiller's objects of longing are fundamentally different, yet in some ways the same, as those of Platonic longing. As we saw earlier in this chapter, the longing of Schiller's sentimental poet is directed towards a kind of Golden Age in which there is no split between the human and the natural. Dwelling unconsciously or pre-consciously within nature, Schiller depicts the naïve poet as being at one with the natural world. Lukács demonstrates a fundamental contradiction within this argument: namely, how can we recall this Golden Age of absolute unity with nature if the very condition of its possibility is the absence of a separation between the external world and the human subject? Or, to be more precise, how can one have a memory of a time in which the very precondition of human memory — human subjectivity, the differentiation of self from other — is absent? The answer to these questions is obviously that we cannot. What we can do is create this preconscious stage of absolute unity with nature as a fiction that then becomes the *raison d'être* for all poetic and philosophical longing and striving. Thus, argues Lukács, the past becomes a goal and longing accordingly becomes limitless and unrequited precisely because its object is endowed with the openness and boundlessness of a fictional phantasm.

Goethe's Early Understanding of Genius

In Goethe's age this phantasm manifests itself in the cultural image of nature as the unified, surging *Kraft* behind all poetic creativity. Related to this conception is the idea of the daemonic genius who is able to harness this *Kraft* through poetry, song, and various other art forms. In the previous chapter of this study I discussed this theory of genius in the work of Herder — a theory that Goethe perpetuates in both essays and poems written during the 1770s.

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[54] Lukács, *Die Seele und die Formen* (Berlin: Egon Fleischl, 1911), 202.

The earliest of these works on genius is the essay "Von deutscher Baukunst" (On German Architecture, 1772), in which Goethe characterizes the genius as an inspired "Halbgott" — a figure who manages to give shape, harmony, and order to the "bildende Natur" that surges within him (*FA* 1,18:116). The key features of Goethe's notion of genius can be listed as follows: unity, originality, autonomy, sincerity, naturalness (*FA* 1,18:117). The genius, having somehow mysteriously originated out of itself, from its own autonomous powers, rises like a daemon in quest of beauty and proportion, the perfect, harmonizing principles that emanate from God or Nature and that the gifted individual is able to intuit. It is here that we begin to approach the myth of genius that prevailed during the *Sturm und Drang* period — a myth that is central to Goethe's early, unbounded Romanticism of limitless longing or striving. This myth is comprised in the notion of the daemonic genius: the "gottgleich" human who, through his or her limitless artistic longing and striving, is able to transcend the scission between the human and the natural, and the human and the divine (*FA* 1,18:117).

But there is a contradiction at work in this definition of genius: namely, how can one engender oneself, how can one constitute one's own origin? According to the definition of genius outlined by Kant in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (*Critique of Judgement,* 1790) — a definition that has its roots in the early Romanticism of Goethe and Herder — genius is a kind of pure originality.[55] Once it is marked with the stain of derivation, it falls into the category of imitation, and there is no mid-point in the schema: either you are a genius or you are not. So, in order to exist, the genius must be born, must come into being, while at the same time having only itself as its origin. Here we are also reminded of Schiller's discussion of the naïve and the sentimental. The genius must be naïve in Schiller's sense of the term, because it must not engage in a mimesis of something (like, for example, nature or God) that precedes it; rather, genius is pure self-creation and self-mimesis — it does not recognize any anterior models or patterns. Thus, so the story goes, genius does not imitate nature, it *is* nature: a pure and unified expression of organic creative *Kräfte*.

This then leads to a secondary contradiction in the theory of genius. In order for the poetic genius to express himself, he must deploy a means of expression: language. But it is precisely the capacity for language — or

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[55] See Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft,* § 46–50 (= *KW* 5: 405–21). See also Günter Blamberger, *Das Geheimnis des Schöpferischen oder: Ingenium est ineffabile? Studien zur Literaturgeschichte der Kreativität zwischen Goethezeit und Moderne* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1991), 65–71.

more precisely, for abstract thinking — that distinguishes the human genius from nature, and in fact prevents the human genius from being self-identical with nature. The desire that corresponds with genius — the longing for a unity with God/Nature — also represents the barrier that forever bars genius from its consummation. The more genius longs for the unity and oneness of nature, the more it reifies and fragments nature through the deployment of abstract signification. Its chief faculty (reflective or abstract language) is thus also its poison.

The historical aspects of Goethe's early definition of genius are clearly present in poems like "Wanderers Sturmlied" (Wanderer's Storm-Song), "Prometheus," and "Ganymed" (Ganymede), all of which can be seen as early examples of Romantic Hellenism. "Wanderers Sturmlied" (written in 1772), with its references to Greek gods such as Jupiter and Apollo, its valorization of Pindar, and its invocation of the ancient notion of genius as a tutelary spirit or guardian deity, represents a looking back to ancient Greece for poetic inspiration. Likewise, "Prometheus" and "Ganymed" (written in 1773 and 1774 respectively) concern themselves with God-like figures from ancient Greek myths. Ganymede, the most beautiful of mortal men, according to Homer, was chosen as a cupbearer to the gods, and thus served as an intermediary between the secular and the divine, as did Prometheus, the individual who stole the divine fire from the gods and gave it to humanity. Clearly then, Goethe did not wish to deny the existence of a Western literary tradition. Rather, Goethe valorized the ancient Greek notion of genius as a daemonic faculty — as a conduit between the earthly and the divine — while at the same time altering the nature of this selfsame daemonic faculty by re-conceiving it within a secular framework. The past is thus not so much denied by Goethe as it is invoked as an alternative to an unacceptable present, the present of neoclassicism.

Again, this echoes Abrams's definition of Romanticism as the continuation of ancient religious ideas within the secular *Weltanschauung* of the Enlightenment. The ancient Greek phase of contact with the divine has, implies Goethe, and after him, Schiller, been lost irretrievably. There can be no going back to this naïve phase, a phase in which the human and God/Nature coalesced as one. Instead, poetry must re-approximate this phase in modernity, through the reinvigoration of genius. The past is therefore not lost but recreated in a present that, in being a transitory point or instant suspended between the ancient and the modern, is able to function as a new origin, a new point of departure for Western literature. In his study of Goethe's poetry of the *Sturm und Drang* period, *The Specular Moment,* David E. Wellbery summarizes the temporal/atemporal logic of Goethe's notion of genius most succinctly:

> *Modernity is the wound of genius.* In this sense, the present is what one must break with in order to make possible a future genius, the author of a new, and native, law. The best way to do this is to renew contact with past genius and to draw therefrom the energy required for the creation of a future that is one's own. In its temporal structure, then, the discourse on genius swings back and forth between the anamnesis of a lost origin and the invocation of a perpetually imminent originality. It is at once nostalgic and utopian, and in both of these shadings sharply critical of modernity.[56]

Situated within modernity, within a period that valorizes nature as an abstract idea, the genius is presented with an impossible task. He must approximate nature from within the realm of culture, thus healing the split between the human and the natural — or, to use Schiller's terminology, he must try to approximate the naïve within a sentimental age. In this endeavor the genius can only fail, and in this way the limitless subjectivity of Goethe's early Romanticism is forced to learn its limits, to understand that an absolute unity between the human and the natural, between subject and object, is neither possible nor desirable. But, as I hope to demonstrate in the following consideration of "Mahomets Gesang," Goethe had not yet learnt this lesson by late 1772. It was a lesson that he would learn during and after the composition of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*.

Water as Subjectivity I: "Mahomets Gesang"

The poem "Mahomets Gesang" suggests a Goethe still in the grip of an early, unlimited, or unbounded Romanticism. Taking as its subject the life of the prophet Mohammed, the poem depicts the course of a mountain stream on its journey to the ocean. But "Mahomets Gesang" is very far indeed from being a poem specifically about Islam. Rather, as Erich Trunz observes in his commentary on the poem, "Mahomets Gesang" is a representation of the prophet's course, his trajectory, not his teaching (*HA* 1:470). Indeed, this is first and foremost a poem about *Kraft* and trajectory: that is to say, the trajectory of an all-powerful and overweening subjectivity — the trajectory of the youthful genius who is driven by his indwelling energy or daemon.[57]

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[56] Wellbery, *The Specular Moment,* 129.

[57] Here I follow Ellis Dye, who argues that Goethe saw Mahomet's strong personality as being related to what he would later, in *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* refer to as the "ungeheure Kraft" (*FA* 1,14:841) displayed by *das Dämonische* when manifested within individuals. See Ellis Dye, *Love and Death in Goethe: "One and Double"* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), 72.

Of interest is Goethe's choice of perspective for "Mahomets Gesang." It differs from his three other major poems on the subject of genius — "Wanderers Sturmlied," "Prometheus," and "Ganymed" — in that the narrative voice of the poem does not occupy the subjective position of the poem's protagonist. Instead, Goethe presents us with a panoramic, external view of the protagonist/stream as it descends toward the sea. This may be due to the fact that the poem aims to present the life of a figure (Mohammed) who exists at some cultural distance from Goethe. But despite the poem's subject matter, it seems that its speaker experiences a strong sense of identification with the position of the protagonist.[58] The poem (*FA* 1,1:193–95) begins by placing a positive value upon the notion of youth:

Seht den Felsenquell
Freudehell
Wie ein Sternenblick!
Über Wolken
Nährten seine Jugend
Gute Geister
Zwischen Klippen im Gebüsch.

Jünglingfrisch
Tanzt er aus der Wolke
Auf die Marmorfelsen nieder
Jauchzet wieder
Nach dem Himmel

The youthful stream emerges "aus der Wolke," from a mysterious, unseen origin. It is apparently self-generating, for one hears nothing of its parentage, and in this respect it concurs with the notion that genius should be absolutely original — having only itself as origin. The "Gute Geister" that fueled or nourished the stream's youth exist within an ancient tradition of genius discourse, a tradition that was seen earlier in this study in the myriad of guardian deities that proliferate in Neo-Platonism. Goethe's choice of water as an appropriate metaphor for genius and subjectivity is by no means accidental. This *topos* appears in the French Encyclopedia's article

[58] A slightly different version of "Mahomets Gesang" appears in the drama fragment *Mahomet,* written by Goethe in 1773. In *Mahomet,* the poem is sung by Mohammed's daughter and son-in-law. This factor reinforces the view that the narrative voice of the poem is not identical with the position of its protagonist. See *FA* 1,4: 249–53.

devoted to *Enthousiasme* (Enthusiasm),[59] and can be traced back at least as far as Horace's description, outlined in the *Odes,* of Pindar's genius.[60] The most likely source, however, for Goethe's choice of metaphor in "Mahomets Gesang" is the elaboration upon the aforementioned passage from Horace offered by Herder in *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur:*

> So fließt ein majestätischer Strom, reich um Arme auszulassen, und sparsam, sie wieder an sich zu ziehen, in seinem breiten Bette fort, und wälzt sich mit hundert Händen brausend vom Felsen herab, um sich im Tale zusammenzufinden: ein großer, gewaltiger Strom, der Name seiner Gegend. (*HW* 1:341)

The image of water that Goethe derives from Herder represents absolute unity, fluid adaptability, *Kraft* (both artistic and sexual), and the naming power of language. The stream in Goethe's poem rushes exultantly "Durch die Gipfelgänge," giving life and health to flowers and pastures as it flows. Then Goethe endows his stream/protagonist with another characteristic feature of genius and his early unlimited Romanticism — boundlessness, the refusal to recognize limits:

> Doch ihn hält kein Schattental
> Keine Blumen
> Die ihm seine Knie umschlingen
> Ihm mit Liebesaugen schmeicheln
> Nach der Ebne dringt sein Lauf
> Schlangewandelnd.

For Plato the daemonic operates as both an erotics and a poetics — by either of these means the individual may attempt to gain knowledge of the forms. In Goethe, the non-rational modes of *eros* and *poiesis* become almost indistinguishably fused in a form of longing that cannot be satisfied by any finite love object. The stream in "Mahomets Gesang" is unmistakably phallic, taking on both the image of biblical sexuality (the snake), and, later in the poem, a more anatomical resonance as a swelling force:

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[59] Diderot, "Enthousiasme," *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers,* 35 vols., vol. 5 (1751–80; Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann, 1966), 719–22.

[60] In Ode 5, 2, Horace describes Pindar's poetic talent in the following way: "A river bursts its banks and rushes down a / Mountain with uncontrollable momentum, / Rain-saturated, churning, chanting thunder — / There you have Pindar's style, / Who earns Apollo's diadem of laurel / In all his moods" (Horace, *The Odes and the Centennial Hymn,* trans. James Michie [Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963], 187).

"Und nun schwillt er / Herrlicher." Sexuality and subjectivity have now become one, and in this context *eros* functions as a metonym for forces of nature. Just as Plato's notion of the daemonic corresponds with the human capacity to approach the forms, so Goethe's early conception of the daemonic expresses itself through humankind's link with the pantheistic natural order, an order that expresses itself through biological imperatives, and, in particular, through the biological imperative of procreation.

But the natural order is also subject to death. As the protagonist continues its course, its *Bäche* — fearful of death — petition it to swallow them up in its life-giving, life-sustaining flow:

Bäche schmiegen
Sich gesellig an
Nun tritt er
In die Ebne silberprangend
Und die Ebne prangt mit ihm
Und die Flüsse von der Ebne
Und die Bäche von Gebürgen
Jauchzen ihm und rufen: Bruder!
Bruder nimm die Brüder mit!
Mit zu deinem Alten Vater
Zu dem ewgen Ozean
Der mit weitverbreiten Armen
Unsrer wartet
Die sich ach vergebens öffnen
Seine Sehnenden zu fassen
Denn uns frißt in öder Wüste
Gier'ger Sand
Die Sonne droben
Saugt an unserm Blut
Ein Hügel
Hemmet uns zum Teiche!
Bruder!
Nimm die Brüder von der Ebne
Nimm die Brüder von Gebürgen
Mit zu deinem Vater mit.

The imagery of the poem suggests that death can be mitigated or perhaps even overcome by two different means: the erotic and the poetic. Through *eros* humans procreate and thus secure a measure of immortality for their species. Although this process does not manifest itself literally within "Mahomets Gesang," one nevertheless feels a sense of sexual urgency in the trajectory of the poem's protagonist/stream. When infused

by the subject-stream the *Ebne* sparkles (*prangen:* literally, to be resplendent) as if it is renewed, reborn, and revivified by its liquid force.

Poiesis, if one follows the suggestions of Plato outlined in the *Symposium,* is a form of sublimated eroticism — a procreation corresponding with the mind instead of the body. According to the ideology of the *Sturm und Drang* period outlined by Herder in works like *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode* and *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur,* the efforts of the poetic genius do not have ramifications simply for literature. Rather, they serve to galvanize a broader sense of indigenous linguistic culture. Thus, as Nicholas Boyle observes, the fact that the other *Bäche* in "Mahomets Gesang" are seen to join the subject stream in its trajectory is attributable to "a period in Goethe's life when he saw the genius as a participant in a collective enterprise" — the birth of a national German poetry (*BGA* 1:201). In "Mahomets Gesang" this form of rebirth or procreation is embodied in the protagonist's act of naming the landscape, an act foreshadowed in Herder's discussion of Pindar in *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur,* and an act that infuses (one might even say impregnates) nature with a sense of the human through the deployment of language:

> Und im rollenden Triumphe
> Gibt er Ländern Namen, Städte
> Werden unter seinem Fuß.

Here the protagonist takes on the role of the genius outlined by Herder — the task of building a bridge between nature and culture, between landscape and language. On one level this activity corresponds with the surface-level thematic focus of the poem, which is the prophet's act of creating a new religion for his people, and of distributing this new creed across the earth as a means of reconciling individuals to their position within the divine order. But beneath these religious themes there are other issues that have far more to do with Goethe's nascent pantheism than they have to do with his youthful interest in Islam. These issues are likewise central to the development of themes that a much older Goethe would eventually unite — in Eckermann's *Gespräche* — under the term daemonic.

Perhaps the central issue at stake in Goethe's later conception of the daemonic is that of the individual's confrontation with what might be called fate, the divine, or — in a more pantheistic context — God/Nature. To repeat Goethe's famous formulation of this confrontation in *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* the daemonic seems: "mit den notwendigen Elementen unsres Daseins willkürlich zu schalten" (*FA* 1,14:840). Later in his life, Goethe tended to theorize this confrontation

in Aristotelian terms, by seeing the individual as being determined by a life principle or law akin to Aristotle's concept of the indwelling entelechy.[61] As we saw in chapter 2, Leibniz associates the concept of the entelechy with his notion of the human soul as a monad, a concept that in turn influences Herder's understanding of the individual as animated by an internal force or *Kraft* (*HW* 8:452). Tracing a similar path through the history of ideas, Dietrich Mahnke argues in his study *Leibniz und Goethe: die Harmonie ihrer Weltansichten* (1924) that Goethe's notion of a personal daemon is in fact nothing other the Leibnizian monad, which distinguishes the individual from others, and out of which necessarily flows the whole progression of its "Lebenserscheinungen," so that every individual personality develops alone, out of its own individual essence, without the possibility of being diverted from its characteristic path by external powers.[62]

The entelechy — like the Leibnizian monad — is, according to Goethe in his conversation with Eckermann dated 11 March 1828, the element of the individual that determines his or her role within the grand scheme laid down by God/Nature, and the strength of a particular entelechy functions as an index of the individual's resistance to the forces of fate (*FA* 2,12:656). Thus, while the monadic soul discussed by Mahnke may apparently develop independently of external powers, in Goethe's worldview its path may nevertheless be obstructed by the mythological forces of fate or God/Nature, which decree that all living things must die. This is the reality that presents itself to the smaller tributaries or *Bäche* that decide to join the protagonist/stream in "Mahomets Gesang." Through identifying with a greater, trans-individual concept or scheme — whether this be Islam, or Goethe's so-called Natural Religion — the individual may be better able to reconcile itself to a divine order over which it can have little control, and of which it perhaps has no understanding. But the act of identifying with a trans-individual force also represents a potential threat to the individual's identity. In merging with the protagonist/stream, and eventually with "dem ewgen Ozean," the smaller *Bäche* im "Mahomets Gesang" are forced to surrender their discrete boundaries to a greater force. The individual is thus subsumed by the totality.

Here we come across a problem inherent in Spinozism with which Goethe grappled, according to Nicholas Boyle, for most of his life. The issue of the individual versus the totality of God/Nature became of press-

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[61] See, for example, "Urworte. Orphisch" (*FA* 1,20:491–97) and the conversation with Eckermann dated 11 March 1828 (*FA* 2,12:656).

[62] Mahnke, *Leibniz und Goethe: Die Harmonie ihrer Weltansichten* (Erfurt: Kurt Stenger, 1924), 16–17.

ing importance to Goethe around the time of the Jacobi-led Spinoza controversy. This had begun in 1783 and reached its height in 1785 with the publication of Jacobi's *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (On the Teaching of Spinoza, in Letters to Mr. Moses Mendelssohn). To recapitulate this controversy, on learning that Lessing was convinced by Spinoza's pantheism, Jacobi sought to show that Spinoza's philosophy amounts only to atheism, and that it is not reconcilable with orthodox Christianity.

In reaction to this controversy, and in defense of Spinoza, Goethe composed his *Studie nach Spinoza* in 1785 (*FA* 1,25:14–17). But Goethe's *Studie nach Spinoza* tended to avoid the issue of the individual's insignificance within the totality of God/Nature. As Nicholas Boyle observes, Goethe's Spinoza is shaded with distinctly Leibnizian hues, since in terms of the individual's relationship to God/Nature, Goethe gives "practical, and to a great extent theoretical, priority to individual existences, conceived as centres of energy just like Leibniz's monads" (*BGA* 1:384). Boyle argues — and in this regard he agrees with Dietrich Mahnke[63] — that Goethe's preoccupation with the destinies of individuals made it difficult for him completely to reconcile himself to Spinoza's assertion that humans have little freedom in the face of God/Nature's divine order. In fact, by 1785, Goethe was aware that a complete fusion or identification between the subject and God/Nature amounts to a surrender of identity on both sides. The human and the natural can have a reciprocal relationship, but when one term takes absolute precedence over the other, this relationship breaks down. Nevertheless, "Mahomets Gesang," the product of a much younger Goethe, ends with an apparently joyous union between the protagonist/stream and God/Nature:

> Und so trägt er seine Brüder
> Seine Schätze seine Kinder
> Dem erwartenden Erzeuger
> Freudebrausend an das Herz.

Not only do the smaller *Bäche* merge with the protagonist/stream, the protagonist/stream itself then loses itself in the infinity of God/Nature, embodied in the everlasting ocean. In this way the *agon* that lies at the heart of "Mahomets Gesang," the quest for artistic and religious individuation undertaken by the protagonist/stream, reaches a climax of renunciation.

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[63] Mahnke observes on page 14 of *Leibniz und Goethe* that Goethe preferred Leibniz's "individualistischen Metaphysik" to Spinoza's notion of a great totality or "Weltsubstanz."

"Mahomets Gesang" is often compared with another of Goethe's early lyrics: "Prometheus" (1774). As Erich Trunz comments, both works can be seen as representations of the excessive and overweening subjectivity associated with the *Sturm und Drang* doctrine of genius (*HA* 1:472). But unlike the stronger Prometheus, who defiantly declares to his God: "Ich dich ehren? Wofür?" (*FA* 1,1:204) and later in the poem, "Hier sitz ich, forme Menschen / Nach meinem Bilde / Ein Geschlecht das mir gleich sei" (*FA* 1,1:204), the protagonist/stream in "Mahomets Gesang" is happy to surrender its identity to the great ocean of God/Nature. Seen in this way, the fate of the subject stream in "Mahomets Gesang" typifies what Jochen Schmidt describes as the "unendliche[n] Regression, die als Sehnsucht nach der 'Natur' in der Zeit lag."[64]

Thus, the conclusion of "Mahomets Gesang" does not in fact depict, as David Wellbery believes, a case of the genius returning "to — and as — the Father," a return that fulfills the myth of "auto-engenderment, of self-fathering."[65] On the contrary, "Mahomet's Gesang" shows us that there can only be one Father, or Mother, as the case may be, and that auto-engenderment can only be a myth. God/Nature wins this battle, and the genius is absorbed into its infinite substance. In "Prometheus" the conflict is essentially the same. The genius wishes to displace God/Nature and occupy the position of the origin — to install itself as both the subject and object of mimesis. But this situation only replaces the self/nature subject/object dualism with a boundless narcissism. Prometheus — like Werther, the subject of the next chapter in this study — wants the world to be his own projection, an emanation of his own excessive subjectivity.

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[64] Jochen Schmidt, Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik, 1750–1945, 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), 1:279.

[65] Wellbery, *The Specular Moment,* 144.

4: *Werther:* The Pathology of an Aesthetic Idea

IN AN ESSAY ON *Die Leiden des jungen Werther,* Thomas Mann gives the following description of the novel's author:

> Goethe . . . der Dichter, das Genie, der treuherzige und aufrichtige, aber auch wieder treulose und in irdischem Sinne unzuverlässige Vagabund des Gefühls . . . der junge Dämon, der im "Faust" von sich sagt: "Bin ich der Flüchtling nicht? Der Unbehauste? Der Unmensch ohne Zweck und Ruh?" — Ein liebenswürdiger Unmensch: schön, hochbegabt, geladen mit Geist und Leben, feurig, gefühlvoll, ausgelassen und schwermütig, kurz — närrisch in einem lieben Sinn.[1]

Mann's portrayal of Goethe, and the passage from part two of *Faust* with which he supplements it, both correspond with the official Goethe-endorsed mythology that surrounds *Werther*. In this scenario, Goethe is seen as the fiery young *Stürmer und Dränger;* a figure compared to a "Wassersturz" that has stormed "von Fels zu Felsen . . . / Begierig wütend nach dem Abgrund zu" (*FA* 1,7/1:144). It is no coincidence that we find in the passage from *Faust* quoted by Mann a similar image of rushing water to that which appears in "Mahomets Gesang," as the biographical mythology surrounding the composition of *Werther* corresponds with the model of subjectivity outlined in Goethe's early poem. Hence we are presented with a biographical narrative in which Goethe, inspired with Romantic longing and endowed with an excess of natural creativity, feverishly wrote *Werther* in order to exorcize himself of his overweening, transgressive, and dangerously anti-social subjectivity. To use a formulation coined by Nicholas Boyle, *Werther* was, for Goethe, an example of "myself not myself" — a representation of Goethe's own subjective preoccupations transposed on to a fictional character (*BGA* 1:167–68).

Goethe was thus, according to Mann, "der junge Dämon," in that he embodied the notion of genius promoted by the cult of *Empfindsamkeit*

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[1] Thomas Mann, "Goethes Werther," in *Das essayistische Werk,* ed. Hans Bürglin, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1968), 2:342.

or sensitivity. This genius is the young poet with an affinity for nature and a heart full of longing for his ideal of womanhood at the time: the provincial girl of the land who is, at the very least, a metonym for nature at certain points in the narrative of *Werther*. The *Dämon,* then, is the monadic individual or genius who turns nature into art and art into nature, thus healing the split between the human and the natural that is constitutive of modernity and that differentiates the poetry of eighteenth-century Germany from the so-called naïve art of the ancients. In this sense, as Paul Fischer observes in his book *Goethes Altersweisheit,* "der dämonische Mensch handelt unbewußt, ungewollt, nicht auf Grund von Erwägung und Entschluß, sondern wie die Natur, das Kind, der Wilde."[2]

Of course, Goethe is himself chiefly responsible for biographical treatments of the novel like that offered in Thomas Mann's essay. In a section from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* written in July 1813, Goethe argues that in writing *Werther* he simultaneously represented and overcame the aesthetic expectations of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, expectations that were impossible for any human being to satisfy and that consequently posed a threat to his health. The process of writing the novel is thus seen by Goethe as a kind of "Generalbeichte" that enabled him to overcome a youthful and stormy element in his personality, opening the way to a new life (*FA* 1,14:639).

In a later source, Goethe's conversation with Eckermann dated 2 January 1824, this notion of writing-as-therapy is given a broader significance. Here Goethe describes the *Werther* period as a phase during which he was forced to accommodate his free and natural inclinations to the restrictions of a traditional and antiquated society (*FA* 2,12:529). The subject of *Werther* is thus, implies Goethe, quite close to the theme that would come to dominate the nineteenth-century European novel: the question of what limits, if any, should be imposed upon the strivings and desires of individuals when they are in conflict with the prevailing mores of society. This appraisal appears to depict an older Goethe who had, at least to some degree, been able to distance himself from the subject matter of *Werther*.

But the question remains as to whether critics, among them Thomas Mann,[3] should continue to posit a significant similarity between the

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[2] Fischer, *Goethes Altersweisheit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921), 28.

[3] Erich Trunz contributes to the mythologization of the events in Goethe's life that contributed to the composition of *Werther,* by commenting that: "Die Entstehung des Werks weist auf drei verschiedene Kreise von Tatsachen; aber diese sind bereits so zu einander gestellt, als habe ein Dämon heimlich auf eine Verbindung hingewiesen" (*HA* 6:558).

character Werther and Goethe himself. It is my contention that the famous and much celebrated similarities between events in Goethe's life and the plot of *Werther* have served mostly to mythologize, and thus to obscure, an appropriate understanding of the philosophical forces that contributed to the composition of this difficult novel.[4] As Matthew Bell observes, the notion that *Werther* emerged by and large from Goethe's obstructed passion for Lotte Kestner has served to reinforce "the picture of an irrationalist *Sturm und Drang*."[5] So the story goes, a youthful and irrational Goethe wrote *Werther* in a short creative frenzy — Goethe himself reports that he wrote the novel "unbewußt, einem Nachtwandler ähnlich" (*FA* 1,14:639) — and with this transformational act, managed to free himself from *Sturm und Drang* ideology, thus preparing him for the courtly, aristocratic culture of Weimar. In *The Specular Moment,* David Wellbery comments that the *Sturm und Drang* theory of genius presented here by Goethe "rests on a psychology (and even a metaphysics) of artistic production that remains believable today only in a few isolated backwaters of literary-historical research."[6] Can Goethe himself be consigned to such backwaters? Did the Goethe who wrote *Werther* actually subscribe to the theory of genius that the novel depicts, a theory that has already been seen in early lyrics like "Mahomets Gesang" and in the essay "Von deutscher Baukunst"? Or does *Werther* present a Goethe still at a comparatively early point in his literary development, yet already capable of mounting a critique of the essentially daemonic metaphysics of genius propounded during the *Sturm und Drang* period? In the ensuing discussion of *Werther* I hope to find some answers to these questions.

The issues at stake in this discussion of *Werther* become clearer still upon investigation of the changes that Goethe made to the text during 1786, in preparation for the Göschen edition of his works published in 1787.[7] By this time, Goethe had endured accusations that the novel was

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[4] For an account of the circumstances in Goethe's life that influenced the genesis of *Werther,* see Boyle, *BGA* 1:130–36.

[5] Matthew Bell, *Goethe's Naturalistic Anthropology: Man and Other Plants* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), 70.

[6] Wellbery, *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1996), 7.

[7] *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* was originally published in 1774. A slightly altered version of the first edition appeared in 1775, before the fully revised Göschen edition of 1787. For an account of the revisions made to the various editions, see *FA* 1,8:909–25.

blasphemous and suggestions that it encouraged suicide.[8] In response to this controversy, the Göschen edition serves to emphasize Werther's pathological tendencies, and thus to discourage the reader from identifying with his state of mind. This later edition also includes a completely new subplot added to the section entitled "Der Herausgeber an den Leser," the significance of which I will examine later in this chapter. For now it is merely necessary to observe that the Göschen edition (which I have chosen to use in this chapter) displays a Goethe who most certainly wishes to distance himself from Werther's psychological perspective. While it is true to suggest that the editorial voice of the 1774 edition is already at some remove from Werther's emotional standpoint, this distance has definitely increased by 1787.[9] Nevertheless, the second edition of *Werther* still puts Herder's and Goethe's aesthetic preoccupations of the early 1770s on display, and it is to these preoccupations — in particular the daemonic theory of genius — that we shall now turn.

The Genius as Daemonic

In *Werther,* Goethe presents the novel's protagonist as a mediator between humanity and nature. Werther's view of natural phenomena concurs with Spinoza's contention that God and nature are one and the same:

> Vom unzugänglichen Gebirge über die Einöde die kein Fuß betrat, bis ans Ende des unbekannten Oceans weht der Geist des Ewigschaffenden, und freut sich jedes Staubes der ihn vernimmt und lebt. — Ach damals, wie oft habe ich mich mit Fittigen eines Kranichs, der über mich hinflog, zu dem Ufer des ungemessenen

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[8] Boyle observes that Pastor Goeze of Hamburg saw *Werther* as "a book calculated to encourage the mortal sins of adultery and suicide" (*BGA* 1:175). Further to this, Gerhard Sauder reports that Lessing wished Goethe to insert "a sceptical warning for the benefit of young readers" into the novel, presumably discouraging suicide. Gerhard Sauder, "The *Sturm und Drang* and the Periodization of the 18th Century," in *Literature of the Sturm und Drang,* ed. David Hill, 309–31; here, 315 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), vol. 6 of *The Camden House History of German Literature,* 10 vols. In the slightly altered 1775 edition of the novel, Goethe apparently followed Lessing's suggestion by including the following warning at the beginning of book 2: "Sei ein Mann, und folge mir nicht nach" (*FA* 1,8:917).

[9] This is the view of Dieter Welz in *Der Weimarer "Werther": Studien zur Sinnstruktur der zweiten Fassung des " Werthers"* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1973), 63. See also *FA* 1,8:920–25.

> Meeres gesehnt, aus dem schäumenden Becher des Unendlichen jene schwellende Lebenswonne zu trinken, und nur einen Augenblick, in der eingeschränkten Kraft meines Busens, einen Tropfen der Seligkeit des Wesens zu fühlen, das alles in sich und durch sich hervorbringt. (*FA* 1,8:107)

The *Sehnsucht* presented here cannot be equated with a Platonic longing for the forms. Unlike the winged soul of the philosopher presented in Plato's *Phaedrus,* a soul that strives to leave the corporeal world in order to find the realm of the *eide,* Werther only wants to grow wings in order to better investigate the earth, not the heavens. Thus, while an aerial perspective may assist him in appreciating the grandeur of God/Nature, he is just as happy to find this grandeur in "das Wimmeln der kleinen Welt zwischen Halmen, die unzähligen, unergründlichen Gestalten der Würmchen, der Mückchen," which allow him to feel "die Gegenwart des Allmächtigen der uns nach seinem Bilde schuf" (*FA* 1,8:15).

This passage displays the influence of Leibniz upon the young Goethe. Werther is fascinated by the minute organisms of the natural world because they serve as a confirmation of the interconnectedness of God/Nature's divine order. Each individual being or monad exists in an apparent preestablished harmony with its companions, and the deeper Werther's investigations become, the more they confirm his intuitions about the inherent orderliness of nature. But this serenely rational schema is not without its own disorder. Leibniz's philosophy also demands that each monad be a living mirror or representation of the whole of God's creation — in this way the universal and the particular are said to coalesce, thereby adding to the overarching unity of God/Nature. Werther seems to feel the force of this demand — which he experiences as the demand for artistic representation — every time he confronts the intricacies of nature:

> Noch nie war ich glücklicher, noch nie meine Empfindung an der Natur, bis auf's Steinchen, auf's Gräschen herunter, voller und inniger, und doch — Ich weiß nicht wie ich mich ausdrücken soll, meine vorstellende Kraft ist so schwach, alles schwimmt und schwankt so vor meiner Seele, daß ich keinen Umriß packen kann; aber ich bilde mir ein, wenn ich Thon hätte, oder Wachs, so wollte ich's wohl heraus bilden. Ich werde auch Thon nehmen, wenn's länger währt, und kneten und sollten's Kuchen werden! Lottens Portrait habe ich dreymal angefangen, und habe mich dreymal prostituirt. (*FA* 1,8:83)

Evidently, Leibniz's philosophy does not translate well into a theory of aesthetics, as Werther discovers that it is beyond the scope of the human imagination (the human monad or soul) to represent fully the infinity of

God/Nature. As Mahnke observes of Leibniz's notion of the monadic subject: "Nur im ewigen 'Weiterschreiten' kann der Mensch . . . Glück finden."[10] Faced with this impossible task of achieving an endless expansion of his capacity for artistic representation, Werther's attempts descend into formlessness. Likewise, it is no coincidence that Werther's chain of association shifts from "nature" to "Lotte" in this passage, as his mind turns from his failed attempts at artistic representation to the compensatory prospect of erotic success. In *Werther* aesthetics and erotics often coalesce — both represent a kind of consummation for which the novel's protagonist longs precisely because they are, at least for him, unattainable. In fact, at certain points in the novel, the terms "Lotte" and "nature" appear to be almost interchangeable. Right from the novel's first image of her, Lotte is presented as a mediator of nature's abundance:

> In dem Vorsaale wimmelten sechs Kinder von eilf zu zwey Jahren um ein Mädchen von schöner Gestalt, mittlerer Größe, die ein simples weißes Kleid, mit blaßrothen Schleifen an Arm und Brust, anhatte. Sie hielt ein schwarzes Brod und schnitt ihren Kleinen rings herum jedem sein Stück nach Proportion ihres Alters und Appetits ab, gab's jedem mit solcher Freundlichkeit. (*FA* 1,8:41)

Lotte's mode of dress is provincial and her "schöne Gestalt" reflects the inherent orderliness of nature's forms. Like nature itself, Lotte knows intuitively the appropriate amount of food required to sustain each organism. Thus, in Werther's imagination, Lotte appears to occupy symbolically the positions of both mother (the source of nourishment) and love object. In this way she functions as both an origin and a goal. Representing nature, and the sustenance that nature provides, she is identified as the source of life, while at the same time becoming an object of erotic attraction.

Addressing the question of Lotte's double symbolic function as both nature and love object, David E. Wellbery understands this duality as the expression of a tendency toward "pansexualism" within *Werther*. Pantheism refers to the belief that God and Nature are one. Pansexualism, according to Wellbery, denotes a state in which the subject associates and perhaps even conflates his or her love object with the All of God/Nature.[11] In this way Lotte functions as an object of erotic, poetic,

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[10] Dietrich Mahnke, *Leibniz und Goethe: Die Harmonie ihrer Weltansichten* (Erfurt: Kurt Stenger, 1924), 11.

[11] David E. Wellbery, "Morphisms of the Phantasmatic Body: Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther,*" in *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century,* ed. Veronica Kelly and Dorothea von Mücke (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1994), 187.

and spiritual longing. Werther's aesthetics are those of Herder and the *Sturm und Drang*. The goal of all art is not so much to imitate nature as it is to mediate or harness its divine immanence, since nature, according to Werther in his letter dated 26 May 1771, "ist unendlich reich und sie allein bildet den großen Künstler" (*FA* 1,8:29). Within this aesthetic schema, Lotte is both source and *telos*. She inspires in Werther a longing for nature, while at the same time becoming — at least in Werther's imagination — the medium through which that selfsame longing can be satisfied. In unifying himself with Lotte, Werther seems to imagine, he will recover some lost kinship with God/Nature, and he is thus drawn to and enthralled by her — in fact, his enthrallment seems to be a parody of the ancient Greek notion of love as possession or divine madness:

> Ach wie mir das durch alle Adern läuft, wenn mein Finger unversehens den ihrigen berührt, wenn unsere Füße sich unter dem Tische begegnen; Ich ziehe zurück wie vom Feuer, und eine geheime Kraft zieht mich wieder vorwärts — mir wird's so schwindlich vor allen Sinnen. . . . Sie hat eine Melodie, die sie auf dem Claviere spielet mit der Kraft eines Engels, so simpel und so geistvoll! Es ist ihr Leiblied und mich stellt es von aller Pein, Verwirrung und Grillen her, wenn sie nur die erste Note davon greift. Kein Wort von der alten Zauberkraft der Musik ist mir unwahrscheinlich, wie mich der einfache Gesang angreift! (*FA* 1,8:77–79)

Werther is both horrified and excited by the reactions that contact with Lotte produces in him, and it is this kind of ambivalence that Rudolf Otto associates with daemonic experience — an experience that he associates with states of Dionysian intoxication. According to Otto, the daemonic object inspires feelings of terror and fear, while at the same time alluring and charming its beholder, creating in him a desire to make it his own.[12]

It is not my intention to suggest that Goethe is attempting here to portray an example of ancient Greek daemonic enthrallment in eighteenth-century bourgeois culture. What he is perhaps doing is parodying the cult of Romantic Hellenism that eventually reached its apotheosis, some twenty-one years after the publication of *Werther,* in Schiller's conception of the ancients as naïve. Here it is appropriate to repeat a key line from Schiller's essay "Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung," a line that refers to objects of nature: "Sie *sind,* was wir *waren;* sie sind, was wir

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[12] Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen,* 11th ed., 1917 (Stuttgart: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1923), 38.

wieder *werden sollen*" (*SW* 8:707), says Schiller of flowers, birds, and bees. In this line we find the key to what the term daemonic means with reference to *Werther*. The daemonic is the mode or conduit through which the modern, sentimental human longs to be naïve, to be natural. In being drawn to Lotte, Werther is drawn to an idealized and fictionalized version of Nature propagated by the aesthetics of the *Sturm und Drang*. Lotte is the path through which he believes he can return to nature, but this path is also horrifying to him because it represents the threat that in unifying itself with objects of nature, the human subject may in fact lose its own identity. Werther experiences this threat at different points in the narrative. In the letter dated 10 May 1771, after writing a paean to God/Nature's infinite creation, Werther begins to sense that the task of harnessing this infinitude through art is beyond him, and that God/Nature may in fact overwhelm his identity:

> wenn's dann um meine Augen dämmert, und die Welt um mich her und der Himmel ganz in meiner Seele ruhn wie die Gestalt einer Geliebten; dann sehne ich mich oft und denke: ach könntest du das wieder ausdrücken, könntest dem Papiere das einhauchen, was so voll, so warm in dir lebt, daß es würde der Spiegel deiner Seele, wie deine Seele ist der Spiegel des unendlichen Gottes! — Mein Freund — Aber ich gehe darüber zu Grunde, ich erliege unter der Gewalt der Herrlichkeit dieser Erscheinungen. (*FA* 1,8:15)

When Werther's obsession with nature is seen in this light, it becomes difficult to disagree with Schiller's diagnosis of him as a "gefährliches Extrem des sentimentalischen Charakters" (*SW* 8:760). Here sentimentality can be taken to mean something akin to sensitivity or *Empfindsamkeit* — which is effectively the opposite of rational, empirical cognition, the mode of cognition concerned with reality. But what is so dangerous about Werther's sentimentality? Schiller provides an indication of this danger through a further description of the sentimental individual, who "mit glühender Empfindung ein Ideal umfaßt, und die Wirklichkeit fliehet, um nach einem wesenlosen Unendlichen zu ringen" (*SW* 8:760).

The danger to which Schiller alludes is the loss of contact with *Wirklichkeit* that may occur when the subject pursues the insubstantial infinitude of the idea at all costs. But what is the insubstantial infinitude, the impossible *telos* that he seeks? Schiller fails to answer this question because his own literary *Weltanschauung* is shot through with the same myth or idea that haunts and eventually destroys Werther: the myth of the naïve poet as a daemonic genius — an intermediary between the human sphere and the Ur-source of God/Nature. The origin of Schiller's conception of the naïve poet can be found in a text that predates *Werther* — Herder's *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode* (1765). In chapter 2, I argued

that the concept of *Affekt* is central to Herder's conception of the ode as the mode of poetry that best approximates and harnesses the *Kraft* of nature. In *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung,* the same concept appears in relation to naïve poets. "Der Affekt," says Schiller, is an emotional force that has its origins in nature and that, when harnessed, produces works of genius. When this force is able to overcome the strictures of style and sensibility, then naïve works of art may be produced. But Schiller also avoids scrupulously the suggestion that *Affekt* alone is sufficient to produce the naïve. Unlike the *Stürmer und Dränger,* he is not prepared to accept that the dynamic *Kraft* of nature alone is sufficient to create naïve works of art. Nature, suggests Schiller, is not just *Kraft;* it also has its own inherent teleology — a teleology that he calls "moralische Größe" but that may, when translated into an aesthetic vocabulary, be called form or inner necessity. In short, Schiller prefers to see nature as form and not as pure dynamism or "blinde Gewalt" (*SW* 8:713).

But is it "blinde Gewalt" that destroys Werther? No — it is the violence of an aesthetic idea, the idea of the naïve poet, the daemonic genius, an idea that disrupts the boundaries of the human subject. Poets, writes Schiller, "werden . . . entweder Natur *sein,* oder sie werden die verlorene *suchen*" (*SW* 8:728). Werther, like a true modern, wants to be the former, but is in fact the latter. In the letter dated 10 May 1771, Werther announces that he has given up the project of art, of mimesis or imitation, because true art should be *lived,* not abstractly constructed:

> Ich bin so glücklich, mein Bester, so ganz in dem Gefühle von ruhigem Daseyn versunken, daß meine Kunst darunter leidet. Ich könnte jetzt nicht zeichnen, nicht einen Strich, und bin nie ein größerer Mahler gewesen als in diesen Augenblicken. (*FA* 1,8:15)

For Werther, drawing nature would merely confirm the fact that he is other than nature. As the sentimental poet *par excellence,* he wants to be naïve, because the notion of the naïve is, in itself, an eminently sentimental idea — the idea of a lost Golden Age of complete unity or coalescence between the human and the natural. Indeed, at certain points in his essay, Schiller seems to be aware of this fact, stating "Das Gefühl, von dem hier die Rede ist, ist . . . nicht das, was die Alten hatten; es ist vielmehr einerlei mit demjenigen, welches wir *für die Alten haben*" (*SW* 8:727).

In essence, Schiller argues that any modern conception of the ancients could only be sentimental. Modernity — which for Schiller necessarily involves a sense of separation from nature, a conceptualization of nature as other than human — forms the very condition of the concept of the naïve. Indeed, it is precisely because the naïve is a concept — one might even say a sentimental idealization of ancient Greece — that it becomes an aesthetic *telos* beyond the scope of any artistic talent, including

that of Werther. Thus, Schiller's concept of the naïve takes on precisely those characteristics that he finds in the sentimental. It becomes, in the Kantian sense, an idea that exceeds the boundaries of sensuous experience, an idea or "reine Form" in pursuit of which the poet may stand in danger of losing "allen Gehalt," not only of his poem, but also of himself, of his self-identity (*SW* 8:795).

In his book *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (1964), Angus Fletcher associates the daemonic with the phenomenon of personification, which he finds in the eighteenth-century allegorical ode. Allegorical protagonists, says Fletcher, "are always daemonic." By this he means that the allegorical character is designed to represent a particular idea or type, and within the scope of any given narrative this may make such a character appear to display "the type of behavior manifested by people who are thought (however unscientifically) to be possessed by a daemon." Allegorical protagonists, as Fletcher defines them, are characters "obsessed with only one idea," who are seemingly "driven by some hidden, private force."[13] Although it would be untrue to suggest that Werther displays all of the characteristics that Fletcher ascribes to the allegorical character — he is, for example, able to take an interest in phenomena other than Lotte, and does display a capacity for self-analysis at certain points in the narrative — there is nevertheless a sense in which he may be seen to represent the type of the artist as it was conceived during the cult of *Empfindsamkeit*. In this sense, Werther is possessed by a cultural idea, a literary fashion: his daemon is his culture, not his personality, his nature. Far from being a conduit or medium who gives expression to the pantheistic forces of nature, he personifies a particular tendency of his culture — the obsession with daemonic genius as a naïve, non-conceptual, non-rational faculty.

In this connection, it is useful to consider briefly the historical background to *Werther* offered by Gerhard Sauder in the *Münchner Ausgabe* of Goethe's *Sämtliche Werke*. Sauder refers to the "empfindsame Tendenz" that characterized European literature in the mid- to late eighteenth century, particularly in Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), and epistolary novels like Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748), and Rousseau's *Julie, ou La nouvelle Héloise* (Julie or the New Eloise, 1761). Sauder observes that this tendency has its origins in the discourse of "moral sense" developed in early to mid-eighteenth-century philosophy and theology, particularly in England and Scotland. The central premise of this discourse is the idea, found in Hume's moral

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[13] Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1964), 39–40.

philosophy, that in every human heart there is inscribed a natural law akin to the notion of "immediate feeling and finer internal sense" (*MA* 1,2:772). According to this worldview, argues Sauder, human emotions are endowed naturally with a sense of sociability and benevolence, which, when complemented by reason, forms a trustworthy basis for ethics. Sauder contends that these theories were particularly influential in Germany, especially among Pietist theologians and the authors of the *Sturm und Drang,* thereby strengthening the sentimental trend already present in German literature of the period (*MA* 1,2:772).

Keeping in mind Sauder's prescient analysis of the historical conditions that gave rise to *Werther,* while at the same time adding to it an understanding of Leibniz's conception of the rational soul as a monad that strives for complete self-realization — a conception that, as Dietrich Mahnke has shown, exerted a great influence on Goethe[14] — the following questions need to be posed: to what extent was Goethe, during the initial process of writing *Werther* undertaken in early 1774, already aware of the unrealistic aesthetic expectations of the cult of *Empfindsamkeit* and the *Sturm und Drang* movement? Did Goethe put his trust in the rational and sociable human soul — a soul naturally endowed with rationality and virtue, and purportedly guaranteed (either by natural benevolence or by Leibniz's notion of *harmonie préetablie*) not to go astray or transgress the rights of others? Or was Goethe aware of a darker, perhaps unconscious and non-rational side to the soul of *Empfindsamkeit*?

These questions are of course impossible to answer with any degree of certainty, although Nicholas Boyle offers one suggestion with which I tend to agree: "It was because it so perfectly understood and represented the pathology and the crisis of contemporary sentimentality that *Werther* became a European success" (*BGA* 1:168). Likewise, Jochen Schmidt detects in Werther a certain "kritisch-diagnostische Kontur,"[15] which suggests that even during the novel's initial composition, Goethe stood at some distance from the emotional standpoint of the novel's protagonist. Walter Benjamin offers an even more telling analysis of the novel, arguing that "in 'Werthers Leiden' fand das damalige Bürgertum seine Pathologie ähnlich

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[14] Mahnke traces the Leibnizian notion of the soul as a monad back to the Aristotelian conception of the entelechy. Mahnke is also in agreement with Nicholas Boyle (*BGA* 1:384) insofar as he argues that Goethe's preference was for the individuality of the Leibnizian monad, as opposed to the pantheistic all suggested by Spinoza's notion of *Deus sive Natura*. See *Leibniz und Goethe,* particularly 14–18.

[15] Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik, 1750–1945,* 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), 1:323.

scharfblickend und schmeichelhaft zugleich bezeichnet wie das heutige in der Freudschen Theorie."[16] In sum, Boyle, Schmidt, and Benjamin seem to agree that in *Werther* Goethe can be seen to offer an early diagnosis of the aesthetic preoccupations of the *Sturm und Drang* movement.

These preoccupations stem from two main sources. The first — to which Dietrich Mahnke has drawn attention — is the Leibnizian conception of the individual as a rational soul or monad that must expand at all costs, a notion that is later taken up by Herder in his notion that an internal, developmental *Kraft* animates each human soul. The second, alluded to by Gerhard Sauder, is the idea that human emotions are naturally benevolent, rational, and inherently convivial and sociable. If one follows the suggestion that, even in its first edition, Goethe's *Werther* is a diagnosis and critique of these preoccupations, then it becomes clear that *Werther,* far from being an example of *Sturm und Drang* irrationalism, is in fact a key text in the European Enlightenment — a text that teaches something about the limits of human subjectivity, and about the ways in which cultural phenomena can influence the lives of individuals. Georg Lukács, albeit for different reasons than my own, concurs with this view. In the essay "Die Leiden des jungen Werther" (1936) that appears in *Goethe und seine Zeit* (1947), Lukács observes:

> Die ausserordentlich weite und tiefe Wirkung des "Werther" in der ganzen Welt hat . . . diese führende Rolle der deutschen Aufklärung klar ins Licht gestellt. Der deutschen Aufklärung? Hier stutzt der Leser, der an den Literaturlegenden der bürgerlichen Geschichte und der von ihnen abhängigen Vulgärsoziologie "geschult" wurde. Ist es ja ein Gemeinplatz sowohl der bürgerlichen Literaturgeschichte wie der Vulgärsoziologie, daß Aufklärung und "Sturm und Drang," insbesondere der "Werther" in ausschließendem Gegensatz zueinander stehen. . . . Erst die Zerstörung solcher Geschichtslegenden, solcher in der Wirklichkeit nie existierenden Widersprüche eröffnet den Weg zur Erkenntnis der wirklichen inneren Widersprüche der Aufklärung. (*GSZ,* 17–19)

Lukács argues that the traditional opposition between intellect on the one hand and feelings or instincts on the other is a bourgeois myth designed to play down the revolutionary potential of the *Sturm und Drang* movement generally, and in particular, the revolutionary impulses that he finds in the character of Werther. *Werther,* according to Lukács, is a "Tragödie des bürgerlichen Humanismus . . . [und] . . . zeigt bereits den unlösbaren Konflikt der freien und allseitigen Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit mit der

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[16] Walter Benjamin, "Goethe," in *BGS* 2,2:709.

bürgerlichen Gesellschaft selbst" (*GSZ,* 26).[17] In this reading, Werther's suicide is reduced to being merely an effect of the social restrictions that bourgeois society places upon young individuals. In short, Lukács offers here a strong and at times compelling sociological interpretation of the novel, but an interpretation that lacks psychological depth.

Of particular interest, however, is Lukács's observation that *Werther* represents the culmination of the tendencies to be found in earlier texts such as "Prometheus" — namely, "die Kämpfe des jungen Goethe um den freien und allseitig entwickelten Menschen" (*GSZ,* 25). When this comment is assessed in relation to my earlier discussions of "Mahomets Gesang" and "Prometheus," it appears to be correct. In both of these poems we encounter protagonists who are interested primarily in an unimpeded expansion of their own subjectivity. Mahomet wishes to unify the human and the natural by infusing the landscape with his creative force, and ultimately by uniting himself with the Ocean, while Prometheus desires to displace the gods as objects of mimesis.

It is precisely in relation to this issue — the question of the expansion of human subjectivity — that I wish to examine Lukács's insistence that the traditional opposition between *Sturm und Drang* and Enlightenment is untenable. In this connection, I wish to suggest that while "Mahomets Gesang" and "Prometheus" may show a Goethe who still more or less subscribes to Leibniz's notion of the monadic subject (as mediated by Herder's conception of *Kraft*), *Werther* may in fact amount to Goethe's earliest critique of, and his earliest counter-narrative to, the conception of the rational, monadic soul found in Leibniz's *Monadology*. Moreover, while this critique can already be discerned in the 1774 version of the novel, it is (I will shortly argue) completely unequivocal and unmistakable in the new sections that Goethe added to the novel in 1786. As was demonstrated in chapter 3, in relation to "Mahomets Gesang," one of Goethe's favorite metaphors for subjectivity is the image of water. I will revisit this metaphor in chapter 6, which considers a sonnet written by Goethe in late 1807 and early 1808, "Mächtiges Überraschen." But at this point, it is necessary to investigate some earlier manifestations of this metaphor in *Werther*.

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[17] In his aforementioned essay on Goethe, originally intended for publication in a Soviet encyclopedia, Walter Benjamin concurs with the view of Lukács when he writes that *Werther* is a text in which Goethe "läßt . . . das revolutionäre Element in seiner Jugend zu Worte kommen" (*BGS* 2,2:709).

Water as Subjectivity II: *Werther*

In the letter dated May 26 1771, Werther asks, and answers, the following question with regard to genius:

> O meine Freunde! warum der Strom des Genies so selten ausbricht, so selten in hohen Fluthen hereinbraus't und eure staunende Seele erschüttert? — Lieben Freunde, da wohnen die gelassenen Herren auf beyden Seiten des Ufers, denen ihre Gartenhäuschen, Tulpenbeete and Krautfelde zu Grunde gehen würden, die daher in Zeiten mit Dämmen und Ableiten der künftig drohenden Gefahr abzuwehren wissen. (*FA* 1,8:29)

It is no doubt from reading passages like this that Lukács arrives at his claim that "die Werke des jungen Goethe [bedeuten] einen revolutionären Gipfelpunkt der europäischen Aufklärungsbewegung" (*GSZ,* 21). Here the genius is presented by Goethe as true nature — the torrent of creative force that rails against the cultivated false nature of the aristocratic and respectable gentlemen who tend their highly structured and contrived gardens. Within this depiction, genius is associated with the transgression of limits, limits that the "gelassenen" gentlemen — with their boundaries, dams, and channels — are at pains to defend. Implicit in this scene is the opposition that I characterized earlier as one of the central themes of the nineteenth-century European novel: that of individual desire pitted against societal propriety. The genius is represented, at least by Werther, as the individual who must be allowed to expand at all costs, even if this expansion gives rise to a transgression of the rights of others.

Leaving, at least for the moment, these sociological questions to one side, I now wish to examine the psychological implications of this particular passage. David Wellbery comments that in *Werther* the "concept of human being (*Menschheit or Menschsein*) . . . is inextricably tied to the concept of limit (*Grenze*) and therewith to the concepts of finitude, relativity, determination through difference."[18] But in *Werther* there is very little cognizance of social and psychological *Grenzen,* and even when they are perceived by the novel's protagonist, they are normally viewed by him as obstacles to be overcome. One such *Grenze* or obstacle is nature itself. It is a commonplace of Western thought from Fichte to Freud that the human subject defines itself negatively: that is to say, by ascertaining what it is not. In this way external objects, including those of nature, take part in the subject's perception of itself as an object — a discrete, individual being differentiated from other beings.

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[18] Wellbery, "Morphisms of the Phantasmatic Body," 183–84.

In *Werther,* the differentiation between subject and object is problematized. In the above passage, the genius/stream with which Werther identifies, is — at least insofar as Werther is concerned — more than just a metaphor for human subjectivity. I have already discussed the way in which the *Sturm und Drang* discourse on genius endeavors to conjoin the human and the natural. Human genius does not imitate nature, does not engage in mimesis; it is, in itself, natural, auto-originating, and non-mimetic in its structure. In short, the genius is akin to the unconscious, child-like, and savage daemonic individual discussed by Paul Fischer in *Goethes Altersweisheit.*[19] It is this figure who, according to the ideology of the *Sturm und Drang,* may be capable of healing the split between human subjectivity and God/Nature's divine order.

But in the attempt to heal this split, new wounds are created. As the narrative progresses, Werther increasingly identifies changes in his own mood with external events. On 4 September 1772, he writes: "Wie die Natur sich zum Herbste neigt, wird es Herbst in mir und um mich her. Meine Blätter werden gelb und schon sind die Blätter der benachbarten Bäume abgefallen" (*FA* 1,8:161). In the words of Jochen Schmidt, nature becomes, for Werther, a "Projektionsgrund seiner eigenen Gefühle," and a "Spiegel der Subjektivität."[20] As the speed of Werther's psychological fragmentation increases, he begins to see nature as "ein ewig verschlingendes, ewig wiederkäuendes Ungeheuer" (*FA* 1,8:109). Like the desert that threatens to limit, and eventually to extinguish, the flow of the "Bäche" in "Mahomets Gesang," nature becomes, for Werther, the embodiment of everything that opposes and frustrates his project of self-expansion. On 21 June 1771, he writes:

> Es ist wunderbar: wie ich hierher kam und vom Hügel in das schöne Thal schaute, wie es mich rings umher anzog. — Dort das Wäldchen! — Ach könntest du dich in seine Schatten mischen! — Dort die Spitze des Berges! — Ach könntest du von da die weite Gegend überschauen! — Die in einander geketteten Hügel und vertraulichen Thäler! — O könnte ich mich in ihnen verlieren! — Ich eilte hin, und kehrte zurück, und hatte nicht gefunden was ich hoffte . . . wenn wir hinzueilen, wenn das Dort nun Hier wird, ist alles vor wie nach, und wir stehen in unserer Armuth, in unserer Eingeschränktheit und unsere Seele lechzt nach entschlüpftem Labsale. (*FA* 1,8:57)

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[19] Fischer, *Goethes Altersweisheit,* 28.

[20] Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens* 1:323, 328.

Nature produces in Werther a feeling that, after the example of Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* (The Flowers of Evil), one might call spleen — a feeling of restriction and containment, combined with boredom and dissatisfaction. Spleen, writes Baudelaire, occurs when "low and sullen skies lie solid as a lid upon the groaning spirit"[21] — when the soul feels that nature is a prison, not a paradise. It is precisely this feeling of "Eingeschränktheit," this sense of being confined, which, in the above passage, leads Werther to perceive nature as an obstacle to his longings and desires.

Earlier in this chapter I suggested that within Werther's symbolic world Lotte functions as a metonym for nature at certain points in the narrative. Just as nature comes to be seen by Werther as a *Grenze* or limit that impinges upon the expansion of his subjectivity, so Lotte begins to be associated with this selfsame *Grenze,* which functions on both psychological and sociological levels. On 24 November 1772, Werther describes Lotte's mouth in the following way:

> Ja wenn ich dir das so sagen könnte! — Ich widerstand nicht länger, neigte mich und schwur: nie will ich es wagen einen Kuß euch aufzudrücken, Lippen! auf denen die Geister des Himmels schweben — Und doch — ich will — Ha! siehst du, das steht wie eine Scheidewand vor meiner Seele. (*FA* 1,8:185)

This *Scheidewand* (literally, separating-wall or barrier) represents both the social taboo of Werther's desire for a married woman, and the border or *Grenze* that obstructs the fulfillment of Werther's longing for an unimpeded expansion — or, to use Dietrich Mahnke's term, *Weiterschreiten* — of the Leibnizian monadic self or soul. Seen in this way, Lotte is not so much a love object for Werther as she is a symbol of the mode of existence that he cannot achieve: complete, unobstructed *Selbstverwirklichung.* Jochen Schmidt concurs with this view by arguing that Werther's fixation with Lotte can be seen as an effect of the "Subjektivismus-Problematik" that arises from the *Sturm und Drang* theory of genius — a problematic that always prioritizes subjective "Selbstverwirklichung" and "Selbstgenuß" above the observance of both psychological and social *Grenzen.*[22]

It is precisely this notion of a *Grenze* — a *Grenze* that obstructs the desires and strivings of the subject — that would come to inform Goethe's later intuition of the daemonic as what Benno von Wiese calls a

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[21] Charles Baudelaire, "Spleen," in *The Flowers of Evil and Paris Spleen,* trans. William H. Crosby (Rochester, NY: Boa Editions, 1991), 141.

[22] Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens,* 1:334.

"Grenzsituation" (limit or boundary situation).[23] Here it is necessary to emphasize that the origin or locus of this *Grenze,* obstructing force, or *Grenzsituation* is ambiguous. On the one hand, Goethe's notion of the daemonic often corresponds with an internal, developmental "Gesetz" referred to by Dietrich Mahnke as a *Schicksalsdämon*.[24] In chapter 8, I will examine how Goethe formalizes this notion of the daemon in the poem "Urworte. Orphisch" (1817–18) as the "Gesetz, wonach du angetreten," and as the "geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt" (*FA* 1,20:492). On the other hand, I shall also argue — in chapters 5, 6, and 7 — that for Goethe the daemonic often seems to represent or coincide with a *Grenze* located outside the subject, in the powers of the divine, or in nature. This inside/outside duality in Goethe's conception of the daemonic is also discussed by Paul Fischer, who sees the daemonic in Goethe as an "ehrfurchtgebietende" (literally, demanding of both respect and fear) power that seems to determine and shape the individual from within, while also at times intruding upon the life of the individual as an external power.[25] Without, at this stage, attempting to resolve the issue of the apparent duality in Goethe's conception of the daemonic raised by Fischer, I wish merely to suggest that in the problematic model of unlimited subjectivity depicted in *Werther* we can begin to see the origins of Goethe's later recognition of an obstructing principle or *Grenze* — whether this notion be associated with the internal characteristics of the subject or the external forces of God/Nature.

The notion that God/Nature apportions certain capacities and developmental *Grenzen* to organisms is of course traceable to Aristotle's notion of the entelechy as the locus of animation characteristic of all living things. Seen in this way, nature does indeed limit us — we are bounded by the capacities with which we are endowed. But as Dietrich Mahnke has demonstrated, Goethe (via the influence of Herder) came into contact with a highly individualistic interpretation of Aristotle's notion of the entelechy in its guise as the Leibnizian monad — a "windowless," purportedly rational soul, which is capable of mirroring the entire universe, and that strives for self-realization at all costs.[26] Leibniz held that the relationships between these monads or "Tätigkeitsprinzipien"[27] are regulated by

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[23] Wiese, *Das Dämonische in Goethes Weltbild und Dichtung* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1949), 4–5.

[24] See Mahnke's comments to this effect in *Leibniz und Goethe,* 16–17 and 41.

[25] Fischer, *Goethes Altersweisheit,* 28.

[26] Mahnke, *Leibniz und Goethe,* 14.

[27] Mahnke, *Leibniz und Goethe,* 14.

an overarching *harmonie préétablie*. As a counter-narrative to Leibniz's serenely rational worldview, *Werther* shows what happens to the "windowless" monadic soul, both socially and psychologically, when Leibniz's preestablished harmony is absent, and when subjective, non-rational emotions refuse to recognize any *Grenzen*. This is demonstrated most clearly when one follows Goethe's preferred metaphor for subjectivity (water) to its logical conclusion.

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned the subplot in the section headed "Der Herausgeber an den Leser" that Goethe added to *Werther* in 1786 for the Göschen edition of his works, published in 1787. In this subplot, Werther comes to know a farmhand who has developed an obsessive love for his widowed female employer. His employer eventually dismisses him for his overbearing behavior towards her and subsequently employs a new servant. When the dismissed farmhand learns that the widow has shown some affection for her new charge, he becomes insane with jealousy and murders him. After hearing this story, Werther identifies strongly with the emotional condition of the farmhand, and in fact attempts to have him acquitted of his crime, much to the horror of the presiding judge (who reproves him for taking up the cause of a murderer) and Lotte's husband, Albert.

In the farmhand Werther sees a mirror image of his own ill-fated obsession with Lotte. The effect of this subplot is to further emphasize Werther's pathological condition, and to show how far his mindset has strayed from the prevailing values of his society. At this point of the novel, Werther appears to be unable to distinguish clearly between his own situation and that of the farmhand. In fact, he seems subjectively to appropriate external events and relate them to his own condition — a sure sign that the *Grenze* or *Scheidewand* between internal and external, between self and other, may be on the verge of breaking down completely.

This *Scheidewand* or *Grenze* between self and other, between the human and natural, is, according to Herder and, one suspects, also to the young Goethe, often porous. In fact Herder insists, in the opening passages of his *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache,* that human emotions often enact a process of give and take, a sense of reciprocity, between the human subject and its natural surroundings, and he accordingly observes: "So wenig hat uns die Natur, als abgesonderte Steinfelsen, als egoistische Monaden geschaffen!" (*HW* 1:697). The objection expressed by Herder to the purported windowlessness or isolation of the Leibnizian monad is intimately connected with his theory of language. In chapter 2, I discussed the extent to which Herder understands languages to have emerged from the interactions of human subjects with their natural habitats. Such an understanding of language characterizes the interactions between the self and nature as being positive, productive, and

indeed necessary for the *Bildung* of the human species. In experiencing its natural surroundings, the human subject differentiates itself from these surroundings through the development of reflective language and reason, while at the same time feeling a kinship, a sense of connection, toward the natural sources from which its language originally developed. It is, moreover, precisely this positive sense of interaction between subject and object that will be seen, in chapter 5, as being central to the scientific theories developed by Goethe following his journey to Italy between 1786 and 1788.

In the character of Werther, however, the relationship of reciprocity between subject and object, of kinship through difference, is radicalized into a total, narcissistic identification, in which the supposedly rational, ever expanding monadic subject sees all external objects as reflections of its own internal desires, projects, and fantasies. This sense of complete identification between subject and object is demonstrated in another entry added by Goethe to the 1787 edition of the novel, and dated 12 December 1772. In this entry, Werther describes yet another image of water:

> Gestern abend mußte ich hinaus. Es war plötzlich Thauwetter eingefallen, ich hatte gehört, der Fluß sey übergetreten, alle Bäche geschwollen und von Wahlheim herunter mein liebes Thal überschwemmt! Nachts nach eilfe rannte ich hinaus. Ein fürchterliches Schauspiel, vom Fels herunter die wühlenden Fluthen in dem Mondlichte wirbeln zu sehen, über Äcker und Wiesen und Hecken und alles, und das weite Thal hinauf und hinab Eine stürmende See im Sausen des Windes! Und wenn denn der Mond wieder hervortrat und über der schwarzen Wolke ruhte und vor mir hinaus die Fluth in fürchterlich-herrlichem Wiederschein rollte und klang: da überfiel mich ein Schauer und wieder ein Sehnen! Ach mit offnen Armen stand ich gegen den Abgrund und athmete hinab! hinab! und verlohr mich in der Wonne, meine Qualen, meine Leiden da hinab zu stürzen! dahin zu brausen wie die Wellen! (*FA* 1,8:213)

In this passage Goethe exposes the water-as-daemon metaphor to a profound critique — a critique that operates on two interrelated levels: the level of enunciation (Werther's voice) and the level of imagery (Goethe's thematic intentions). At the level of enunciation, of speech, Goethe depicts a Werther who identifies with nature to such an extent that he sees the trajectory of his own life embodied in natural events. He longs to mimic the transit of the river by plunging himself into the *Abgrund* of nature. The pathological element in Werther's identification is then displayed by Goethe through the imagery deployed in this passage. When the genius-stream becomes *geschwollen* to such an extent that its subjectiv-

ity literally overwhelms the autonomy of external objects, then the image of nature longed for by the sentimental poet is destroyed. In its place the sentimental poet installs a boundless narcissism in which everything in nature merely reflects internal emotions. The object world is thus literally flooded with the genius-stream's expanding subjectivity, and nature, far from being celebrated through poetry and song, is in fact lost in the unlimited expansion of the poet's self. But nature (the world of external objects) is not the only thing that is lost in this process. Without an object-world from which to differentiate, and thus to define and delimit itself, the subject also loses its identity.

Erich Trunz, in his commentary on *Werther* (*HA* 6:542–43), describes this phenomenon in relation to a statement made by Goethe in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*FA* 1,14:384) on the subject of religion, a statement also quoted in chapter 3. Many years after the composition of *Werther,* observes Trunz, Goethe saw the entirety of creation as a falling from and returning to the origin. According to this worldview, the individual exists by virtue of its boundaries or *Grenzen,* while at the same time always containing within itself the possibility, even the hope, that these boundaries may be dissolved through a reunification with the All of God/Nature. In fact, as Trunz points out, Goethe invented the words *Verselbsten* (self-creation) and *Entselbstigen* (un-selfing) in order to describe this process.

Thus, just as the protagonist/stream in "Mahomets Gesang" eventually loses its identity by merging itself with the Father/Ocean, so Werther's longing for nature becomes an act of *Entselbstigen,* and as such, it also amounts to a kind of regression. Unable to find his longed-for idea of nature in external reality, and prevented from satisfying his desire for Lotte, he chooses death. Denied of its purported capacity for limitless *Selbstverwirklichung,* the windowless Leibnizian subject cannot adjust its internal desires to external reality, and subsequently feels compelled to leave the world altogether.

The 12 December entry added to the 1787 edition of *Werther* yields two crucial consequences for an assessment of the novel. First, it shows a clear separation between the consciousness of the novel's protagonist and the consciousness of its author, a separation that is often overlooked in traditional accounts of the novel's autobiographical genesis. If there are some grounds for identifying Goethe with the character of Werther in the 1774 edition of the novel, these grounds are all but lost in the changes that Goethe made to *Werther* before its inclusion in the Göschen edition of his *Werke* in 1787. Second, if these changes confirm that in *Werther,* and especially in the 1787 edition of the novel, Goethe sought simultaneously to depict and critique the *Sturm und Drang* theory of the daemonic genius, then the novel cannot simply be consigned to the category of

Sturm und Drang irrationalism. On the contrary, it appears to bring out something akin to those inner contradictions of the Enlightenment alluded to by Georg Lukács in his discussion of the novel.

Werther and the Enlightenment

So what are these inner contradictions? For one, *Werther* shows that the concept popularly referred to as "nature" during the *Sturm und Drang* period is very far indeed from any objective referent in the external world. In this respect, Goethe anticipates Kant's discovery that objects appear to our perception through *a priori* categories located within the subject, and that any over-arching concept of nature is therefore a subjective — and, in Werther's case, a sentimental — construction. Erich Trunz makes this point succinctly by stating that prior to *Werther* there existed the orthodoxy of Pietism and the early to mid-eighteenth century Enlightenment of Leibniz and Wolff, while after *Werther* the *Weltfrömmigkeit* associated with the adoption of philosophical idealism by Goethe and Schiller became dominant, at least in Weimar. Yet in between these two historical phases there lay a kind of philosophical or epistemological vacuum. This vacuum, says Trunz, was *Empfindsamkeit,* and it was a crisis (*HA* 6:553).

Prior to Kant, and thus also prior to the discovery that reason is located only within the subject, Enlightenment philosophers like Leibniz and Wolff relied upon a universal conception of rationality or order (namely, preestablished harmony), which would regulate the relationships between individual souls or monads. *Werther* offers an internal critique of the Enlightenment insofar as it demonstrates that the individual has a large measure of subjective freedom to construe and interpret the world in whichever way he will, independently of any universal rational order or even any wider social structure, and that this freedom also involves the risk that his interpretation may transgress the boundaries and limits of reason, order, and harmony — boundaries and limits previously thought (by thinkers like Leibniz and Wolff) to be controlled and regulated by virtue of preestablished harmony.

In his commentary on *Werther,* Trunz also invokes Goethe's notion of *Weltfrömmigkeit,* associating this concept with Goethe's philosophical development after the *Sturm und Drang* period. Since the notion of *Weltfrömmigkeit* (translated as world-piety, or a sense of duty and reverence toward the world) will reappear in chapters 5, 6, and 8, it is necessary here to investigate its significance. Perhaps Goethe's clearest elaboration of this term occurs in the following passage from *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre,* in which Wilhelm's friend, the Abbé, offers him some advice:

> Wir wollen der Hausfrömmigkeit das gebührende Lob nicht entziehen: auf ihr gründet sich die Sicherheit des Einzelnen, worauf zuletzt denn auch die Festigkeit und Würde des Ganzen beruhen mag; aber sie reicht nicht mehr hin, wir müssen den Begriff einer Weltfrömmigkeit fassen, unsre redlich menschlichen Gesinnungen in einen praktischen Bezug in's Weite setzen, und nicht nur unsre Nächsten fördern, sondern zugleich die ganze Menschheit mitnehmen. (*FA* 1,10:514)

Goethe's later concept of *Weltfrömmigkeit* (the first draft of *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* was completed by Goethe in 1820–21)[28] seeks to place the individual desires, longings, and fantasies of the Werther-style subject within a wider order: an order that is social, natural, and ultimately cosmic. This order is not to be construed narcissistically by the subject in terms of his or her own sectional interests. Rather, it demands that the subject be cognizant of the wider interests of external objects and subjects, objects and subjects with which and with whom it must learn to live harmoniously.[29]

When viewed as a counter-narrative to the Leibnizian model of the subject as a rational and windowless monad, it becomes clear that *Werther,* and particularly the revised *Werther* of 1787, exists securely within, and not in opposition to, the traditions of the European Enlightenment. Here it is pertinent to note that the so-called war or schism between poetry and philosophy, between *mythos* and *logos,* that is encountered in the philosophy of Plato manifests itself once again in the confrontation between the non-rational, sentimental worldview presented in *Werther* and the rational-philosophical worldview of Leibniz. In this regard Goethe's novel shows that there is a place for non-rational, emotive, and poetic discourse within the Enlightenment — if one understands the

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[28] See Erich Trunz's discussion of the novel's composition, *HA* 8:550–51.

[29] In his commentary on *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre,* Erich Trunz seeks to clarify the notion of *Frömmigkeit.* He concludes that the term invokes a sense of *Pflichterfüllung.* In this context, *Weltfrömmigkeit* would appear to refer to the subject's sense of duty or piety towards the world — "world" denoting here the society in which the subject lives, and perhaps also the grander cosmic order invoked by Pantheism (*HA* 8:619–20). The closest term in English that approximates *Frömmigkeit* appears to be "piety," derived from the Latin *pietas.* In *The Oxford Classical Dictionary,* William Chase Green and John Scheid define *pietas* as "the typical Roman attitude of dutiful respect towards gods, fatherland, and parents and other kinsmen" (William Chase Green and John Scheid, "Pietas," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary,* ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth, 3rd ed. [Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996], 1182).

Enlightenment to be, in a broader sense, a movement that is able to recognize both rational and non-rational modes of thought. Indeed, this view of *Werther* concurs with Gerhard Sauder's revisionary definition of the *Sturm und Drang* as an "intensification and internal criticism of the Enlightenment" — a definition that questions the traditional characterization of the *Sturm und Drang* as an irrationalist movement.[30]

Goethe's Early Romanticism and the Concept of *Grenze*

At this point, it is apposite to return to two questions that were raised in chapter 3. The first is: Was the young Goethe a Romantic, and if so, what kind of a Romantic was he? The answer, if one takes the broad European model of Romanticism offered by M. H. Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism* into account, is that the *Sturm und Drang* Goethe of "Mahomets Gesang" and *Werther* was a Romantic insofar as he served, whether consciously or not, at least partially to secularize the ancient Platonic/Christian pattern of Paradise/Fall/Return by naturalizing it. This is not to suggest that Goethe was a Platonist — indeed, his focus on the natural world suggests that he was not. But his Spinoza-inspired natural religion nevertheless retains a central tenet of Neo-Platonism: the notion that one's life is a gradual process of emergence from, and returning to, the divine — a process of *Verselbsten* and *Entselbstigen*. The fact that Goethe's divine was, like Spinoza's, effectively the same as nature serves only to exemplify Abrams's contention that Romanticism was by and large a movement of secularization that took place alongside, and not necessarily in opposition to, the Enlightenment. As has been seen, this notion of returning to a divinely-infused nature runs through many of Goethe's early works, in particular "Mahomets Gesang" and *Werther*.

The second question arises from Benno von Wiese's suggestion (discussed in the introduction to this study, as well as in chapter 3) regarding the temporal development of Goethe's notion of the daemonic. Does the notion of the daemonic — as a conduit between the material world and the divine — permeate Goethe's early *Sturm und Drang* works before he actually uses the term in later works like "Mächtiges Überraschen," "Ur-

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[30] Gerhard Sauder, "The *Sturm und Drang* and the Periodization of the 18th Century," 310. See also: Gerhard Sauder, "Die deutsche Literatur des Sturm und Drang," in *Europäische Aufklärung, II. Teil,* ed. Heinz-Joachim Müllenbrook, Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft 12 (Wiesbaden: AULA-Verlag, 1984), 327–78.

worte. Orphisch," *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* and Eckermann's *Gespräche*?[31] Again, the answer is yes, but this "yes" is complicated, and involves a number of secondary issues.

In Goethe's age, the role of the Platonic daemon was taken over by a new aesthetic category: the category of genius. The old Neo-Platonic and Stoic notion of genius as an external guardian divinity was gradually replaced by a more secular notion of genius as the artist who has the capacity to fuse the human with the natural. In fact, the genius is, in himself, nature, in that he creates with the power and spontaneity of natural organisms. Lying close to, or even being at one with, nature, the genius should be naïve in Schiller's sense of the term — he should manifest a mediation, and perhaps even an absolute coalescence, between the human and the natural. Seen in this way, the modern daemon, the young, emotional, inspired and inspiring artist of the *Sturm und Drang* that Thomas Mann finds in the creator of *Werther,* is still a conduit between humanity and its lost origin. The only thing that has changed is the origin itself — it is no longer the *eidos* or *logos* as in Plato's philosophy: rather, it is the God/Nature of Spinoza, the All from which one emanates and to which one returns.

But with the attempt to return to nature, to fuse the subject with the natural world, decidedly modern issues, issues that relate to subjectivity, come into focus. The genius, the type of the youthful artist who longs for nature (a type that finds its fullest expression in the character of Werther) exposes himself to a double risk. The first element of this risk lies in the fact that in longing for a union with nature, the genius may blur the boundary between self and other, thereby losing the self. It is this notion of a limitless, transgressive, and often destructive longing that I find in Goethe's early Romanticism: a Romanticism that focuses solely on the expansion of subjectivity through limitless longing. This kind of longing is expressed most clearly in the respective narratives of "Mahomets Gesang" and *Werther,* both of which end in acts of *Entselbstigen* or unselfing. The second element of this risk involves the concept of nature, and exists in the fact that in longing for nature, the genius may forget that his notion of nature is already a subjective concept that may actually be absent in the external world. In short, the quest for nature may very quickly become a solipsistic quest for the self.

Thus, through its exposure to this double risk — the risk of the loss of self or *Entselbstigen,* and the loss of empirical or objective nature through its occlusion by an idealized concept of nature — unlimited sub-

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[31] Wiese, "Das Dämonische und seine Gegenkräfte in der Tragödie Goethes," in *Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel,* 81.

jectivity must come to recognize *Grenzen*. These obstructing forces or *Grenzen* — termed *Grenzsituationen* (limit or boundary situations) by Benno von Wiese — appear to be located both within and outside the subject. In chapter 5, I will address Goethe's attempts to recognize and theorize these daemonic *Grenzsituationen* through his forays into science and his engagements with the critical philosophy of Kant.

5: Kantian Science and the Limits of Subjectivity

GOETHE'S IMMEDIATE RESPONSE to the problem of unlimited subjectivity exemplified by *Werther* was to emphasize the objective existence of external objects. In this connection, it is no coincidence that Goethe's first journey to Italy was roughly contemporaneous with the revisions that he made to *Werther* for the Göschen edition of his works.[1] For the Goethe of the mid- to late 1780s, the objective world effectively means nature: a concept that represents not only discrete, individual organisms, but also, after the examples of Spinoza and Herder, a natural order infused with the presence of an indwelling God. Werther's mistake was to succumb to the hubris of believing that he could reconceive this natural order on his own particular, subjective terms, without giving rise to tragic consequences. As this chapter will demonstrate, the post-*Werther* Goethe travels to Italy with this knowledge in his memory, and with a new program in mind: the "objective" and sensuous contemplation, observation, and recording of external objects, particularly plant life and geological formations.

But by the early 1790s, following Goethe's first encounters with the critical philosophy of Kant, the question as to what exactly constitutes objectivity, and whether indeed objectivity is possible at all, became increasingly important for Goethe's writings on scientific method. Goethe's consideration of these questions was then further intensified by his philosophical correspondence with Schiller during the mid- to late 1790s, as part of what Simon Richter has referred to as the project of Weimar Classicism: "an ambitious attempt not only to imagine but also to achieve a new quality of wholeness in human life and culture at a time when fragmentation, division, and alienation appeared to be the norm."[2] In Goethe's words, his bond with Schiller was sealed through "den größten,

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[1] Goethe departed for Italy in September 1786. He commenced his revisions to *Werther* in 1782 and 1783. These revisions continued in 1785, and were finally completed in August 1786. See Boyle, *BGA* 1:407.

[2] Simon Richter, "Introduction," in *The Literature of Weimar Classicism,* ed. Richter, 4 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), vol. 7 of *The Camden House History of German Literature.*

vielleicht nie ganz zu schlichtenden Wettkampf zwischen Objekt und Subjekt" (*FA* 1,24:437). As Ellis Dye has recently observed, this subject-object dichotomy is not only a feature of Weimar Classicism, but perhaps also *the* central issue in Romanticism as it is theorized by scholars like René Wellek.[3] The most important question, then, to be addressed in this chapter is that of what significance this subject-object dichotomy, as mediated to Goethe via Kant and Schiller, has for Goethe's later conceptualization of the daemonic.

Objectivity and the *Urpflanze*

Goethe's growing suspicion that observing the discrete autonomy of external objects actually helps to strengthen one's sense of self, one's sense of dwelling within a natural world that is not identical with one's subjectivity, but with which one can nevertheless feel a kinship, is aptly demonstrated by an entry from the *Italienische Reise,* dated 20 October 1786. Goethe reports that he has spent the entire day "unter freiem Himmel," taking a particular interest in rocks and minerals (*FA* 1,15/1:117). Upon coming across a large group of boulders, he first of all imagines them to be deposits of "Lehm" (loam or clay), but upon closer examination, he finds that they are composed of "sehr feinblättricher Schieferton, welcher mit Gyps abwechselt" (*FA* 1,15/1:118).

This entry displays the shift that occurs in Goethe's descriptions of natural phenomena between his writing during the *Sturm und Drang* years of the early 1770s and the notes taken in Italy between 1786 and 1788.[4] Gone are the Wertherian days when the subject or soul was a

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[3] Dye, *Love and Death in Goethe: "One and Double"* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), 35. See, on the issue of subject and object in Romanticism, René Wellek, "Romanticism Reexamined," in *Concepts of Criticism,* ed. Stephen G. Nichols Jr. (New Haven, NJ: Yale UP, 1963), 218, 220; cited in Dye, 35.

[4] It is necessary here to note that although Goethe's *Italienische Reise* records events in Goethe's life that took place between the years of 1786 and 1788, the actual book itself was only published under the title *Italienische Reise* as late as 1829, in the edition of Goethe's works known as the *Ausgabe letzter Hand*. Goethe first mentions working on the *Italienische Reise* as a book in letters written in late 1813 and early 1814. The first two volumes of the book were published in 1816 and 1817 under the title *Aus meinem Leben: Zweiter Abteilung erster und zweiter Teil.* Goethe then worked upon a third volume intermittently between 1819 and 1829. All three volumes were finally published together in 1829, under the title *Italienische Reise,* in the *Ausgabe letzter Hand*. But the *Italienische Reise* nevertheless arose from notes and letters that Goethe wrote between 1786 and 1788. In his commentary to the *Italienische Reise,* Herbert von Einem observes

Spiegel of nature. Nature is recorded in a way that tends to moderate the influence of the subject upon the object being observed. The speaker does not rush toward an immediate interpretation of external phenomena in line with his initial suspicion that it is a "Lehmhügel." Deeper, "nähere Betrachtung" of the object then reveals a further, hitherto concealed, level of information, which forces the subject to adjust and refine his initial understanding in order to accommodate the particularities of the object in question (*FA* 1,15/1:118). Such an adjustment shows a level of reciprocity between subject and object that is absent in *Werther*. In that text the subject continually rushes toward interpretations of nature that mirror his internal emotions. If Werther is happy, as he is in the entry dated 24 July 1771 (*FA* 1,8:83), nature is a paradise, but when he is depressed (see, for example, the entry dated 18 August 1771 [*FA* 1,8:109]) nature becomes an *Ungeheuer*.

By contrast, when Goethe does refer to himself in the above entry from the *Italienische Reise,* his reference shows a new understanding of the relationship between nature and human subjectivity. Goethe observes, "ich komme mir vor, wie Antäus, der sich immer neu gestärkt fühlt, je kräftiger man ihn mit seiner Mutter Erde in Berührung bringt" (*FA* 1,15/1:117). The son of Gaea (also known as Mother Earth) Antaeus was, according to myth, invincible provided that he remained in contact with the earth, his mother, who infused him with surges of incomparable strength. It was only when Heracles was able to lift Antaeus away from the surface of the earth that his strength weakened, allowing Heracles finally to strangle him.[5]

Of interest is the way in which Goethe's reference to this myth reflects the ideas about subjectivity that he was developing during the 1780s. Implicit in Goethe's likening of himself to Antaeus is the notion that one's subjectivity, one's sense of self, is in fact strengthened when it encounters, touches, and examines the external objects of nature. Something akin to this notion is already apparent in an earlier text — the essay "Über den Granit" (On Granite, written during 1784 and 1785). For

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that we should regard the book more as an edited version of earlier notes and letters than as a completely new creation undertaken by Goethe in the early nineteenth century. With regard to the first part of the *Italienische Reise* (from which the above quote is taken, and with which I am presently concerned) Herbert von Einem observes that: "der erste Teil dem Reisejournal sehr getreu folgt und die beschwingte Stimmung jener ersten Wochen und Monate rein wiedergibt" (*HA* 11:574).

[5] See Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths,* 2 vols. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 2:146–47.

Goethe, granite represents the "Grundfeste unserer Erde" (*FA* 1,25:313), the oldest, strongest, deepest, and most unshakeable production of nature, the presence of which, says Goethe, "meine Seele erhebt und sicher macht" (*FA* 1,25:314–15). Werther's sense of reality is brittle because he tends to see all external phenomena as reflections of his own emotional world. In this way his sense of self expands to the point of fragmentation. By contrast, the Goethe of "Über den Granit" and the *Italienische Reise* discovers that when one loses contact with nature as a collection of autonomous objects differentiated from, but also in kinship with, the self, then one may also weaken one's sense of self, one's self-identity. Only when the subject runs up against, and eventually accommodates, the concrete particularities of external phenomena can there be a healthy reciprocity between subject and object.[6]

It would, however, be misleading to suggest that Goethe's approach to nature always maintained the level of objectivity suggested by these geological reflections. Indeed, at times Goethe's early scientific studies take on quasi-mythical overtones, resembling Faust's quest for universal knowledge. A case in point is Goethe's quest for the "Geheimnis der Pflanzenzeugung und Organisation," otherwise known as the *Urpflanze* or primal plant. This project is first touched upon in the *Italienische Reise,* in a letter to Herder dated 17 May 1787. In this letter, Goethe suggests that through direct observation of natural objects, a kind of inner necessity can be intuited through a mode of apprehension central to Herder's philosophy: *Einfühlung* (which when translated literally means "feeling-in"). The grandiose scale of Goethe's ambitions is reflected in his view that:

> Die Urpflanze wird das wunderlichste Geschöpf von der Welt, um welches mich die Natur selbst beneiden soll. Mit diesem Modell und dem Schlüssel dazu, kann man alsdann noch Pflanzen in's Unendliche erfinden, die konsequent sein müssen, daß heißt: die, wenn sie auch nicht existieren, doch existieren könnten und nicht etwa malerische oder dichterische Schatten und Scheine sind, sondern eine innerliche Wahrheit und Notwendigkeit haben. Dasselbe Gesetz wird sich auf alles übrige Lebendige anwenden lassen. (*FA* 1,15/1:346)

This passage demonstrates the extent to which Goethe's turn toward objectivity and science is shot through with a sense of ambiguity — one might even say with a dual sense of subjectivity. On the one hand, as was

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[6] See, on this subject, Rüdiger Görner, *Goethe: Wissen und Entsagen — aus Kunst* (Munich: Iudicium, 1995), 50–62.

seen in the geological notations quoted earlier, Goethe was, during his Italian journey, much in the process of developing his skills of observation, a process that enabled him to adjust and fine-tune his initial subjective presentiments regarding external phenomena. On the other hand, Goethe's conception of the *Urpflanze* appears to contain all of the overweening ambition of his early Romanticism. Echoing (perhaps unconsciously) his *Sturm und Drang* poem "Prometheus," Goethe suggests that his notion of the *Urpflanze* will be the envy of nature itself — that his genius will effectively trump God/Nature by creating "das wunderlichste Geschöpf von der Welt." Goethe intimates that he will not just observe nature; he will go beyond it by uncovering and harnessing its inner laws, inner laws that will enable him theoretically to demonstrate the possibility and "innerliche Notwendigkeit" of plants that go beyond the bounds of phenomenal experience — plants that *could* exist, as opposed to plants that *do* exist.

Seen in this light, Goethe's apparent turn toward objectivity is not necessarily as objective as it might first seem. This is because Goethe, at least the Goethe of the *Italienische Reise,* still considered all natural objects in relation to the subject and its capacities. When examining geological formations, he does so in an Antaeus-like fashion: in order to bolster his sense of self. Likewise, the epistemological status of the *Urpflanze* was not altogether clear to Goethe at this time. In a letter to Herder dated 17 April 1787, Goethe seems to suggest that the *Urpflanze* might be an actual empirical object, growing on some Italian hillside, rather than a theoretical model or type (*FA* 1,15/1:285–86). Yet earlier, on 25 March 1787, he wonders whether his *Urpflanze* may be so "sublimiert" (sublimated or abstract) as to be useless as a model for understanding actual botanical objects (*FA* 1,15/1:239), a self-critique that presages Schiller's later description of the *Urpflanze* as being akin to a Kantian idea.

The pressing question on Goethe's mind during the late 1780s — that of how the perceiving subject might observe and do justice to the objects of nature — is also addressed in relation to aesthetics, most notably in the essay "Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil" (Simple Imitation, Manner, Style), written in 1789 for Wieland's *Teutsche Merkur* (German Mercury). In this essay, Goethe suggests that the artist ignores the particularities of nature at his peril. Nature should always be his primary object and focus, and when this object is ignored or effaced by the artist's *Manier* — his subjective appropriation, perhaps even his distortion, of external objects — then it is to the detriment of his art. This essay will be analyzed in greater depth later in this chapter. Here I wish to make the observation that, at this time in Goethe's thinking, there appears to have been a high degree of interaction between his aesthetic theories and the cognitive approach that he brings to scientific enter-

prises. In fact, the relationship between the aesthetic and scientific modes of cognition was very much on the philosophical agenda just one year after the publication of "Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil" in 1789. The publication in 1790 of Kant's third *Critique* — the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Critique of Judgment) — marked a major turning point in Goethe's approach to the natural world. In Goethe's own words, Kant's book brought together his "disparatesten Beschäftigungen," leading to a wonderful new period in his life (*FA* 1,24:444).

Goethe, Schiller, and the Kantian Turn

How, then, did Goethe come to be acquainted with the thought of Kant? Before dealing with the earliest stages of Goethe's Kant reception, it is useful to consider Goethe's recollection, in the autobiographical fragment "Glückliches Ereignis" (Fortunate Encounter, 1817), of the meeting with Schiller that has traditionally been seen as marking the most decisive moment of Goethe's Kantian turn. At a meeting of the Natural History Society in Jena held on 20 July 1794, a presentation was given by A. J. Batsch on the subject of botany. Following this presentation, Schiller commented privately to Goethe about the speaker's fragmentary manner of dealing with nature. Warming to this topic, Goethe replied that one could easily adopt a different approach to the natural world, by portraying it not as a series of individual fragments, but rather as "wirkend und lebendig," and as "aus dem Ganzen in die Teile strebend" (*FA* 1,24:436). Proceeding to Schiller's house, Goethe went on to offer his host a summary of his hypothesis that, when viewed from the perspective of metamorphosis, individual plants might be understood as modifications of a universal design, archetype, or essential form. This notion is, at the very least, suggestive of his earlier concept of the *Urpflanze*, which had been altered in the six or so years since the end of his first Italian journey in 1788.

During this period, Goethe had published his theories regarding plant formation in an essay entitled *Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erklären* (Experimental Observations to Explain the Metamorphosis of Plants, 1790). The scientific hypothesis of this book is that all of the individual parts of plants — for example, seed leaves, nodes, buds, stems, sepals, petals, stamens, and pistils, leading ultimately to fruit and new seeds — can be understood as modifications or transmutations of a preexisting organ or essential part (*FA* 1,24:110). These modifications are seen as arising from the twin forces of expansion and contraction that Goethe thought to be resident in matter (*FA* 1,24:132–33), an idea that he probably derived from his reading of Kant's *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* (Metaphysical Foundations of

Natural Science, 1786) during 1789.[7] Petals, for example, may arise from an expansion of the sepals (*FA* 1,24:122–23), while stamens develop through a contraction of the petals (*FA* 1,24:125). Although Goethe does not specify definitively the identity of the essential part that is subjected to these transformations, at the conclusion of his treatise he suggests that "das Blatt" might be seen as best approximating the organ that underlies all plant development (*FA* 1,24:150). Thus, through a synthesis of Goethe's detailed empirical investigations of plants, the *Urpflanze* had now become neither a mythical plant that he might actually find in Sicilian gardens, nor an abstract Platonic form derived from empirical observations; rather, it was purportedly a concrete, essential form (*das Blatt*) with an inherent teleology that could be observed and experienced in its various manifestations in individual plants.

As an orthodox Kantian who had already studied Kant's three *Critiques,* Schiller's response to Goethe's revised and updated theory of the *Urpflanze* was predictable, although Goethe was apparently shocked and annoyed by it at the time. According to Goethe's recollection in "Glückliches Ereignis," Schiller argued that the *Urpflanze* could never be an object of empirical experience, exclaiming "das ist keine Erfahrung, das ist eine Idee" (*FA* 1,24:437). The *Urpflanze* was, in Schiller's opinion, an example of something akin to Kant's notion of the transcendental ideas of pure reason. In the language of the first *Critique,* the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Critique of Pure Reason; A edition 1781, B edition 1787) the function of these ideas is not, in Kant's view, to refer to actual, empirical objects, but rather to point towards a heuristic or regulative unity that might bring together separate acts of the understanding into an overarching, synthetic whole.[8] In other words, such an idea could only belong to the observer's internal and *a priori* cognitive faculties, and not to external nature.

For Kant, these *a priori* elements are essentially threefold. First, any experience of an external object is implicitly received by us in terms of what Kant calls the *Anschauungen* of space and time associated with the faculty of *Sinnlichkeit* or sensibility. Second, for any meaningful act of cognition to take place, these raw intuitions are processed by pure *a priori* concepts associated with the faculty of *Verstand* (understanding). These pure concepts or categories (like, for example, causality, necessity, unity,

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[7] Goethe attributes this notion to Kant in his *Campagne in Frankreich, FA* 1,16:520. On this issue, see: Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2002), 429.

[8] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (A 327 / B 383), *KW* 2:331.

and substance) are not intuitive but discursive, which is to say, they are associated with thought and judgment. Unlike empirical concepts, which are derived from experience, these pure concepts condition the possibility of experience. They exist *a priori* within the subject and make possible the meaningful representations of experience that occur within the subject. All one can know, therefore, are phenomena — *Vorstellungen* or representations of external objects that are mediated by the categories of the understanding. How things might actually be *an sich* (in themselves), in what Kant refers to as the noumenal realm, is something that we cannot know, since for Kant the *Ding an sich* functions as a limit concept that circumscribes the boundaries of human knowledge. At the top of this construction stands the faculty of *Vernunft* or reason — the very ground and basis of human freedom. While the faculties of *Sinnlichkeit* and *Verstand* are tied directly to the experience of external objects, and thus subject to the determination of natural forces, reason is free from such determination, since it extends beyond the limits of sense experience, formulating ideas about the ultimate purpose and design of both the natural world and of human activity within the world.

In the third *Critique* — the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Critique of Judgment, 1790) — Kant clarifies how reason may function in the context of scientific observations. He undertakes this task in the second part of the third *Critique* — entitled the "Kritik der teleologischen Urteilskraft" (Critique of Teleological Judgment) — and it is likely that this aspect of Kantian thought also plays a role in Schiller's reaction to Goethe's theory of the *Urpflanze*. Like the scientific establishment of his day, Kant believed that the most plausible and acceptable explanations for natural occurrences are to be found in the cause and effect hypotheses offered by Newtonian mechanics. At the same time, Kant also thought that organisms and their constituent parts display such a high degree of organization, generative integration, and reciprocity, that a teleology or design beyond simple cause-effect relationships is necessarily suggested to the scientific observer. Thus, just as the observation of some artworks produces aesthetic ideas like beauty, so too do certain features of organisms — like, for example, the different parts of plants studied by Goethe — point towards an idea of the organism as a *Naturzweck*.

Science, according to Kant, is on firm ground when it posits mechanistic cause-effect relationships between the parts of organisms, since they conform to the laws of nature that correspond with the *a priori* categories of the understanding. When, on the other hand, it speculates as to the final ends or purposes of organisms and their parts, it is on much shakier ground, since such ends or purposes do not follow necessarily from the *a priori* categories; rather, they constitute reflective, teleological judgments formulated freely by reason — judgments that can play only a regulative,

heuristic role in scientific methodology. Thus, for Kant, the scientist can proceed *als ob* the separate parts of plants are organized according to an overarching teleology, or as if, in the words of Robert Richards, "the very heart of nature beat out intrinsic patterns and pulsed with productive powers,"[9] but to assert that this is necessarily and objectively the case would be to overstep the limits of reason that Kant had delineated so carefully in the first *Critique*.

It is more or less this Kantian critique of teleological scientific judgments that Schiller applied to Goethe's theory of the *Urpflanze* in 1794. But was Goethe completely unaware of this aspect of the third *Critique* at this time? The popular image of Goethe propagated by Schiller in the essay "Über Anmut und Würde" (On Grace and Dignity, 1793) as well as in his famous letter to Goethe dated 23 August 1794, is that of the instinctive, intuitive, and decidedly non-theoretical genius who more or less unconsciously arrives at similar results to those achieved by the conscious, speculative philosopher: Schiller himself.[10] Moreover, Goethe's response to Schiller's Kantian critique of the *Urpflanze* tends only to confirm this image of the intuitive poet: "das kann mir sehr lieb sein daß ich Ideen habe ohne es zu wissen, und sie sogar mit Augen sehe" (*FA* 1,24:437).

Yet letters written by members of Goethe's intellectual circle reveal that he began studying the first *Critique* in 1789 and the third *Critique* in the year of its publication (1790), some four to five years before the purportedly decisive meeting with Schiller.[11] In his book *Goethes Kantstudien* (Goethe's Kant Studies, 1994), Géza von Molnár investigates the actual editions of the first and third *Critiques* that Goethe read and annotated during these years. If we take the interpretative leap of assuming that the heavily annotated sections are those that most attracted Goethe's scholarly interest, then it becomes very clear that Goethe was, as early as the winter of 1790–91, particularly interested in the *a priori* conceptual elements of cognition discussed by Kant in both the first and third *Critiques*.

Goethe's extensive annotations of the "Kritik der teleologischen Urteilskraft," the scientific component of the third *Critique*, are especially relevant to the question of the *Urpflanze*. When, for example, Kant uses the example of a tree to clarify his idea that an organism is cognized as a

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[9] Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, 67.

[10] Schiller to Goethe, Jena, 23 August 1794, in *MA* 8.1:12–16.

[11] Christoph Martin Wieland to Karl Leonhard Reinhold, 18 February 1789, in *GG* 1:470; Christian Gottfried Körner to Friedrich Schiller, 6 October 1790, in *GG* 1:497. Both of these letters are discussed by Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, 427–30.

Naturzweck when its constituent parts display a high level of reciprocity and integration (*KW* 5:482–83), Goethe's annotations show, according to Molnár, that he finds in Kant's passage confirmation of his notion that plants develop teleologically out of an essential form common to all botanical species.[12] These annotations do not, however, resolve the question as to whether Goethe believes (*à la* Kant) that this teleology is merely an aspect of his own cognitive equipment, or whether it is actually resident in the external world *an sich*. Goethe addresses this question only in a much later fragment, entitled "Anschauende Urteilskraft" (Judgment Through Intuitive Perception, written in 1817) where, after the manner of Kant, he describes such teleological reflections as being risky adventures of reason (*FA* 1,24:448).[13] Nevertheless, far from confirming the image of an intuitive scientist, Goethe's early annotations of the first and third *Critiques,* combined with the essay that I shall presently consider ("Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt," written in April 1792) demonstrate that, at the very least, Goethe was already on the way to developing a Kantian scientific epistemology prior to his discussion of the *Urpflanze* with Schiller in 1794.

Der Versuch and Its Limits

In the introductory paragraph to "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt," Goethe gives an outline of the Werther-style approach to the cognition of external objects — an approach that, he suggests, must be abandoned if objective scientific research is to take place. The process of relating all external *Gegenstände* to the self, to one's emotions, likes, and dislikes, is — Goethe suggests — what leads us into a thousand errors (*FA* 1,25:26). This is due to the fact that objects — including human objects, such as, for example, Lotte in Goethe's *Werther* — do not function as extensions of the subject's own will. Indeed, they may have an existence that is completely independent of, and therefore oblivious to, the wishes and desires of the perceiving subject. Thus, when the subject sees the content of its emotional world reflected everywhere in external objects and events, and when these events, or the actions of the objects in question, do not in fact accord with its desires and longings, humiliation and bitterness may quickly ensue (*FA* 1,25:26). This, it seems, is the fate that befalls Werther.

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[12] Géza von Molnár, *Goethes Kantstudien* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1994), 123–24.

[13] See also, on this subject, Daniel Steuer, "In Defence of Experience: Goethe's Natural Investigations and Scientific Culture," in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe,* ed. Lesley Sharpe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 168–69.

Goethe then proposes that a more difficult but also more rewarding task for the scientist is to strive (*streben*) to observe nature's objects "an sich selbst" (*FA* 1,25:26). The construction "an sich selbst" is probably derived from Kant's limit concept of the *Ding an sich* — a concept that demarcates things as they might be independently of human perception. Goethe's use of the verb *streben* may also suggest that he recognizes the impossibility of achieving absolute objectivity in scientific research, which would, in Kantian terms, amount to knowledge of the *Ding an sich*.

There are two crucial terms present in the early passages of this essay that require special attention. The first is the notion of *Gegenstand* — inadequately translated into English as object. *Gegenstände* are indeed objects in the everyday sense of those things that are external to, and therefore differentiated from, the subject. But the term *Gegen-stand,* which, when translated literally, means that which stands *gegen* (over against) the self, carries within itself a further meaning, in that it suggests that objects may well be things that oppose, or even obstruct, one's subjective desires. In "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt," Goethe interprets this sense of *Gegenstand* in a scientific context. Often the scientist has a hypothesis that, through an experiment, he seeks to demonstrate, usually through the manipulation of external objects under certain conditions. But in many cases, the *Gegenstände* of nature may oppose, or even contradict, the theories that scientists project upon them, and this, according to Goethe, demonstrates "die Disproportion unseres Verstandes zu der Natur der Dinge" (*FA* 1,25:34). The implicit suggestion here is that the scientist's understanding of objects is deepened when the desires, wishes, or theories that he imposes upon them are obstructed by the external conditions of concrete reality. Thus, the scientist should always be cognizant of the gap between the idea and the thing, between concept and object, between rational theories and the external world.

The significance of the second key term follows directly from the meaning of *Gegenstand*. If the objects of external nature turn out to contradict and oppose the scientist's wishes and theories, then he must be prepared to adjust, reformulate, or even abandon these wishes and theories in order to accommodate himself to external reality. The scientific investigator must, says Goethe, practice *Entsagung* (*FA* 1,25:26). And just when we might think that Goethe wishes to apply the notion of *Entsagung* to scientific experiments alone, he drops the following remark into his essay, a remark that will become crucial to my interpretation of his later conception of the daemonic: "das Leben weist uns bei jedem Schritte zurecht" (*FA* 1,25:27).

Later in the essay, the influence of Kant's critical philosophy comes even more clearly into view. Goethe observes that while empirical evidence should be of the utmost importance to any scientific experiment, a

major role is also played by what he calls the creative and independent *Seelenkräfte,* as it is through these *a priori* faculties that empirical evidence is grasped, collected, ordered, and developed (*FA* 1,25:28). What role do the so-called *Seelenkräfte* or inner faculties play in scientific research? In precisely what sense are the *Seelenkräfte* independent? And can the *Seelenkräfte* always be trusted? The answers to these questions may lie in exactly what Goethe means when he uses the term *Versuch,* a word with both literary and scientific connotations that tend to exceed its rather one-dimensional translation into English as "experiment."

In its most literal and everyday sense, *etwas zu versuchen* means to attempt something or to try something out. However, the Grimms' *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (published in 1860) reveals that during the eighteenth century *der Versuch* also came to mean, after the example of Michel de Montaigne (1533–92), "essay" — a written formulation of a particular problem. Finally, the brothers Grimm also show that since the seventeenth century, and especially for Goethe, the term *der Versuch* approximated the Latin term *experimentum* or experiment. For Goethe, *der Versuch* is a procedure that attempts to reproduce, under artificially constructed conditions, an empirical phenomenon first observed by chance in nature (*FA* 1,25:29). In this sense *der Versuch* is the product of a concept-laden intentionality, or in other words, the product of what Goethe calls the *Seelenkräfte.* It is precisely this process of intentionally reproducing empirical phenomena in order to achieve an anticipated outcome that Goethe sees as necessarily involving what he calls the *Seelenkräfte* or inner faculties.

Here the question arises as to precisely which texts by Kant exerted an influence upon Goethe's theorization of *der Versuch.* In his recent study *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (2002), Robert Richards maintains that "by 1792 Goethe had not yet advanced beyond the Kant of the first *Critique,*"[14] thereby discounting the possibility that Goethe's reading and extensive annotation of the second (scientific) part of the third *Critique* (undertaken in the winter of 1790–91) may have played a role in the formulation of "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt." It is impossible to resolve this question regarding the influence of Kant in a definitive way, since there is admittedly no passage in Goethe's essay that shows an unequivocal link with the third *Critique.* At the same time, however, it is possible to see in Goethe's essay an attempt to question a major tenet in Kant's philosophy of science — a tenet that has its basis in the first *Critique* and is then extended in the third *Critique.*

[14] Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life,* 438.

This tenet exists in Kant's proposition that the ideas of reason correspond with the independence and freedom from natural necessity enjoyed by humans. In the third *Critique,* this freedom consists in the subject's ability to understand particular organisms under a universal law freely and independently legislated by reason through reflective judgments. Seen in this way, Goethe's capacity to posit the *Urpflanze* as a law of development governing all manifestations of plant life may correspond with a kind of freedom. But this rational form of freedom would always be subject to two very significant qualifications: first, the reflective judgments associated with scientific research can only ever be abstract and heuristic — that is, remaining confined to the Kantian realm of the *als ob* — as opposed to actual and concrete. Goethe makes this point clear when he states that the relationships between objects that are posited by scientific experiments may not in fact exist in external reality, precisely because they emerge from the "Organisation unsers Wesens" (*FA* 1,25:31). Second, it is precisely the abstract and heuristic element of such research that would compromise and perhaps even distort the particularity of the individual object by attempting to subsume it under a universal law legislated by reason.

In fact as early as 1792, in "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt," Goethe argues that the purported freedom to posit such universal laws is probably compromised by forces beyond the complete control and awareness of the subject — forces that, for want of a better term, might be called the scientific unconscious. He does so by raising serious doubts as to whether scientific judgments based upon experiments can be purely rational or even completely aware of their own underlying motives. This is because

> beim Übergang von der Erfahrung zum Urteil, von der Erkenntnis zur Anwendung ist es, wo dem Menschen gleichsam wie an einem Passe alle seine inneren Feinde auflauren, Einbildungskraft, Ungeduld, Vorschnelligkeit, Selbstzufriedenheit, Steifheit, Gedankenform, vorgefaßte Meinung, Bequemlichkeit, Leichtsinn, Veränderlichkeit, und wie die ganze Schar mit ihrem Gefolge heißen mag, alle liegen hier im Hinterhalte und überwältigen unversehens sowohl den handelnden Weltmann als auch den stillen vor allen Leidenschaften gesichert scheinenden Beobachter. (*FA* 1,25:30)

Here we can begin to understand how Goethe's turn toward science and Kant's critical philosophy can be seen to prepare the way for his later, post-*Sturm-und-Drang* conception of the daemonic as an ambivalent obstructing or limiting force located both in external nature and within the subject. In "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt," Goethe becomes aware of a gap that exists between the internally generated theo-

ries and desires of the subject, and the existence of external objects or nature. Within this *Weltanschauung,* nature is no longer the path through which the Leibnizian monadic soul can achieve an unobstructed *Selbstverwirklichung.* On the contrary, Goethe intends to show in his essay that the subject and its attendant desires, projects, and theories are necessarily subjected to determination, limitation, and sometimes even obstruction, by forces of which it often has little understanding — forces that are perhaps better understood within the inexact narrative mode of *mythos.*

Comparative Anatomy and "Erfahrung und Wissenschaft"

Goethe's desire for synthesis, for a universal model upon which to map the particular objects of nature, is nowhere more clear than in an essay entitled "Erster Entwurf einer allgemeinen Einleitung in die vergleichende Anatomie, ausgehend von der Osteologie" (Outline for a General Introduction to Comparative Anatomy, Commencing with Osteology), written in 1795–96 and published in the volume *Zur Morphologie* (On Morphology) in 1820.

In a section of this essay entitled "Über einen aufzustellenden Typus zu Erleichterung der vergleichenden Anatomie" (Concerning a Proposed Type in Order to Assist the Development of Comparative Anatomy), Goethe outlines his central methodological problem. He begins by arguing that although the similarity between different animals and between animals and humans is generally acknowledged, these similarities are also difficult to demonstrate in some instances and sometimes overlooked or completely denied. This situation prevails, according to Goethe, precisely because there is no universal model or archetype of animal development against which one can test different observations (*FA* 1,24:229). The problems sketched here by Goethe are similar to those that preoccupied him in his search for the *Urpflanze.* First, how does one construct a general theory of nature based upon isolated observations of its individual organisms? And second: how can one erect such a universal model without overlooking, and therefore obscuring, the particular attributes of each organism in question?

As Robert Richards observes, Goethe's response to these questions is infused with Kant's third *Critique.*[15] Using scarcely veiled Kantian terminology, Goethe begins with the proposition that all of our judgments about the world must begin with *Erfahrung* (empirical experience), or what Kant might call sensation or *Empfindung.* This experience — the

[15] Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life,* 446.

unprocessed matter of our observations, which corresponds with the faculty of *Sinnlichkeit* — is then ordered according to what Goethe calls "die Idee." This idea seems to be something akin to a regulative idea of pure reason, since Goethe points out that it may be "nur zum Versuch aufgestellt" (*FA* 1,24:230). But Goethe leaves the temporal order of this process unresolved. Do we develop this regulative idea in response to our initial sensory observations, or does it somehow precede them? To what degree should the idea be allowed to prevail or legislate over our empirical observations? And perhaps most importantly, to what extent does this process of universal legislation fail to account for the minute particularities of the objects in question? As Nicholas Boyle observes in relation to this essay, Goethe "leaves it undefined — makes it, in other words, a matter of personal intuition — what the relation is to be between this necessary postulate, or Idea, and the evidence of our senses" (*BGA* 2:258).

The two essential questions that confront Goethe here can be formulated as follows: Is it possible to unify the multifarious phenomenon known broadly by Goethe as nature within a sequence of universal regulative ideas — ideas that, in their speculative nature, are not unlike Kant's ideas of pure reason? Or does nature resist all of science's attempts to achieve interpretative closure and certitude in relation to natural phenomena? In an essay written on 15 January 1798, entitled "Erfahrung und Wissenschaft" (Empirical Observation and Science),[16] Goethe appears tentatively to answer these questions by placing his methodological emphasis on the side of the ideal — the overarching scientific key or idea — at the expense of the real: the sensuous natural objects in question.

Goethe begins this essay by addressing the cognitive dualism of particular and universal, observing that while the scientific researcher always aims to grasp the particularities of the objects under investigation, he also keeps in mind not only how these objects actually appear but also "wie sie erscheinen sollten" (*FA* 1,25:125). Thus, precisely because the scientist aims to achieve "ein reines konstantes Phänomen" in his scientific research, he is often required to discard, ignore, or elide "viele empirische Brüche" in order to arrive at this ideal (*FA* 1,25:125).

Here Goethe finds himself on similar terrain to that which he traversed in "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt." In that essay Goethe drew attention to the "innere Feinde" that threaten the scientist at the point of transition from empirical evidence to judgment. It is again these inner enemies that Goethe highlights in "Erfahrung und Wissenschaft" when he notes the scientific temptation to arrive at a "konstantes Phänomen," and thus to erect an ideal around which to organize

[16] This essay is also referred to as "Das reine Phänomen."

and interpret one's empirical observations. But later in the essay, Goethe seems to regard the inner tendency toward an ideal model to be a necessary evil of any scientific enterprise. If the minute particulars of the natural objects in question are overlooked in the quest for a universal model, then, says Goethe, this is simply a reflection of the necessary inexactness of scientific cognition. There is, he observes "ein großer Unterschied ob man, wie Theoristen tun, einer Hypothese zu lieb ganze Zahlen in die Brüche schlägt, oder ob man einen empirischen Bruch der Idee des reinen Phänomens aufopfert" (*FA* 1,25:125).

Attempting to observe, describe, and do justice to the minute particularities of each object would, offers Goethe, be like trying to drink the sea dry (*FA* 1,25:125), and while we might imagine that the hypersensuous Goethe of the *Italienische Reise* and "Einfache Nachahmung der Natur" might indeed have attempted to drink the sea dry rather than compromise the autonomy and individuality of natural objects, the Goethe of "Erfahrung und Wissenschaft" appears to be happy to cut his losses and side with Kant's regulative ideas of pure reason.[17] This decision appears to have arisen from the correspondence between Goethe and Schiller on the subject of epistemology that took place during early January 1798.

Kantian Disagreements

On 10 January 1798, Goethe sent a copy of "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt" to Schiller for his consideration. Schiller's initial response on 12 January 1798 was congratulatory, remarking that Goethe had touched upon "die höchsten Angelegenheiten und Erfodernisse aller rationellen Empirie" (*MA* 8.1:491–92). But later in the same letter, a disagreement between Goethe and Schiller on the role of idealism in scientific methodology rears its head. Although Schiller initially applauds Goethe's insistence that the scientist should pay attention to the minute, sensuous details of the object under investigation, this applause soon betrays its own internal ambivalence, an ambivalence that reveals Schiller's preference for the ideal or abstract, over and above the sensuous. Schiller sees the painstakingly sensuous methodology extolled by Goethe in "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt" as a worthy undertaking, but an undertaking that is only a means to an end. For Schiller, detailed empirical observation is only a kind of preparatory activity, the aim of which is to secure some kind of basis from which to launch the "vorstel-

[17] This view is supported by the commentary on this essay by John Neubauer, *MA* 6.2:1265–67.

lenden Kräfte" and the "Kombinationsvermögen" into the stratosphere occupied by Kant's speculative ideas of pure reason (*MA* 8.1:492).

In the end it was Schiller's distaste for the world of sensuous objects, combined with Goethe's ultimate — albeit sometimes wavering — faith in these objects as the only ground upon which to base and refine any scientific theory, that led to a lack of common purpose in their respective cognitive approaches. On the following day (13 January 1798) Goethe replied to Schiller by suggesting that, with the benefit of Schiller's assistance, he was now able to progress from "einem steifen Realism und einer stockenden Objektivität" to the point where the orthodox Kantianism outlined in Schiller's letter could offer him the realization of a new faith (*MA* 8.1:494). But Goethe's adherence to this faith would be short-lived. Although both the above letter and the essay "Erfahrung und Wissenschaft" tend to contradict Hans Blumenberg's assertion that Goethe looked at Kant only as a gesture of respect toward Schiller (*BAM,* 436), comments made by Schiller as early as November 1790 demonstrate the extent to which their respective versions of Kantianism were, from the very outset, poles apart. Writing to C. G. Körner, Schiller observes that Goethe's method of reading Kant consists in clothing the Kantian philosophy with his (Goethe's) own subjective manner of thinking. While Schiller prefers to rely on the soul, Goethe's philosophy, according to Schiller, "holt zu viel aus der Sinnenwelt" and is in general too sensuous for his taste (*GG* 1:497–98).

Schiller's account of Goethe's decidedly sensuous interpretation of Kant leads to the central ambiguity in Goethe's Kantianism. This ambiguity exemplifies the way in which Goethe tended to use philosophy for his own purposes, regardless of the prevailing orthodox interpretations of certain thinkers. While Schiller appears to have been an orthodox disciple of Kant, Goethe, especially during the 1790s, simply latched on to those aspects of the Kantian philosophy that best fitted in with his own developing ideas about subjectivity.

Earlier in this chapter I referred to what might be called a dual sense of subjectivity in connection with Goethe's adoption of scientific research. On the one hand, Goethe saw the scientific tendency to examine objects minutely as a kind of antidote to the excessive subjectivity embodied in the character of Werther. The scientist, Goethe seems to have thought, is able to control his own subjective intimations regarding nature by remaining sensuously in contact with nature. In this way his internal fantasies, surmises, and ideas about nature could be refined and held in check by the boundary of concrete reality, by the minute particularities of natural organisms. It was, moreover, precisely the *critical* aspect of the Kantian philosophy — namely, Kant's contention that the ideas of pure reason could never correspond with the actual objects of sensuous experience —

that appealed to Goethe, as it appeared to suggest that there was an aspect of the external world, embodied in Kant's essentially unknowable things in themselves, that would always exceed the internally generated ideas of the striving subject.

On the other hand, however, the Kantian philosophy also offered Goethe a new source of longing. That is to say, it offered him the fantasy of a scientific methodology that might unlock universal keys to nature, keys not unlike Kant's ideas of pure reason. Goethe entertained the idea that such universal keys might exist in his exploration of the *Urpflanze,* in his work on comparative anatomy, and, as I shall suggest later in this chapter, in his pursuit of the *Urphänomen*.

Bildung and Entelechy

As Matthew Bell has shown in his study *Goethe's Naturalistic Anthropology: Man and Other Plants* (1994), Goethe's investigations of non-human life forms have direct implications for his theorization of human development. This leads to the following question: If something like the *Urpflanze* could be a principle of biological development within the realm of botanical life, what might its human equivalent be? Goethe was beginning to compose an answer to this question in September 1796, about ten years after his first journey to Italy. The answer took the form of a new term that Goethe contributed to the language of science: *Morphologie*.[18] *Morphologie,* wrote Goethe in 1796, rests on the study of *Gestalt* and *Verwandlung* in both inorganic and organic objects — with the vegetable, the animal, and the human all being included in the latter category (*LA* 10:128).

Goethe's attempt to apply his burgeoning "Verwandlungslehre" (*LA* 10:128) to the sphere of human life also derived some of its impetus from another specific term and its philosophical history: the notion of *Bildung,* which can be translated into two English words — formation or education. This term, used in the sense of formation, was first deployed in a scientific context by the German anatomist J. F. Blumenbach, in his book *Über den Bildungstrieb* (On the Formative Drive, 1780).[19] In his article on *Bildung* in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie,* E. Lichtenstein observes that Goethe took up Blumenbach's concept of the formative drive and regarded it as the key to the great thoughts of nature (*HWP*

[18] Boyle writes that the word "Morphology" was Goethe's "own coinage . . . although it was independently invented for use as a medical term, as which it first appeared in print in 1800" (*BGA* 2:459).

[19] Boyle, *BGA* 2:30.

1:924). Goethe would eventually publish an essay on Blumenbach's theories titled "Bildungstrieb" (The Formative Impulse) in 1820 (*FA* 1,24:451–52).

Of more interest for the purposes of this study is the philosophical origin of the notion of *Bildung* in the works of Aristotle, and, more specifically, in Aristotle's notion of the entelechy. In chapter 1, I discussed how, with respect to living beings, Aristotle's concept of the entelechy functions as the organism's completed actuality or end — *entelecheia* meaning "having the end within." For Aristotle, then, the entelechy is the source of what Blumenbach and Goethe would later call the *Bildungstrieb* or formative drive — the locus of the organism's development, unfolding, and formation. In the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie,* E. Lichtenstein traces the genealogy of this essentially Aristotelian notion of *Bildung* as formation or self-formation from Aristotle, through figures as various as the sixteenth-century Swiss natural philosopher Paracelsus (1493–1541), Leibniz, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), and Herder, into the thought of Goethe. In the case of Paracelsus, Lichtenstein finds a dynamic new coinage of the term *Bildung* in the sense of the Aristotelian-Stoic image of striving self-generation (*HWP* 1:922). In Leibniz, the concept of *Bildung* then finds its corollary in the *Monadology,* where the author makes the link with Aristotle quite specific by observing that monads may be called entelechies, since "they all have in them a certain perfection . . . that makes them sources of their own internal actions."[20] Likewise, a new Platonized, aesthetic-humanistic interpretation of the term *Bildung* is attributed to early German translations of Shaftesbury's notion of inward form as "innere Bildung" (*HWP* 1:923).

Apart from Herder, the most famous of Goethe's contemporaries to use this term was Wilhelm von Humboldt. "Bildung," Humboldt writes, echoing Leibniz: "hat ihren Ursprung allein in dem Inneren der Seele, und kann durch äussere Veranstaltungen nur veranlasst, nie hevorgebracht werden."[21] Humboldt's notion of *Bildung* as self-generating and internal demonstrates the extent to which he remained confined to a Leibniz-based model of the soul; for Leibniz holds that the monad is isolated, windowless, and not susceptible of alteration by external sources. It is also this Leibnizian model of the soul that was found, in the previous section of this study, to underlie Goethe's *Sturm und Drang* works, in particular the poem "Mahomets Gesang" and *Werther*.

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[20] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Monadology,* trans. Nicholas Rescher (Pittsburgh, PA: U of Pittsburgh P, 1991), § 18, 87.

[21] Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Gesammelte Werke,* ed. Carl Brandes, 7 vols. (Berlin, 1841–52, repr. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 7:71.

In "Mahomets Gesang," Goethe presents an early model of the monadic genius-as-daemon. Mahomet, embodied in a stream that rushes over the landscape, is able to bridge the divide between nature and culture through the act of naming countries, towns, and cities, and he achieves this despite the natural forces that oppose him: the desert and the sun. The implicit message of this poem is that Mahomet's internal powers of self-formation or *Bildung* are sufficient to overcome the most trying of external circumstances. Life does not correct him at every step: rather, *he corrects life* by striding over, and effectively conquering, the landscape and its dangers.

By the time of *Werther,* however, the monadic soul is exposed to a profound critique or counter-narrative, a critique that would influence Goethe for the remainder of his intellectual development and that arguably contributed both to the formation of essays like "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt," and to his later conception of the daemonic as an obstructing or limiting force in God/Nature. Werther is the monadic soul gone wrong — the individual who cannot adapt his internal emotions, longings, and desires to external reality: the world of objects and other subjects. As was seen earlier in this chapter, Goethe's initial response to this problem of overweening or excessive subjectivity was to turn toward objective nature. But this turn has its own internal problems — problems that Goethe himself acknowledged during the 1790s. Kant's critical philosophy demonstrated to Goethe that when one takes into account the *a priori* elements in human cognition, "objectivity" becomes an issue that lies within the gap between object and subject. It is precisely this gap, and the question of overcoming it, that Goethe addresses in his theoretical notion of the *Urphänomen.*

Science and the *Urphänomen*

Zur Farbenlehre (Theory of Colors) is a project that preoccupied Goethe in various forms between the early 1790s and the year of its publication (1810). In sections 174 to 177 of the "Didaktischer Teil" (Didactic Part) of the *Farbenlehre,* written and revised between 1801 and 1806, Goethe offers his most comprehensive theoretical discussion of what constitutes an *Urphänomen.* Goethe begins by arguing that the most basic scientific investigations originate in the simple observation of sensuous nature. From these observations one derives "empirische Rubriken," which then lead to "wissenschaftliche Rubriken" and ultimately to an understanding of the general "Bedingungen des Erscheinenden" (*FA* 1,23/1:81). Each stage in this process is marked, not by a simple reliance upon concepts, but by progressive investigations of sensuous phenomena — thereby avoiding a speculative flight into pure abstraction (*FA* 1,23/1:81). The

end point of this process is achieved when one encounters the *Urphänomene,* since "nichts in der Erscheinung über ihnen liegt" (*FA* 1,23/1:81). Once the scientific investigator has ascended to the level of the *Urphänomene,* he can then put them to practical use as theoretical models through which to understand the "gemeinsten Falle der täglichen Erfahrung" (*FA* 1,23/1:81).

It is clear that the theorization of the *Urphänomene* in the above section from the *Farbenlehre* is derived from Goethe's earlier work on morphology, along with his reading of Kant's first and third *Critiques.* As Daniel Steuer states, for example, the *Urpflanze* is clearly the "*Urphänomen* of plant organization,"[22] while in the *Farbenlehre,* the polarity of light and darkness is seen as an *Urphänomen* that underlies all manifestations of color. In this sense, an *Urphänomen* can be experienced as a "real existeriende Urform" rather than as a purely mental or theoretical abstraction, and there may be a series of *Urphänomene* that correspond with different classes of objects — for example: plants, animals, or colors (*GH* 4/2:1080).[23] But while Goethe's understanding of form is clearly transcendental in the Kantian sense, his deployment of this understanding also leads to what Daniel Steuer calls an ironic version of transcendental philosophy. According to Steuer, Goethe replaces Kant's and Schiller's "strict division between subject and object with a dynamic model of experience" — a model in which "experience is allowed to correct the immutable categories of philosophy."[24] In this way, the *Urphänomene* are not "unshakable foundations once and forever given"; rather, they constitute reflective, theoretical models that display an in-built awareness of their own limits and of the limits of human knowledge in general.

On the other hand, and as John Erpenbeck observes in the *Goethe Handbuch,* the general concept of *das Urphänomen* (often used in the singular) receives a more theoretical and reflective treatment in the *Farbenlehre,* followed by a speculative scientific-philosophical universalization in the *Maximen und Reflexionen* (*GH* 4/2:1080). As T. Rebock observes, the *Urphänomen* (again, singular), "stellt . . . die äußerste Grenze menschlicher Erkenntnismöglichkeiten dar" (*HWP* 7:474). In fact, in a conversation with Eckermann regarding the *Farbenlehre* dated 18 February 1829, Goethe describes the sense of "Erstaunen" that accompanies recognition of the *Urphänomen* in precisely this way — that is to say, as the recognition of an insurpassable "Grenze" (*FA* 2,12:311).

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[22] Steuer, "In Defence of Experience,"170.

[23] See also, in this connection, Steuer, "In Defence of Experience," 166.

[24] Steuer, "In Defence of Experience," 171.

Here I wish to discuss the way in which the generalized notion of the *Urphänomen* might be seen to operate as a limit in a double sense — that is to say, as an interior or *subjective* limit, and as an exterior or *objective* limit. If, according to Goethe, an individual's apprehension of phenomena is subject to certain *a priori* conditions, then one's capacity to know nature is limited by these conditions — it cannot pass beyond them. In this way the subject is internally limited. If, moreover, these internal limits circumscribe and delineate exactly what one can and cannot know about the objects of nature, then the *Urphänomen* described by Goethe also marks the external limit of human knowledge, a limit that corresponds directly with the mode, the conditions of appearances, through which one apprehends things. In short, the *Urphänomen* marks both the internal (subjective) and external (objective) limits of cognition, and in this sense it is also a principle or law of existence that tells one something about the very essence of Being. This relationship between subject and object is addressed by Goethe in the following undated aphorism from the *Maximen und Reflexionen,* where he observes: "Es ist etwas Unbekanntes Gesetzliches im Object, welches dem Unbekannten Gesetzlichen in Subject entspricht" (*FA* 1,13:269).

At this point, we can begin to speculate as to whether Goethe's notion of the daemonic might be seen as being related to the *Urphänomen*. The possible relationship between the *Urphänomen* as a kind of limit, and Goethe's later conception of the daemonic, expressed in the poem "Urworte. Orphisch," as an indwelling, formal *Gesetz* or boundary for the subject, not unlike Aristotle's notion of the entelechy, is suggested by the following two passages. The first was written by Goethe to Hegel on 13 April 1821, following the philosopher's positive response to the theory of the *Urphänomene:*[25]

> Da Sie so freundlich mit den Urphänomenen gebaren, ja mir selbst eine Verwandtschaft mit diesen dämonischen Wesen zuerkennen, so nehme ich mir die Freiheit, zunächst ein Paar dergleichen dem Philosophen vor die Türe zu bringen, überzeugt, daß er sie so gut wie ihre Geschwister behandlen wird. (*FA* 2,9:164)

The second appears in the *Maximen und Reflexionen:*

> Wenn ich mich bei'm Urphänomen zuletzt beruhige, so ist es doch auch nur Resignation; aber es bleibt ein großer Unterschied, ob ich mich an den Gränzen der Menschheit resignire oder innerhalb

[25] See Hegel to Goethe, 20 February 1821, in *Briefe von und an Hegel,* ed. Johannes Hoffmeister, 3 vols., vol. 2, *1813–1822* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1969), 247–52.

> einer hypothetischen Beschränktheit meines bornirten Individuums. (*FA* 1,13:49)

The letter to Hegel shows a thematic link between the *Urphänomen* and *das Dämonische*. The passage from the *Maximen und Reflexionen,* on the other hand, suggests a great deal more. In this passage Goethe speculates as to whether the *Urphänomen* marks an objective limit beyond which human knowledge cannot penetrate — the "Grenzen der Menscheit,"[26] so to speak — or whether, on a less grandiose scale, it simply represents the subjective limits of Goethe's own inborn capacities. Either way, Goethe seems to be saying that in dealing with the *Urphänomen* one is dealing with the limits of knowledge — whether these limits are general (applying to humanity in total) or personal (applying to Goethe alone).

How, then, linking these sentiments back to Goethe's letter to Hegel, can the daemonic be seen as akin to the *Urphänomen*? The answer to this question, if we take into account Goethe's lengthy passage on the nature of the daemonic that appears in *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* is that it exceeds and surpasses "Alles, was uns begrenzt" (*FA* 1,14:840). As Roger Stephenson observes, the *Urphänomene* are for Goethe *dämonisch* because when we encounter them "we seem to have reached the very limits of understanding,"[27] limits that separate us both from the innermost secrets of nature and the mysteries of fate, while at the same time connecting us with these selfsame mysteries, because we too are part of nature. Another answer to this question, and an answer that seems to be the logical extension of Goethe's comments in *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* can be found in an essay written by Walter Benjamin, which takes as its subject a novel that Goethe published in 1809, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. Although *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* shows important aspects of Goethe's notion of the daemonic, I do not intend to deal with the content of this text here.[28] Rather, I am interested in Benjamin's general treatment of Goethe's notion of the *Urphänomen,* and his understanding of Goethe's notion of the daemonic.

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[26] See the poem by Goethe with this title, *FA* 1,1:332–33.

[27] R. H. Stephenson, *Goethe's Conception of Knowledge and Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1995), 14.

[28] For a discussion of the theme of the daemonic in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften,* see Gabrielle Bersier, "Sinnliche Übermacht — übersinnliche Gegenmacht: Die dämonische Verwandlung des klassischen Eros in der Epoche der *Wahlverwandtschaften,*" in *Verantwortung und Utopie. Zur Literatur der Goethezeit,* ed. Wolfgang Wittkowski (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988), 404–18; Norbert Puszkar, "Dämonisches und Dämon," *German Quarterly* 59 (1986): 414–30.

Benjamin argues that at the time when Kant completed, with the publication of the third *Critique,* his systematic or architectonic method for understanding reality, there also commenced "das Goethesche Suchen nach den Samen ewigen Wachstums." Benjamin sees this quest as a peculiar characteristic of "Klassizismus," which sought to grasp what he calls "das Mythische und Philologische."[29] The relationships posited by Benjamin between classicism, Goethean science, and Kantianism will be discussed later in this chapter. For now I wish merely to note that Benjamin regards both Goethe and Kant as having taken their bearings from the European Enlightenment, a movement which, at least in Benjamin's opinion, tended to focus on the notion of conceptual "Gehalt" (general or universal content), at the expense of "Sachgehalt" (sensuous particularity or material content; *BGS* 1,1:127). It is precisely this drift away from the sensuous and particular, towards the abstract or universal that Goethe sees, in his essay "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt," as the chief danger or pitfall inherent in scientific experiments, and it is likewise this danger that Benjamin locates in Goethe's notion of the *Urphänomen*.

The motive behind Goethe's scientific research, according to Benjamin, corresponds with a "Doppelsinn" in his conceptualization of nature. On the one hand, Goethe seeks to understand individual, sensuous, and particular phenomena, while on the other hand he wishes to synthesize these phenomena through "anschaubaren Urbilder." Yet despite Goethe's experimental attempts to bring the particular and the universal together — seen, for example, in the quest for the *Urpflanze* — he is never able to offer a convincing account of how such a synthesis may be achieved (*BGS* 1,1:147). The problem isolated in Benjamin's essay can be stated as follows: as soon as Goethe tries to bring his nature research within grander teleological-philosophical schemes — embodied, for example, in his overarching concepts of the *Urpflanze* and the *Urphänomen* — the sensuous, material content (*Sachgehalt*) of this research is obscured, perhaps even obliterated. That is to say, instead of science we get art or philosophy. Thus Benjamin continues that the *Urphänomene* manifest themselves to perception only in the "Bereich der Kunst," while in the realm of science they remain abstract ideas that may illuminate objects of perception without, however, inhering in and transforming them. In short: the *Urphänomene* "liegen der Kunst nicht vor, sie stehen in ihr" (*BGS* 1.1:148).

Goethe is confronted, according to Benjamin, by an unbridgeable abyss that lies between sensuous nature — the particular and discrete existences of external objects as presented to the senses — and the teleologi-

[29] Walter Benjamin, "Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften," in *BGS* 1,1:126–27.

cal theories that he constructs in order to understand these objects within a universal scheme. This abyss gives expression to the discontinuity or gap between reason and nature, between concept and object, between particular and universal knowledge, between the human and the divine or God/Nature, and perhaps, in the last analysis, between *logos* and *mythos.* It is an abyss that begs to be filled with theories about the secrets of nature — theories not unlike those expressed by Goethe in his notions of the *Urpflanze* and the *Urphänomen* — but which at the same time ensures, by virtue of its very existence, that such theories will never achieve a direct correspondence with those objects or phenomena that they attempt to explicate.

It is this abyss or gap between the conceptual and the natural, and between humans and gods, according to Benjamin, that corresponds directly with what he describes as Goethe's notion of *das Dämonische* as the "Erfahrung unfaßbarer Naturzweideutigkeit," which "begleitet Goethes Anschauung sein Leben lang" (*BGS* 1,1:150). Faced with an irresolvable discontinuity between reason and nature, Goethe is forced, says Benjamin, to revert to the realm of *mythos,* a realm manifested for Goethe in "die Astrologie als den Kanon des mythischen Denkens," which Benjamin finds in Goethe's last and most comprehensive poetic statement on the concept of the daemonic: the poem "Urworte. Orphisch" (*BGS* 1,1:150). I will consider this poem, along with the question as to whether or not Goethe completely abandons science and returns to mythic thinking in his later conception of the daemonic, in chapter 7.

Benjamin's analysis reveals that although Goethe was at times attracted, perhaps even momentarily seduced, by the suggestion that Kant's thought might offer him a key with which to unlock the secrets of nature, it was essentially the critical aspect of Kantian philosophy that had a lasting effect upon his thinking. Thus, while the *Urpflanze* eventually became a kind of speculative model through which to examine nature, and while the work on comparative anatomy foundered when confronted with the abyss between particular objects and universal ideas, the *Urphänomen* came to embody for Goethe the complete ambivalence, incomprehensibility, and excessiveness of nature — that is to say, the sense in which it remains mysterious despite all the best efforts of the scientist. For Goethe, the *Urphänomen* marks the limits of human reason, limits that we can only observe, to quote his words to Eckermann, with astonishment.

In the words of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Goethe, like Schelling, ultimately belonged "zu denen, die mehr an Natur als an Freiheit glauben" (*GGW* 9:66). In his essay "Goethe und die Philosophie" (Goethe and Philosophy, 1947), Gadamer elaborates upon this point by arguing that Goethe, unlike many of his philosophical contemporaries (and here one thinks of Schiller), did not believe in the autonomy of rea-

son — rather he recognized its "menschliche Bedingtheit" (*GGW* 9:70). Like Socrates, Goethe did not, however, see this conditionedness as barring human beings from access to truth, since the recognition of one's limits is for Goethe the only "Weg zur Weisheit" (*GGW* 9:70). Goethe's conception of truth, says Gadamer, "beruht auf einem Lebensverhältnis" between the active subject and the world of objects (*GGW* 9:71). It is precisely when the active subject experiences the "Gegenwirkung" of the world in response to his theories and projections that truth is realized, and in this sense Goethe's sense of truth is always, according to Gadamer, "mit dem Irrtum verknüpft" (*GGW* 9:71).

Goethe's awareness of the human conditionedness of reason is, as we have seen, apparent in essays like "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt." It is this very conditionedness that, in Goethe's opinion, may draw the scientist into error. But it is precisely these errors — the blind spots in human thinking — that, in the opinions of both Goethe and Gadamer, may lead us to deeper truths, truths that teach us about the limits of human endeavor. Goethe seems to have known intuitively, if not intellectually, that any regulative or teleological idea is merely a fragile construction when pitted against the overwhelming powers of nature, powers that can only be represented in the extra-rational realm of *mythos*. The individual whose overarching idea is contradicted or perhaps even jettisoned by the forces of nature may indeed learn from this suffering. It may even produce in such an individual a kind of humility, perhaps even astonishment, when confronted with what Goethe would call the powers of nature, or what classical philosophers might call the tragic powers of fate. It is this sense of humility- and subjectivity-in-limitation that would become central to Goethe's later conception of the daemonic found in poems like "Mächtiges Überraschen" and "Urworte. Orphisch," and in biographical sources like *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and Eckermann's *Gespräche*.

Excursus on Romanticism II: Romanticism, Science, and Weimar Classicism

In the concluding section of this chapter, I wish to speculate as to whether the works by Goethe discussed here can be seen as in any way continuous with, or a development of, the broad European movement known as Romanticism outlined in chapter 3. In particular, this speculation will seek to uncover affinities between the aesthetic theories propounded by Goethe in essays like "Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil" and the scientific theories that Goethe outlines in works like "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt." My suspicion is that both Goethe's aesthetics and his scientific writings are chiefly con-

cerned with problems relating to subjectivity and its limits — problems that originate in the *Sturm und Drang* period's valorization of the concept of the daemonic genius. More specifically, my contention is that Goethe's Weimar Classicism is concerned with questions about the limits or boundaries placed upon the Western subject, and that Goethe's preoccupation with subjectivity-in-limitation can be seen as the core issue in his later conception of the daemonic as it is outlined in texts like "Mächtiges Überraschen," *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* "Urworte. Orphisch," and certain passages in Eckermann's *Gespräche*.

In chapter 3, I defined the key feature of European Romanticism as that pointed to by M. H. Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism:* namely, the notion that Romanticism served to secularize Platonic and Christian modes of thinking by reconfiguring the relationship between the individual and his or her God as a new, cognitive interchange or transaction between subject and object — between the individual and nature. Such a definition of Romanticism highlights the extent to which the Romantic movement was in many ways coterminous with the Enlightenment's attempts to arrive at an appropriate framework through which human beings could cognize the objects of nature. The scientific writings by Goethe discussed in this chapter are concerned with precisely this cognitive problem: How can the individual come to an understanding of nature without distorting nature through the lens of his or her subjective desires and preoccupations? *Werther* served as proof for Goethe that the subject's capacity to distort nature, to perceive the external world in purely subjective terms, was theoretically limitless.

My questions, then, can be proposed as follows: is Goethe's Weimar Classicism simply a kind of reversion to the ancient Greek aesthetics outlined in Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (History of Ancient Art, 1764)? Or is Weimar Classicism progressive and developmental in its emphasis? One answer to these questions is offered by Georg Lukács in his essay "Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe" (The Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe, 1934), which appears in *Goethe und seine Zeit* (1947). Lukács observes that the central issue in this correspondence is the problem of form within the context of modernity. While Goethe and Schiller did, according to Lukács, look for solutions to this problem by examining ancient Greek art, these examinations did not lead to simple imitations of the ancients; rather, their central concern was always the application of classical laws of form to the problems of the modern age (*GSZ,* 56–57).

What Lukács refers to as the modern age is in fact the period of European Romanticism, which took place during the central years of Goethe's adult life: roughly 1780–1832. The thematic material that this age offered to its poets, and the material that preoccupied not only writers

like Goethe and Schiller but also philosophers like Immanuel Kant, was that of subjectivity, and, more specifically, the question of what limits, if any, should be placed upon the Western subject, and upon Western reason. In his essay "Goethe und die Philosophie," Hans-Georg Gadamer proposes a similar formulation of this problem to that offered by Lukács. Goethe, he says, seems to have possessed the "Ruf zur Entsagung im ganzen, die in der Anerkennung des Notwendigen liegt" (*GGW* 9:59). Gadamer argues that this "Ruf zur Entsagung" occurs precisely because the poet's creative intensity knows no bounds, and that therefore it is forced to confront a "notwendigen Gegenhalt" in order to limit and render formal its "unbändige Lebenskraft und titanische Bildnerlust" (*GGW* 9:59). Thus, according to Gadamer, Goethe sees the acquisition of experience as being central to the soul's recognition of boundaries and limits (*GGW* 9:60).

Again, we are presented here with the problem of the limits of subjectivity, as this is also a problem that confronted both Goethe and Kant at the end of the eighteenth century. In short, Gadamer is alluding to the problem of subjective freedom. At the beginning of this section I suggested that Goethe's early Romanticism, the eminently subjective Romanticism presented in "Mahomets Gesang" and in *Werther,* tends to valorize the subject's longing or striving at the expense of the discrete identities of external objects and external subjects. This valorization of individual subjective desires and goals is the logical consequence of an aesthetics that sees the genius as a kind of gifted intermediary between the human sphere and a divinely infused conception of nature. This genius is daemonic in the sense that he promises, through the infinite longing of his art, to heal the split between the human and the natural.

It was not uncommon for thinkers in the late eighteenth century to view the epoch of modernity as being characterized by a kind of illness or pathology, and it is perhaps on this basis that we can begin to reflect upon the following famous statement made by Goethe — a statement that appears in his *Maximen und Reflexionen* (Maxims and Reflections): "Classisch ist das Gesunde, romantisch das Kranke" (*FA* 1,13:239). The aesthetic theories that led to this statement, probably made by Goethe around 1829,[30] can be found as early as 1795 in Schiller's "Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung." In chapter 3, I showed that Schiller characterizes the modern poet as being sentimental, in that he separates himself from nature by conceptualizing nature as an abstract idea. His feeling for nature is, according to Schiller, like the feeling of an invalid for

[30] Goethe makes a similar remark to Eckermann on 2 April 1829: "Das Klassische nenne ich das Gesunde, und das Romantische das Kranke" (*FA* 2,12:324).

health. The naïve poet, on the other hand, enjoys a primordial oneness with nature akin to that which was supposedly experienced by the ancients — the poets of the classical period like Homer and Pindar. Health, then, is associated with a kind of sensuous contact with nature, while sickness seemingly ensues when this contact is lost, when the poet pursues abstract — as opposed to real or concrete — goals.

But just how real and concrete was the image of ancient Greece propagated during the late eighteenth century? In chapter 3, I also presented David S. Ferris's contention that: "Hellenism has written the history of a promise and not a history of Greece."[31] The promise of which eighteenth century Hellenism wrote is precisely that promise to which Schiller alludes when he describes the poets of ancient Greece as naïve. It is the promise of an art that is completely at one with nature; an art that derives its rules and regulations, its forms and boundaries, from the perfection and necessity found in the natural world. Seen in this way, naïve art becomes the impossible — because fictional — yardstick against which modern art must measure itself. In this connection, Ferris helpfully points out that "care needs to be taken to distinguish between historical Greece and the later cultivation of Greece as a reference point for all subsequent art and literature — a role it did not assume until the advent of Hellenism in the eighteenth century."[32]

Goethe also seems to have been aware that the demand for a so-called classical canon in German literature was, in all likelihood, impossible to fulfill. In the essay "Literarischer Sanscülottismus" (Literary Sansculottism, 1795) he addresses the question of a classical literature in Germany, arguing that if the concept of the classical were properly understood, then the terms classical author and classical work would rarely be used in the German context (*FA* 1,18:320). According to Goethe, a classical author can only appear when he is capable "durch ein einwohnendes Genie" of sympathizing with his nation's past and present, and when he finds greatness in the actions and spirit of his compatriots (*FA* 1,18:320). It is arguably no coincidence that Goethe invokes here the concept of genius. The call for German classical works to which Goethe responds in this essay bears a striking resemblance to the demand made by Herder in his *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode* (1764) that Germany should discover for itself a national poetry rather than imitating classical poets like Homer and Ovid.[33] That Herder's impossible demand required a

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[31] David S. Ferris, *Silent Urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2000), xiii.

[32] Ferris, *Silent Urns,* 2.

[33] "Literarischer Sanscülottismus" was written in response to an article by Pastor

German genius who could effectively unify the German landscape with the German language was a lesson learnt by Goethe in the 1770s. By 1795, however, Goethe was far less inclined to believe that the discovery of such a naïve genius was possible, or even desirable in Germany. By comparing the situation of late eighteenth-century Germany with that of post-revolutionary France, Goethe concludes that the primary precondition for the production of classical works — political and cultural unity at a national level — would simply be impossible to establish in his own, still fragmented nation.[34] In the words of Nicholas Boyle, Goethe uses the term Sansculottism to describe: "the excessive demand for perfection which demoralises those engaged in gradual and limited reform" (*BGA* 2:274).

So if Goethe repudiated the call for a German classical literature — classical meaning, in this context, something that could express a kind of formal unity characteristic of the German nation — then what did he mean, in 1829, when he invoked the so-called health of classicism? Goethe seems to have been aware that the valorization of subjectivity that characterized the *Sturm und Drang* movement would render impossible, or at the very least improbable, any sense in which late eighteenth-century German literature could come to be the expression of a public consciousness like that found in classical tragedy. Literature, it seemed, had become inextricably linked with individualism, and not with a city-state like the classical *polis*. At the same time, however, Goethe also suspected that the very emphasis on subjectivity that rendered any notion of a unified national German literature problematic was also a danger, not only to the health of the emerging nation, but also to the health of the modern subject. As Goethe puts it in a letter to Zelter dated 19 October 1829 — some six months after his famous statement to Eckermann concerning the comparative health and sickness of classicism and Romanticism respectively — the trouble with modernity is not so much its lack of a unified national consciousness, but rather its inward "Sehnsucht" for subjectively conceived ideals that are essentially impossible to fulfill: "daher mag denn wohl kommen," says Goethe, "daß den Modernen ihr Ideelles nur als Sehnsucht erscheint" (*FA* 2,11:182).

The implicit message of this letter is that the subject who pursues internally generated ideas, images, or goals — ideas that may quite often have only a tenuous connection with actual external conditions, or the

D. Jenisch, in which the author bemoaned the lack of classical works in German literature. See Boyle, *BGA* 2:273.

[34] Here I am paraphrasing the views of Ernst Robert Curtius in *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (1948; Bern: Francke, 1961), 271.

world *an sich* — is a subject without limits, a subject that uncritically projects its selfhood onto the external world, thereby losing touch with the external world. This is the illness that Goethe associates with the *Sturm und Drang* Romantic — the soul who, like Werther, cannot reconcile his internal ideas and fantasies with external reality. If the pursuit of subjective ideas without sufficient cognizance of reality is illness, then health might consist first of all in recognizing the necessary gap between one's ideas about the world and the world *an sich,* and then in the ability to adjust one's internally generated ideas to external conditions, by remaining sensuously in contact with those conditions. This, then, is the so-called health of classicism, the ability of Schiller's naïve poet to achieve a correspondence between the forms of his song and the forms of nature. The Romantic poet, on the other hand, is sick, because his ideal image of nature is overly abstract, and therefore it strays from inherent orderliness — the limits and boundaries, found in actual or sensuous nature. As a result, his natural subjectivity becomes so excessive as to transform itself into complete solipsism, or at the very least a kind of radical idealism: the belief, perhaps given its fullest theoretical expression in the transcendental idealism of Fichte's *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre* (Foundations of the Entire Theory of Knowledge, 1794–95), that the world is posited by a primary *Tathandlung* or deed-action performed by the self.[35]

When we look back upon the aesthetic and scientific theories generated by Goethe during the late 1780s and the early 1790s, while also keeping in mind the debate regarding the alleged sickness and health of Romanticism and classicism respectively, it becomes apparent that these theories were generated as a response to the sickness of unimpeded subjectivity, a sickness that was a legacy of the *Sturm und Drang* movement and particularly of *Werther*. On the level of aesthetics, Goethe proposes, in "Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil" (1789), that the ultimate basis of all art should exist in the imitation of nature with "Treue und Fleiß" (*FA* 1,15/2:872). This is because the simple imitation of nature operates as a counterbalance against the artist's "Manier" — his

[35] See Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre,* in *Sämmtliche Werke,* ed. J. H. Fichte, 8 vols., vol. 1 (1845; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1965), § 1, 91–101. The allegation that Fichte's philosophy amounts to solipsism is sardonically expressed by Schiller's comments to Goethe in a letter dated 28 October 1794. Schiller writes: "Nach den mündlichen Äußerungen Fichtes, denn in seinem Buch war noch nicht davon die Rede, ist das Ich auch durch seine Vorstellungen erschaffend, und alle Realität ist nur in dem Ich. Die Welt ist ihm nur ein Ball, den das Ich geworfen hat, und den es bei der Reflexion wieder fängt!! Sonach hätte er seine Gottheit wirklich deklariert, wie wir neulich erwarteten" (*MA* 8.1:36).

tendency to appropriate subjectively, perhaps even to distort, external objects. The fusion or sublation of imitation and manner may then occur in "Stil." It is within the realm of style that the artist enjoys a certain measure of freedom to interpret nature according to his own subjective preoccupations, while at the same time combining his preoccupations and ideas with the virtues of imitation, as it is the *Gegenstände* of imitation that form the foundation of all art. Thus imitation keeps manner within appropriate bounds. In fact this dualism between imitation and manner is (in more or less the Hegelian sense of the term) *aufgehoben* in *Stil,* as *Stil* involves both the basic sense perception connected with imitation, and the trained artist's knowledge of the "Wesen der Dinge" — a knowledge that he can then bring to his representations of external objects, thereby attaining in these representations an even higher level of truth and sophistication (*FA* 1,15/2:874).[36]

Likewise, in "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt and Subjekt" (1792), it is precisely the *Gegenstände* of nature emphasized in "Einfache Nachahmung, Manier, Stil" that keep the speculative theories of the scientist in touch with sensuous reality. Just as the artist may modify and regulate his manner by keeping the objects of nature in view, so too is the scientist presented with the greatest opportunity to refine his ideas and theories at the very moment at which they are contradicted by the objects of nature, or what Goethe calls empirical evidence. It is, in Goethe's opinion, precisely because human beings take more pleasure "an der Vorstellung als an der Sache" (*FA* 1,25:31) that empirical evidence is required in order to bring researchers back "auf den rechten Weg" (*FA* 1,25:27). Thus Goethe concludes "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt" with the assertion that the collection of empirical evidence "kann nicht sorgfältig, emsig, streng, ja pedantisch genug vorgenommen werden; denn sie wird für Welt und Nachwelt unternommen" (*FA* 1,25:35).

But what exactly is the *Nachwelt* of which Goethe speaks in this passage? We might begin to understand the significance of this *Nachwelt* or future (and perhaps also of a future in a broader sense of the term than that used in the above passage) upon consideration of the temporal relationship between the eminently subjective Romanticism of the *Sturm und Drang* period discussed in the previous chapter of this study and Goethe's turn toward science and questions of objectivity during the latter years of the 1780s, and most of the 1790s. Within this discussion, the influence

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[36] My discussion of Goethe's essay is indebted to the following article by Walter F. Veit: "Mannerism and Rhetoric: Some Aspects of the Concept in Literary Criticism," in *Miscellanea Musicologica* 11 (1980): 49–65.

exerted by this "objective turn" upon Goethe's later conceptualization of the daemonic can also be tentatively approached.

In *Natural Supernaturalism,* M. H. Abrams observes that while in early Christian thought "God, nature and the soul" constitute the three primary elements, in Romantic thought, "manifested in proportion as the thinker is or is not a Christian theist," the tendency was at the very least to reduce, and in some cases to eliminate completely, the role played by God as a separate, transcendent creator. In the absence of God, there remains only a dialectical relationship between "man and the world, mind and nature, the ego and the non-ego, the self and the not-self, spirit and the other, or (in the favorite antithesis of post-Kantian philosophers) subject and object." Within this new arrangement, however, it is the subject or mind that becomes primary and "takes over the initiative and the functions which had once been the prerogatives of deity."[37]

While the process of secularization alluded to by Abrams was a phenomenon that the Romantic movement shared with the Enlightenment, it also served to threaten enlightenment thinking by virtue of its tendency to place an enormous emphasis on the powers of subjectivity, often at the expense of the so-called independent world of external objects. As was mentioned earlier, this emphasis on subjectivity found its most noteworthy expression in the radically subjective interpretation of Kant adopted by Fichte in his *Wissenschaftslehre.* Kant's philosophy was decisive in demonstrating to Goethe and others that any notion of an object-world cognized in a purely objective fashion is nonsensical. The world can only be encountered via the positionality of the subject, and the subject's encounters or perceptions are always marked indelibly by both its *a priori* cognitive equipment and its individual preoccupations: this was the dictum applied by Goethe in "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt." But at the same time Goethe had become aware, through his experiences in writing *Werther* and related works of the *Sturm und Drang* period, that the elimination — or at the very least, the attenuation — of the power of God as the creator of the natural world left a theoretical vacuum that was initially filled by the overweening Romantic subject, who, like Prometheus, wishes to reconceive the world solely on his or her own subjective terms. In the absence of any traditional religious thought-system that could limit or control the modern subject, soul, or monad, such a subject threatened to expand to the point of fragmentation.

Thus one of the central issues arising out of early Romanticism became the problem of form as it relates to subjectivity, and it is no coinci-

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[37] Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971), 91.

dence that Georg Lukács finds this problem at the core of Weimar Classicism. It is, says Lukács, "die Gesetze der Formgebung" and not a "Zurückgehen auf die Antike" that are central to the Weimar Classicism of Goethe and Schiller (*GSZ,* 62–63). It is also extremely significant that Lukács sees the struggle for artistic form engaged in by both Goethe and Schiller as being, at the same time, a "Kampf mit der Romantik" (*GSZ,* 60). The question as to precisely what this *Kampf* turned out to be is then left unanswered by Lukács, although he does point out that the old Goethe categorically rejected only "die reaktionär-obskurantistisch gewordene deutsche Romantik," and not the broader European Romantic movement *per se* (*GSZ,* 62). What, then, to follow Lukács's suggestion, is this *Kampf* with Romanticism?

As I suggested earlier, this *Kampf,* undertaken by Goethe in the aesthetic and scientific theories of the late 1780s and the 1790s, was a struggle against the radically Romantic aesthetics of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, an aesthetics that represented the artist as a daemonic genius capable of healing the split between the human and the natural, between subject and object, by reconceiving this split on purely subjective terms. This notion of the genius as a supernaturally gifted intermediary or healer of gaps has its distant prototype in the Platonic notion of the daemon as a figure capable of communicating divine messages or gifts from the realm of the forms to the everyday world of matter. As we saw in chapter 4, this notion of the daemonic genius was secularized in the aesthetics of the age of *Werther*. Such a figure no longer served to unify an abstract realm of forms with the world of matter, but rather promised to become a conduit who could reconcile the sentimental with the naïve, healing the split between modern humanity and nature.

That Goethe eventually saw such an aesthetic program as being at best Utopian, at worst a danger to the boundaries of the subject that threatened to distort the objects of nature by seeing them only in terms of internally generated — and therefore inherently speculative — ideas, became clear in the late 1780s and especially in the 1790s, following his encounters with Kantian thought. Thus, Goethe's Weimar Classicism was not essentially concerned with creating a second Greece in eighteenth and nineteenth century Germany, but rather with endowing modern Romantic thought with that aspect of classical culture that tended to formalize and limit the subject by seeing that subject as part of a grander providential scheme of which he could have only a limited and conditioned (because human) understanding. Seen in this way, German Romanticism and Weimar Classicism represent "not so much a polarity,"[38] but rather, as

[38] Dye, *Love and Death in Goethe,* 206.

Hans Robert Jauss observes, a "Familienzwist" (family quarrel) within the broader context of European Romantic modernity.[39]

It is in this context that Goethe's notion of *Weltfrömmigkeit* can once again be invoked. As was observed in chapter 4, Goethe takes care to distinguish *Weltfrömmigkeit* (roughly translated as world-piety, or a sense of duty and reverence toward the world) from *Hausfrömmigkeit,* the individual's respect for his household and the particular interests attached to it. The notion of *Weltfrömmigkeit* seeks to place the individual's subjective wishes, longings, and theories within the context of a wider social, natural, and cosmic order. When the subject perceives itself as a finite being situated within the expanse of the entire world — or what Goethe might, in a pantheistic context, see as the cosmos — its subjective desires, longings, projects, and theories must adopt a sense of humility and self-limitation that is appropriate to its place within this wider order. To translate this notion into Leibnizian terms: the human monad or soul must cease to be windowless and take the rest of the cosmos, and the other objects and subjects that inhabit it, into account.

Goethe's aesthetic solution to the problem of unlimited subjectivity is to pit the modern subject — the abstract, speculative subject of Kantian and post-Kantian idealism — against the sensuous and, to use Walter Benjamin's phrase, incomprehensibly ambivalent forces of a wider cosmic order, an order that is perhaps best described in Spinoza's notion of God or Nature. Goethe seems to have suspected that through the confrontation between the striving self or subject and natural objects or nature, the modern subject would find its appropriate limits. The question as to whether the recognition of these limits can also be associated with Goethe's later conception of the daemonic will be addressed in the remaining chapters of this study.

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[39] Hans Robert Jauss, "Deutsche Klassik — eine Pseudo-Epoche?" in *Epochenschwelle und Epochenbewußtsein,* ed. Reinhart Herzog and Reinhart Koselleck (Munich: Fink, 1987), 583, quoted in Dye, *Love and Death in Goethe,* 206, and Klaus L. Berghahn, "Das Andere der Klassik: Von der 'Klassik-Legende' zur jüngsten Klassik-Diskussion," *Goethe Yearbook* 6 (1992): 1–27; here, 12. Dye concurs with Jauss when he argues that Goethe's occasional criticisms of his Romantic contemporaries need to be viewed as part of a dialogue that is internal to the broader European Romantic movement as defined by Wellek. See Dye, *Love and Death in Goethe,* 206–7. Berghahn, who provides a very useful overview of the complicated debates in this area, also observes that recent histories of German literature have broken with what he calls the unfruitful antithesis between *Klassik* and *Romantik,* preferring to see these two tendencies as coexisting within European Romanticism. See Berghahn, "Das Andere der Klassik," 18.

6: Schelling, *Naturphilosophie*, and "Mächtiges Überraschen"

DURING A CONVERSATION WITH H. E. G. Paulus that took place some time between 1794 and 1800, Goethe is reported to have expressed reservations about what Paulus refers to as the "damals gepriesene 'absolute Spekulieren'" associated with German idealism — particularly the notion that both nature and human activity may be understood through the deployment of supersensuous or transcendental ideas (*GG* 1:777–78). Goethe is said to have asked how this notion of the "Übersinnliche" or supersensuous fits together with both human nature and "Naturphilosophie," observing that the more humans labor, in spite of all Kant's warnings, on speculations about "das Übermenschliche," the more would philosophizing eventually be finally directed towards "das Menschliche" and towards that which is intellectually and physically knowable about nature. Only through a combination of theoretical speculation and empirical investigation, suggested Goethe, could a true "Naturphilosophie" be comprehended (*GG* 1:778).

Goethe's use of the term *Naturphilosophie* suggests that this conversation may have taken place either during or after 1797, the year in which Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (Ideas towards a Philosophy of Nature) appeared. Boyle reports that in November 1797, upon returning from a journey to Switzerland, Goethe obtained a copy of Schelling's *Ideen*. Half a year later, in May 1798, Goethe met with Schelling for the first time, one month prior to the publication of what Boyle calls "Schelling's first systematic essay in the new *Naturphilosophie*," *Von der Weltseele* (On the World Soul; *BGA* 2:593).

The importance of Schelling's early philosophy for this chapter lies in two areas: the first is his efforts to critique and eventually to surpass Kant's critical philosophy; the second, his revival of the Neo-Platonic conception of the *Weltseele*. Both of these spheres of importance attest to Schelling's attempts to move beyond both the concept of the subject and the concept of nature as they are expounded in Kantian thought, as these attempts resemble Goethe's efforts to adjust his own quasi-Kantian methodology. In this connection, I will suggest that the new approaches both to the subject and to nature found in Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* may be seen to exert a considerable influence upon Goethe's notion of the daemonic as it is represented in the sonnet "Mächtiges Überraschen."

Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*

The eminent Schelling scholar Manfred Frank writes that the young Schelling's aim was quite simply to outbid, and eventually to overcome, Kant's philosophy.[1] This project commenced with a series of texts written by Schelling in the early to mid 1790s: *Über die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt* (On the Possibility of a Form of all Philosophy, 1794), and in particular, *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen* (Of the I as Principle of Philosophy, or On the Unconditional in Human Knowledge, 1795).

In *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie,* Schelling endeavors to attack the very ground of Kant's philosophy: his "transzendentale Einheit der Apperzeption" otherwise known as the Kantian "Ich." In a section of the first *Critique* entitled "Von der ursprünglich-synthetischen Einheit der Apperzeption" (On the Original Synthetic Unity of Apperception), Kant erects the "transzendentale Einheit der Apperzeption" as the highest point of his philosophy. This transcendental unity corresponds with Kant's insistence that it must be possible for the "Ich denke" to accompany all human "Vorstellungen" (*KW* 2:136). Essentially, Kant's argument is that in order for there to be any experience of the world at all, we must assume that there is a unified subject that unites and synthesizes sensory phenomena according to the *a priori* categories of the understanding. Even if this unified subject or self-consciousness is not susceptible of phenomenal experience as an object in itself, we can only conclude, argues Kant, that it nevertheless exists as a condition of experience *per se.* In fact, it is precisely this unconditional aspect of the unified subject that confers upon it its so-called transcendental status.

Schelling attacks Kant's "transzendentale Einheit der Apperzeption" by arguing that since the "Ich" is said to be unconditional, it can exist

> weder im Ding überhaupt, noch auch in dem, was zum Ding werden kann, im Subject, also nur in dem, was *gar* kein Ding werden kann, d.h. wenn es ein absolutes ICH giebt, [kann es] nur im *absoluten Ich* liegen. . . . Das Ich, wenn es unbedingt seyn soll, muß ausser aller Sphäre objektiver Beweißbarkeit liegen. (*SCW* 2:90)

At this point, Schelling has not made any major departure from Kant's own argument, as Kant himself would agree that any thing that is transcendental cannot be an object of experience, or even a "thing" in the same way that everyday natural objects can. But the radical element of Schelling's

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[1] Manfred Frank, *Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 25.

critique follows as a direct consequence of his contention that Kant's absolute "Ich" exists beyond "aller Sphäre objektiver Beweißbarkeit."

In *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* (1993), Andrew Bowie contends that the real import of Schelling's critique of Kant lies in his realization that "the ground of nature and consciousness could not appear in philosophical reflection."[2] That nebulous, originary ground, the ground upon which Kant founded his "transzendentale Einheit der Apperzeption" is radicalized by Schelling as a broader absolute "Ich" that encompasses not only the subject or individual consciousness, but is, at the same time, a preconceptual, preconscious, absolute, or infinite subject of which the individual subject is only a small part. This preconscious subject or absolute "Ich" is the ground of Being itself, and given the fact that this ground conditions the existence of limited, individual subjects or beings, it is no surprise that it cannot appear to the individual subject as an object of philosophical reflection. Rather, Schelling argues that one must assume there exists in the objects of nature a *Geist* that is analogous to human creativity, and in which concept and actuality, ideal and real are inseparable (*SCW* 5:99).

It is no coincidence that Schelling invokes here Leibniz's notion of a "prästabilirten Harmonie" that inheres in and regulates "organisirtes Wesen," as he shares with the latter an affinity with the thought of Spinoza (*SCW* 5:99). In chapter 2 of this study I discussed how Spinoza conflates God with nature in his famous statement *Deus sive Natura*. Leibniz then proposes a system of nature or substance that is rationally ordered by an indwelling intelligence or God. This intelligence is then seen by Leibniz to manifest itself at a microcosmic level in the existence of monads — the basic building blocks of all life forms, each of which is absolutely unique, isolated or "windowless," and not susceptible of alteration by external sources.

In the introduction to the *Ideen zu eine Philosophie der Natur,* Schelling contends that the chief philosophical precursor of his *Naturphilosophie* is not, as is often assumed, Fichte, but rather Spinoza. Although both Schelling and Fichte initially categorized themselves under the generic term for post-Kantian German philosophy of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (*Idealismus* or idealism), Schelling endeavored subsequently to differentiate his *Naturphilosophie* from the radically subjective idealism of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*.

In his 1801 essay "Über den wahren Begriff der Naturphilosophie und die richtige Art ihre Probleme aufzulösen" (On the True Concept of

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[2] Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993), 10.

a Philosophy of Nature and the Correct Way to Solve Its Problems), Schelling claims that there are in fact two versions of *Idealismus:* an original or primary *Idealismus* that he describes as the "Idealismus der Natur," and a secondary, derivative version that he terms the "Idealismus des Ichs." Schelling places his *Naturphilosophie* within the first category and Fichte's thought within the second (*SCW* 2:718). According to Schelling, the point of the *Naturphilosophie,* of the so-called original idealism, is not to conceive of the natural world as something that emerges from an originary *Tathandlung* or deed-action performed by the "Ich," as in the philosophy of Fichte. For Schelling, the enormous emphasis that such a radical idealism places on the primary activity of the subject threatened to overwhelm the autonomous existence of external objects, while at the same time failing to recognize nature's role in shaping human subjectivity.[3] Rather, the human "Ich" or self is understood by Schelling to have emerged from a greater absolute subject, encompassing both the self and nature, which functions as the very condition of human consciousness. Thus, although Schelling did not develop explicitly his departure from Fichtean idealism until 1801, the seeds of this departure are nevertheless apparent in his early preference for the philosophies of Spinoza and Leibniz over the thought of Kant.[4]

In Spinoza's vision of nature as the self-generating cause of all phenomena (*natura naturans* or nature naturing) Schelling found both the condition of human consciousness and the absolute subject that lies at the heart of his early *Naturphilosophie* (*SCW* 5:76–77). The implicit contention of Schelling's valorization of Spinoza is that the epoch of modernity, and its attendant Fichtean idealism, is plagued by a sickness not unlike that diagnosed by Schiller in "Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung." For Schelling, philosophy began when the human subject first differentiated itself from, and therefore reflected upon and speculated about, the external world (*SCW* 5:71). The point of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* is essentially to overcome that initial moment of reflection, through which man separated "den Gegenstand von der Anschauung, den Begriff vom Bilde, endlich, (in dem er sein eignes *Objekt* wird,) sich selbst von sich selbst" (*SCW* 5:71–72). "Spekulation," according to Schelling, is the "Geisteskrankheit des Menschen," in that it

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[3] Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy,* 28.

[4] For further discussions of Schelling's departure from Fichtean idealism, see Frank, *Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie,* 104–17; and Wilhelm G. Jacobs "Schelling im deutschen Idealismus: Interaktionen und Kontroversen," in *F. W. J Schelling,* ed. Hans Jörg Sandkühler (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1988), 66–81, particularly 73–77.

makes the separation between the subject and nature permanent, by conceptualizing the latter as a collection of unreachable objects "an sich," which are said to be beyond the grasp of intuition, imagination, understanding, and reason (*SCW* 5:71–72).

At this point we can begin to see just how radically Schelling departs from the philosophy of Kant, and to what extent he returns to pre-Kantian sources, namely Spinoza and Leibniz. As was seen in the previous chapter of this study, Kant's philosophy assumes, from the very outset, that there is a cognitive gap or abyss between the human subject and external objects or things in themselves. The best way to overcome this gap, according to Kant, is to deploy the faculties of reason and judgment in order to understand nature, while at the same time recognizing that the ideas of pure reason are only teleological theories that can never achieve an absolute coincidence with the material objects that they attempt to explicate. Schelling, on the other hand, assumes that there is a preconscious, preconceptual unity between the human mind and the external world, and that the role of philosophy is merely to demonstrate or reveal this preexisting unity, and not to impose an internally generated teleology onto nature (*SCW* 5:64).

There is, argues Schelling, "eine Stufenfolge des Lebens in der Natur," which he associates with the ancient concept of the "Weltseele" or world-soul — an idea so fundamental to human thinking that it must, he opines, lie in the human spirit (*SCW* 5:99). The notion of the *Weltseele* or world-soul, a concept that originates in Plato's *Timaeus* (34 b–c), is deployed by Schelling in his *Von der Weltseele*. This text offers something like an immanent version of the traditional Platonic narrative structure outlined in chapter 1 of this study, which begins with a scene of catastrophic creation that occasions a fall from a first stage of perfection and eternity (Being) into a second stage of fragmentation, alienation, and temporality (Becoming), followed by a third stage, involving a return to perfection and unity by way of philosophical contemplation or *anamnesis.* Schelling's history of philosophy, or, in a broader sense, his history of human consciousness, corresponds in part with this tripartite Platonic structure, while at the same time remaining — in contradistinction to Plato — confined to the plane of immanence. In fact Schelling himself deploys Plato's notion of *anamnesis* in connection with his *Naturphilosophie*. "Die platonische Idee," he writes in 1800, "daß alle Philosophie Erinnerung sei, ist in diesem Sinne wahr; alles Philosophieren besteht in einem Erinnern des Zustandes, in welchem wir eins waren mit der Natur."[5]

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[5] Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke,* ed. K. F. A. Schelling, 14 vols., vol. 4, *Allgemeine*

In chapter 1 of this study we saw how Plato regards the material world as a fallen copy of the divine realm of the forms. In his *Timaeus,* Plato is at pains to point out that the forms take precedence over the physical world in terms of both their metaphysical status and their position outside of temporality. Thus Plato's notion of the daemonic functions as a mode or conduit that announces the possibility of bridging the split between the material world and the world of the forms. Schelling, on the other hand, endeavors completely to side-step Plato's distinction between immanence and transcendence, between Becoming and Being. As Dale E. Snow observes, it appears that Schelling replaces Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura* "with an immanent living absolute" out of which "all other levels of being could be explained."[6]

In the previous chapter, we saw how Goethe was led, as a result of his scientific endeavors, to posit the existence of a phenomenon that he termed the *Urphänomen.* In Goethe's thought, the *Urphänomen* appears to correspond with the gap between internally generated ideas regarding external phenomena (not unlike Kant's ideas of pure reason), and external phenomena in themselves. As we have seen, when Goethe described the *Urphänomen* as being something that leads us to a kind of cognitive limit, he appears to have been using this notion of the limit in a double sense. On the one hand, the *Urphänomen* marks a kind of limit beyond which human reason cannot pass (a subjective limit), while on the other hand it also seems to represent an objective limit or obstructing force in nature, in that it exemplifies the extent to which nature exceeds the efforts of human beings to understand or contain it within abstract schemata like Goethe's *Urpflanze* or his work on comparative anatomy. In short, the *Urphänomen* attests to Benjamin's formulation of the daemonic as that which represents the "Erfahrung unfaßbarer Naturzweideutigkeit."

In contrast to Goethe's approach and his feeling of limitation and resignation when faced with the *Urphänomen,* Schelling attempts to circumvent the abyss or gap between objects and ideas, between material phenomena and their ultimate purposiveness — an abyss that appears in the philosophy of Kant — by arguing that there is an underlying connection between nature and the human mind, between object and idea, and ultimately between immanent objects and their purported transcendent pur-

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Deduktion des Dynamischen Prozesses oder der Kategorien der Physik (Stuttgart und Augsburg: J Cotta, 1856–61), 77. Quoted in Odo Marquard, *Transzendentaler Idealismus, romantische Naturphilosophie, Psychoanalyse* (Cologne: Verlag für Philosophie Jürgen Dinter, 1987), 158.

[6] Dale E. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism* (Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1996), 85–86.

pose. Thus it is necessary to inquire as to whether Schelling's attempted outbidding of Kant's philosophy may have represented to Goethe the possibility that one could circumvent the Kantian abyss between the idea and the object, between the human mind and the purposiveness of nature, by assuming that both the human mind and nature are part of a greater absolute subject, an indwelling world-soul, through which the human mind is intimately connected with natural objects. This possibility is expressed by Schelling in the notion, often repeated throughout the *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur,* that an absolute simultaneity and reciprocity may exist between mind and matter, a unity in which "die Natur soll der sichtbare Geist, der Geist die unsichtbare Natur seyn" (*SCW* 5:107).

But a letter to Schiller dated 6 January 1798 shows that Goethe greeted the first edition of the *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* with qualified praise. In particular, Goethe disagrees with Schelling's tendency to argue against certain "Vorstellungsarten" or modes of perception, and especially with his opposition to the notion that any act of cognition involves a subject that is separate from the object that it perceives (*MA* 8.1:489). This anti-Kantian tendency in Schelling appears to be a result of his relatively strict adherence to the philosophy of Leibniz. In his *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur,* Schelling agrees with Leibniz's notion that the monad is windowless and thus not susceptible of alteration by external sources. Leibniz maintained, according to Schelling, the "absolute Unmöglichkeit" that an external cause could effect "das Innere eines Geistes"; rather, all changes in perception are seen by Schelling to emerge "aus einem innern Princip" (*SCW* 5:77). Schelling is inclined to agree with this element in the thought of Leibniz because it suggests to him that the mind and nature are originally one, and that consequently any change that appears to occur in an organism as a result of external sources is in fact an expression of the original unity between the mind and nature — a unity that is present at the birth of the mind and that persists despite any so-called influence of the external causes upon it. Thus all changes to the individual mind are, for Schelling, preprogrammed by virtue of its original oneness or preestablished harmony with nature — they are mere effects of the world-soul and its operations.

As we have seen in chapters 4 and 5, Goethe's *Werther,* combined with his subsequent preoccupation with empirical research during the *Italienische Reise* and in scientific essays like "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt," are all attempts to overcome the notion of genius as an isolated monadic force that can function as a microcosmic mirror of the whole of nature.[7] Thus, while Goethe emphasizes, in his letter to

[7] See Leibniz, *Monadology,* § 56, 198.

Schiller regarding Schelling, his own attachment to the notion that organic nature has an internal "Zweckmäßigkeit," he at the same time maintains that all cognition involves a "Bestimmung von außen" and a "Verhältnis nach außen" (*MA* 8,1:489). Goethe argues, contra Schelling, that one can only ever know nature from within the confines of our own subjectivity; a subjectivity that is in fact conditioned by our conception of there being an inside to ourselves from which we approach nature, and an outside to ourselves (the world of external objects, differentiated from the self) with which we can engage and form a "Verhältnis." According to Goethe, this subject/object distinction is so deeply imbedded in human consciousness and linguistic structures that it is simply impossible to overcome (*MA* 8.1:489).

Finally, while Goethe understands Schelling's antipathy towards Kant's notion of an inaccessible realm of "Dinge an sich," he also insists that nature still has the capacity to surprise, shock, and contradict the practitioner of *Naturphilosophie,* who will always unexpectedly run into (*anstoßen*) "Dinge außer ihm" (*MA* 8.1:489). This is because, as Roger Stephenson observes, the external world is for Goethe (unlike Schelling) "nothing like our conceptual ideations."[8] In fact, Goethe detects a degree of hubris in Schelling's conviction that his *Naturphilosophie* can demonstrate a seamless continuity between the human mind and the mind or purposiveness of nature. Thus, when Goethe suggests in his letter — it appears, ironically — "daß man also immer wohltut in den philosophischen Naturstande zu bleiben und von seiner ungetrennten Existenz den besten möglichen Gebrauch zu machen" (*MA* 8,1:489), he seems to be implying that instead of asserting the *idea* that there is an absolute simultaneity between the mind and nature, one may learn more by in fact encountering and dwelling in nature, not abstractly and intellectually, but physically and sensuously. There is, he suggests, no chance of our reaching the bodies of nature through subjective reflection, through the creation of the *idea* of a *Naturphilosophie* (*MA* 8.1:489). Rather, we must enter into a relationship with nature through our physical encounters with its infinite particularities. Such encounters would, of course, amount to a kind of "Bestimmung von außen" and would therefore also constitute a "Verhältnis nach außen."

It is precisely the issue of the abstract generalizations contained in the *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* and the question of their actual relationship with the particular objects of nature that characterizes a later comment by Goethe to Schiller about Schelling. In a letter dated 21 and

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[8] R. H. Stephenson, *Goethe's Conception of Knowledge and Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1995), 29.

25 February 1798, Goethe writes that Schelling "bedächtig verschweigt" the very things that contradict the modes of perception that he wants to bring into operation, and it is for this reason that Goethe complains "was habe ich denn an einer Idee die mich nötigt meinen Vorrat von Phänomenen zu verkümmern" (*MA* 8,1:536). Here Goethe characterizes Schelling as being akin to the scientist in "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt," who is not so much interested in "was ist" but in "was behagt" — what fits with the theory being proposed (*FA* 1,25:26). Natural phenomena will always exceed the ability of any one theory to account for them — this is the dictum with which Goethe critiques Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*.

Schelling and the "Erfahrung unfaßbarer Naturzweideutigkeit"

So what exactly did Goethe take on board from Schelling's *Naturphilosophie,* and what precisely is the connection between the *Naturphilosophie* and Goethe's later notion of the daemonic? The answer to these questions is hinted at in Hans-Georg Gadamer's remark that Goethe belonged to those "die mehr an Natur als an Freiheit glauben." In this respect, Gadamer observes that Goethe shows "eine natürliche Verwandschaft mit der Lehre Schellings" (*GGW* 9:66). This affinity originates in Schelling's attempt to outbid Kant, and particularly in his efforts to critique Kant's conception of the subject.

When Schelling asserts, in his *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur,* that the human "Ich" is merely an individuated element of a greater "absolutes Ich" or world-soul, he is at the same time arguing that human subjectivity and human reason are conditioned by nature. As Odo Marquard observes in his book *Transzendentaler Idealismus, romantische Naturphilosophie, Psychoanalyse* (Transcendental Idealism, Romantic Philosophy of Nature, Psychoanalysis, 1987) the aim of Schelling's early *Naturphilosophie* is to recognize "die Natur als Basis der Vernunft."[9] From the proposition that human subjectivity and human reason are conditioned by nature, it follows necessarily that there must be something in nature that exceeds the capacity of the rational subject to cognize it, precisely because it is impossible for the subject to perceive its own condition, its own ground, as an absolute and complete totality. As Andrew Bowie observes, this aspect of Schelling's thought demonstrates "the impossibility of a system of reason grounding itself"[10] precisely because the

[9] Marquard, *Transzendentaler Idealismus,* 153.

[10] Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy,* 2.

locus of reason — the human subject — is itself inescapably situated in nature.

Thus there must exist an aspect of nature that resists the capacity of reason to explain it, and given that, according to Schelling, the subject is itself a part of nature, it must also necessarily follow that there is an aspect of the self that exists beneath or beyond Kant's "transzendentale Einheit der Apperzeption," and that operates outside of the barriers of reason. Odo Marquard describes this aspect of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* as leading to a "Depotenzierung" (reduction of potential) of the rational capacities of the human subject.[11] This reduction of potential occurs precisely because when the subject is viewed by Schelling as being both conditioned by and grounded in nature, its measure of autonomy and freedom is necessarily reduced. Hence reason cannot describe and categorize the objects of nature from a position of absolute separation and objectivity precisely because the rational subject is itself a part of nature. Consequently, a certain natural or non-rational aspect of the self does not present itself directly to the perception of the subject, and in this sense it remains, to a certain degree, unconscious. Thus, as Andrew Bowie comments, in Schelling "the world of nature is the sphere of unconscious productivity, as opposed to the 'conscious' productivity of the self-aware, autonomous I. There is no absolute division of the two: the main problem is understanding how they relate."[12]

Accordingly, the so-called "Erfahrung unfaßbarer Naturzweideutigkeit" that Benjamin sees as approximating Goethe's conception of the daemonic is a *Zweideutigkeit* or ambivalence that exists both within the subject (in that element of the subject that is unconscious or natural), and also outside the subject (in those aspects of nature that are beyond the rational comprehension of the subject). This is why, according to Benjamin:

> Den Umgang der dämonischen Kräfte erkauft die mythische Menschheit mit Angst. Sie hat aus Goethe oft unverkennbar gesprochen. Ihre Manifestationen sind aus der anekdotischen Vereinzelung, in der fast widerwillig von den Biographen ihrer gedacht wird, in das Licht einer Betrachtung zu stellen, die freilich schreckhaft deutlich die Gewalt uralter Mächte in dem Leben dieses Mannes zeigt. (*BGS* 1,1:151)

Benjamin's discussion of "die Gewalt uralter Mächte" in Goethe's life can be analyzed in slightly more sober tones, in terms of the relationship be-

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[11] Marquard, *Transzendentaler Idealismus,* 156.

[12] Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy,* 48.

tween subject and object, a relationship that extends back to the beginning of my analysis of the daemonic in the philosophy of Plato.

In Plato, the daemonic exists in the gap between the material world and the realm of the forms. In this connection, the daemonic is seen as an intermediary mode or bridge that announces the possibility of a return to the divine realm of the forms through philosophical contemplation. But in Plato the daemonic also manifests itself in so-called non-rational phenomena like the *daimonion* or divine voice of Socrates, a voice that dissuades Socrates from certain actions at crucial points in his life, and that may possibly be seen, within an ethical context, as a kind of conscience. I will return to this suggestion in chapters 7 and 8. For now, it is merely necessary to note that in Plato the daemonic represents a kind of nexus between rational and non-rational knowledge or cognition.

Goethe, by contrast, sees the daemonic as being related to the notion of the *Urphänomen*. The *Urphänomen* alerts us to what Benjamin calls both the "die Gewalt uralter Mächte" and the "Erfahrung unfaßbarer Naturzweideutigkeit," by marking a limit beyond which human knowledge cannot pass. As we have seen, this limit is both internal (that is to say, subjective) and external (exterior or objective). In its internal or subjective manifestation, the *Urphänomen* marks the limit of human reason or objectivity. Since, according to Schelling, there is an element of the subject that is natural or unconscious, we can never fully be aware of the extent to which our perceptions of nature, or our theories regarding natural phenomena, are conditioned by unconscious or invisible motivations. Within the realm of science, Goethe refers to something akin to these unconscious motivations when he speaks of the "innere Feinde" that exist in the transition from "Erfahrung zum Urteil," and that guarantee that no perception of nature is purely objective or comprehensive (*FA* 1,25:30). This is also precisely why Goethe refuses to agree with Schelling's abstract assertion that there is a primordial unity between the human mind and nature that can clearly be demonstrated through the deployment of a *Naturphilosophie*. Goethe's letters to Schiller regarding Schelling demonstrate to us his (Goethe's) view that even a *Naturphilosophie* must — like Kant's ideas of pure reason — be subject to its own inner enemies, which prevent it from ever attaining the status of objective truth.

On the other hand, however, Goethe is at the same time willing to accept a precept of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* that accords with his own intuition of the daemonic as an external obstructing force or limit in nature. Since, according to Schelling, our own subjective "Ich" is imbedded within a greater, absolute "Ich" that encompasses the entire sphere of nature, there will always be an extent to which nature eludes or surpasses our rational comprehension. This is due to the fact that we cannot view nature from the outside, as a totality, because we are necessarily and in-

exorably situated within it. Thus the daemonic also designates the excessiveness of nature with respect to the rational capacities of the human subject, in that it denotes the extent to which nature always runs ahead of our capacity to understand it.

Water as Subjectivity III: "Mächtiges Überraschen"

Perhaps Goethe's first conscious attempt to deal with the phenomenon of the daemonic in poetic terms,[13] "Mächtiges Überraschen" belongs to a series of sonnets that he composed in late 1807 and early 1808. As is noted by Erich Trunz in his commentary on the sonnets, these poems are very different from all the other Goethean poem cycles, both outwardly, through the sonnet form, and inwardly, through their self-awareness and distance (*HA* 1:632). "Mächtiges Überraschen" is, in this context, often compared and contrasted with an earlier poem that I have already examined in this study, "Mahomets Gesang." In "Mahomets Gesang" we were introduced to one of Goethe's favorite metaphors for subjectivity: water.[14] As was noted in chapter 3, the image of poetic subjectivity as an uncontrollable stream flowing down a mountainside can be traced back to Horace's *Odes.*

The aforementioned contrast drawn by Trunz between the sonnet form and Goethe's early lyric poems functions on two intertwined levels: the aesthetic and the philosophical. Trunz observes that the strict form of the sonnet genre is completely opposed to the creative principle of the Storm and Stress (*HA* 1:633). This creative principle is observable in "Mahomets Gesang," a poem in which many of the hallmarks of Goethe's early Romanticism can be found: a questing subject, embodied in a genius-stream, which longs to unify itself with the pantheistic deity known as God/Nature. This longing ends, however, in a loss of identity on the part of the subject, which eventually subsumes its own individuality in the act of merging itself with its Father, the ocean. The poetic structure of "Mahomets Gesang" mirrors its subject matter. The rhyme scheme is irregular, as is the length of the stanzas. Indeed, the themes behind the poem seem to determine its formal qualities, in an aesthetics that values content — emotion and inspiration — over form and contour.

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[13] Hermann Kunisch, *Goethe-Studien* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1991), 59.

[14] See Ernst Loeb, *Die Symbolik des Wasserzyklus bei Goethe* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1967).

Likewise, when we examine the *topos* of water-as-subjectivity in revised 1787 edition of *Werther,* the formal aspects of Goethe's prose in the section of the novel dated 12 December 1772 — in which Werther sees "die wühlenden Fluthen" of a swollen river flooding the valley of his beloved Wahlheim — are not unlike those found in "Mahomets Gesang." The emotions of the subject (Werther) seem to determine the formal cadences of the passage, until Werther finally identifies with the river to such an extent that he wishes to mimic its plunge into the abyss below. Thus, in both "Mahomets Gesang" and in the 1787 edition of *Werther,* we encounter questing subjects who long to unify themselves with external objects. The difference, however, between "Mahomets Gesang" and the 1787 version of *Werther* can be uncovered in two qualities that Trunz finds in Goethe's deployment of the sonnet form: self-awareness and distance. While in relation to "Mahomets Gesang" I argued that Goethe was still in the grip of his early Romanticism of unlimited subjective longing, by the 1787 edition of *Werther,* he is already mounting a critique of the aesthetics of the *Sturm und Drang,* thereby also distancing himself from the emotional standpoint of the novel's chief protagonist. Similarly, I also intend to argue that "Mächtiges Überraschen" can be seen to offer a retrospective critique of Goethe's early Romanticism, the Romanticism of limitless subjective longing or unlimited subjectivity.

Nicholas Boyle also finds a mode of retrospective reflection in Goethe's later works — particularly in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* — which he encompasses in the term *anagnôrisis.* This term refers to an act of recognition, particularly in the context of the *dénouement* in classical drama.[15] Boyle understands the term literally to refer to an act of temporal re-cognition, a moment in which the past is reflected upon, re-examined and understood in a way that is directly relevant to the present. "Life," says Boyle, "is an open secret, in which the manifest truth is that the truth is hidden and the only order is anagnoristic — looking back, we recognize our present in our past" (*BGA* 2:423). Although our purpose here is not literary biography, it is appropriate, in the context of our discussion of *anagnôrisis,* to examine briefly a psychological "Selbstschilderung" (self-portrait) that Goethe sketched in August 1797, and that also appears to suggest to the reader the theme of conscious reflection upon previous desires, efforts, and longings. In this self-portrait, Goethe describes all of his activities as being underpinned by a "poetischer Bildungstrieb," which is the basis of his existence (*HA* 10:529). He then observes that while many

[15] The concept of *anagnôrisis,* usually translated as either "recognition" or "discovery," is most famously theorized in chapter 16 of Aristotle's *Poetics* (*CWA* 2:2328–29).

of his early poetic and artistic efforts were characterized by "ein zufälliges unbestimmtes Streben," he later learned, through his investigations into scientific methodology and epistemology, to regulate this striving into a more conscious mode of deliberation (*HA* 10:529–30).

The process of *Bildung* described here by Goethe may also be applied to "Mahomets Gesang" and "Mächtiges Überraschen." While the first poem depicts something resembling a "zufälliges unbestimmtes Streben," I will contend that the second appears to demonstrate a regulated recollection of this striving, which takes into account the phenomenon of the daemonic as representing the "Erfahrung unfaßbarer Naturzweideutigkeit." In the analysis that follows I will argue that this regulated recollection can be seen as a product of the increasingly sophisticated cognitive theories developed by Goethe during the period from the revision of *Werther* and the first journey to Italy (1786–88) to the genesis of "Mächtiges Überraschen" itself in late 1807.

As is the case with *Werther,* the philosophical importance of "Mächtiges Überraschen" has been underestimated and obscured precisely because critics have — in keeping with the cult of personality hermeneutics that are so often applied to Goethe's works — seen fit to interpret it in connection with actual events in Goethe's life. In this connection, the poem is often seen to be Goethe's meditation on his relationships with both Bettine von Arnim and Minchen Herzlieb.[16] In contradistinction to these biographical approaches, I will offer a reading of "Mächtiges Überraschen" that takes into account the philosophical sources to which Goethe was exposed during the years leading up to its genesis, namely those of Leibniz, Kant, and particularly Schelling. It is precisely these philosophical sources, I will argue, that lead to an understanding of Goethe's later concept of the daemonic.

MÄCHTIGES ÜBERRASCHEN

Ein Strom entrauscht umwölktem Felsensaale
Dem Ozean sich eilig zu verbinden;
Was auch sich spiegeln mag von Grund zu Gründen,
Er wandelt unaufhaltsam fort zu Tale.

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[16] This has been the view of Heinrich Viehoff, *Goethes Gedichte,* 3 vols., vol. 3 (Düsseldorf: Bötticher, 1846–53); Paul Hankamer, *Spiel der Mächte: Ein Kapitel aus Goethes Leben* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlag, 1947); and Emil Staiger, *J. W. Goethe: Gedichte* (Zürich: Manesse, 1949). See Hans-Jürgen Schlütter's commentary on the reception history of "Mächtiges Überraschen" in *Goethes Sonette: Anregung, Entstehung, Intention* (Bad Homburg: Gehlen, 1969), 111–15.

Dämonisch aber stürzt mit einem Male —
Ihr folgen Berg und Wald in Wirbelwinden —
Sich Oreas, Behagen dort zu finden,
Und hemmt den Lauf, begrenzt die weite Schale.

Die Welle sprüht, und staunt zurück und weichet,
Und schwillt bergan, sich immer selbst zu trinken;
Gehemmt ist nun zum Vater hin das Streben.

Sie schwankt und ruht, zum See zurückgedeichet;
Gestirne, spiegelnd sich, beschaun das Blinken
Des Wellenschlags am Fels, ein neues Leben.

(*FA* 1,2:250)

The first stanza of the sonnet invites a direct comparison with the opening lines of "Mahomets Gesang." In the earlier poem a "Felsenquell" emerges "aus der Wolke" and races into a valley below. In "Mächtiges Überraschen," however, the protagonist-stream emerges from an "umwölktem Felsensaale" — an origin that, despite its being clouded, is nevertheless earthly or worldly. As is the case in "Mahomets Gesang," the protagonist-stream in "Mächtiges Überraschen" also displays one of the psychological motifs found in Goethe's early Romanticism: the subject's desire to unify itself with the ocean is described, in the third stanza, as a "Streben," a desire for complete *Selbstverwirklichung.*

In the second stanza, this striving is halted abruptly by Oreas, a mountain nymph who belongs to a broader category of demigods known as the Oreads.[17] Oreas confronts the subject-stream with a "dämonisch" counterforce. This counterforce is depicted in the image of the subject-stream's dashing (*stürzen*) against the powers of nature, powers that the figure of Oreas personifies in a mythic form. Here "dämonisch" appears to denote those forces in nature, or perhaps even in the cosmos, that cannot be anticipated by the subject, and that therefore have the capacity to shock and surprise the subject into a state of recognition.

This moment of recognition is then transformed, in the poem's third stanza, into the protagonist-stream's awareness of a new existential situation of subjectivity-in-limitation or *Begrenzung.* Initially, the protagonist-

[17] In their *Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities,* Charles Russell Coulter and Patricia Turner describe the Oreads as follows: "Oreads are the nymphs who inhabit caves and mountains. . . . When the goddess Artemis goes hunting, the Oreads are her attendants. They are shown as graceful women dressed in hunting costume" (Charles Russell Coulter and Patricia Turner, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities* [Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1997], 364).

stream makes another attempt to overcome the obstacle that has hindered its journey to the ocean, but its efforts are dispersed into spray. Having been diverted once again, the protagonist-stream of the poem is forced not only to confront external obstacles in nature, but also to confront itself ("sich immer selbst zu trinken"), and its former mode of existence: a mode of existence in which it sought to achieve its own subjective goals and ends, perhaps independently of external factors.

Thus, in the final stanza, the protagonist-stream, having confronted both obstacles in nature and the limitations of its own eminently subjective worldview, is coerced into a new understanding of its role within the cosmic order. Within this new *Weltanschauung,* limitation of subjectivity is no longer seen as being destructive; rather, its creative and developmental potential is revealed. In having been dammed into a lake, the protagonist-stream comes to realize that it is merely a small part of an all-powerful cosmic order that is depicted in the image of the "Gestirne" that it reflects, an order that cannot fully be understood in rational terms, but which must nevertheless be respected.

In describing how a striving subject is obstructed by a natural or even cosmic daemonic force, an obstruction that then leads the subject to a new awareness of its position within a wider order, "Mächtiges Überraschen" appears to depict Goethe's notion of "Polarität und Steigerung." As we saw in the previous chapter, Goethe probably derived this notion from his reading of Kant's *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* during 1789. In a passage written in November 1792 and published in the *Campagne in Frankreich* (Campaign in France, 1822), Goethe attributes to Kant the notion that the forces of attraction and repulsion comprise the "Urpolarität aller Wesen," which penetrates and animates the infinite diversity of nature's appearances (*FA* 1,16:520). Goethe then elaborates upon these concepts in a much later text entitled "Erläuterung zu dem aphoristischen Fragment Die Natur" (Explanation of the Aphoristic Fragment on Nature), written in 1828.[18] "Polarität," according to Goethe in this text, is a property of matter, while "Steigerung" is described as being "geistig." Each side of this dualism can contain elements of the other, and also depends upon its other for existence (*HA* 13:48). Finally, Goethe's understanding of *Polarität* was also influenced

[18] This text was originally a letter written by Goethe to Kanzler von Müller dated 24 May 1828, in which Goethe comments upon the fragment entitled "Die Natur" (Nature). First published in 1784 and at one time thought to have been written by Goethe, this fragment is now attributed to the Swiss theologian Georg Christoph Tobler, who met with Goethe in Weimar during 1780 and 1781. See *FA* 2,10:1141.

by Schelling's *Von der Weltseele,* in which the author states that the ideas of polarity and dualism should be the first principles of a philosophical theory of nature.[19]

In the "Erläuterung zu dem aphoristischen Fragment Die Natur," Goethe contends that out of the attraction and collision of polarities, "Steigerung" (intensification and ascent) is achieved, through which the two hitherto divided principles are momentarily united on a higher level. This process is demonstrated, for example, in the *Farbenlehre,* where Goethe contends that intensifications in colour are produced by collisions between light and darkness (*FA* 1,23/1:180). But according to P. Probst, in his article "Polarität," Goethe's notion of *Polarität und Steigerung* is not so much concerned with a constant drive toward an overcoming of opposites through unity, as proposed in the dialectic of Hegel, but rather with "die lebendige Spannung zwischen den Polen" (*HWP* 12:1027).[20] As will become apparent in my reading of "Mächtiges Überraschen," Goethe is interested in the productive relationship of opposition between the subject and nature, an endless tension that leads the subject to both new discoveries and further obstacles, and a tension that cannot be surmounted or completely cognized through any overriding theory akin to Hegel's dialectic.[21]

Keeping this notion of *Polarität* in mind, we need to pose the following questions: what is the significance of the daemonic Oreas in "Mächtiges Überaschen"? And if, as I have suggested, Oreas can be seen to embody nature, what are the implications of this contention for Goethe's later theorization of the daemonic? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to review Goethe's philosophical development during the period between the revised *Werther* of 1786–87 and the composition of "Mächtiges Überraschen" itself in 1807–8.

From "Mahomets Gesang," through *Werther,* to the *Italienische Reise* onward, Goethe's philosophical development was primarily concerned

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[19] Quoted in P. Probst, "Polarität," in *HWP* 12:1026–29. For an account of Schelling's influence upon Goethe's notion of "Polarität und Steigerung," see also Peter Huber, "Polarität / Steigerung," in *GH* 4/2:863–65.

[20] Recent accounts of Goethe's notion of polarity substantiate Probst's claim. See Karl J. Fink, *Goethe's History of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 45; Mark Riegner, "Horns, Hooves, Spots, and Stripes: Form and Pattern in Mammals," in *Goethe's Way of Science: A Phenomenology of Nature,* ed. David Seamon and Arthur Zajonc (Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1998), 179.

[21] In this connection, Hans-Georg Gadamer observes in the essay "Goethe und die Philosophie" that the logic of Hegel's dialectic would, in all likelihood, have raised Goethe's suspicion regarding the capacity of theory to account for the complexities of external reality (*GGW* 9:67).

with the relationship between the subject — the perceiving "Ich" — and the *Gegenstände* of nature. On this level, the striving depicted in "Mächtiges Überraschen" is initially susceptible of an interpretation within the rubric of a particular poetics. This poetics would appear to approximate the aesthetic theories that were examined in chapters 2 to 6 of this study, beginning with Herder's *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode* and Goethe's own early meditations on the subject of genius in essays like "Von Deutscher Baukunst" and ending, after the *Sturm und Drang* period, with Schiller's essay "Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung" and Schelling's *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*.

The broad aesthetic/philosophical credo that underlies all of these works is roughly as follows. Modern humanity has become alienated from nature through its recourse to abstract reflection, but a return to nature is perhaps possible through the workings of poetic genius, as poetic genius may be effective in unlocking the sources of nature that are embedded in the self. Seen in this way, "Mächtiges Überraschen" may depict a poetic subject that wishes to unify itself with its lost other: nature. At the same time, however, "Mächtiges Überraschen" may also constitute a reflection on Goethe's later theoretical attitude to nature, an attitude developed through Goethe's encounters with the critical philosophy of Kant and expressed in essays like "Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt" and "Erfahrung und Wissenschaft." In this context the subject — now also the scientist — may strive for a kind of intellectual unity with the objects of nature through scientific investigations that attempt to synthesize disparate natural phenomena within general schemata or ideas. It is submitted that, in all of the above cases, we can detect the driving force that Goethe himself finds, in his "Selbstschilderung" of 1797, at the core of his being: namely a neo-Leibnizian "poetischer Bildungstrieb" that works its way outwards to an understanding of, or at the very least a kind of contact with, the objects of nature.

In chapter 2 of this study, I showed how Plato's original concept of the daemonic as an intermediary conduit between the material world and the forms was rendered immanent via the philosophy of Herder, and especially Herder's concept of *Kraft*. Thus, while in classical philosophy daemons were seen as intermediaries between gods and human beings, during the *Sturm und Drang* period the daemonic individual became something like the modern conception of genius as it is outlined in texts ranging from Herder's *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode* (1764) to Goethe's "Von Deutscher Baukunst" (1772). This daemonic genius is the subject who produces original art works through an indwelling *Kraft* that is seen as being natural and organic, thereby overcoming the split between human subjects and nature.

In order to counteract the sense of unlimited subjectivity that characterized the *Sturm und Drang* period, and the aforementioned notion of the daemonic genius that it propagated, Goethe became increasingly preoccupied with a turn toward objectivity, particularly during his journey to Italy, which commenced in September 1786. At this time, Goethe believed that objectivity could be gained through sensuous contact with, and observation of, natural objects. While this preoccupation was ostensibly a kind of turning away from the unrestrained subjectivity of *Werther,* it nevertheless retained within its structure a desire to synthesize the particular objects of nature within universal models — models that, despite their claims to "objectivity," were ineluctably Goethe's own. In fact, both Goethe's *Urpflanze* and his work on comparative anatomy were conceived in this grandiose, synthesizing spirit.

But the influence of Kant's critical philosophy, combined with Goethe's own deep-seated suspicion in relation to abstract models of any kind, eventually produced in Goethe the realization that the *Gegenstände* of nature would always resist (literally stand *gegen* or against) any universal model that scientists or indeed philosophers attempted to impose upon them. Accordingly, even when Goethe was offered an apparently easy solution to the problem of uncovering a teleological purposiveness in the objects of nature in the form of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie,* he still demurred. The *Naturphilosophie,* he seems to have decided, is also just an idea. When Schelling insists that there is a common underlying origin between the human mind and the mind or teleology of nature, a harmony that we simply have to uncover and reveal through the adoption of a *Naturphilosophie,* Goethe objects. This is because Goethe had realized, long before he read Schelling — and perhaps even during the revisions that he made to the 1787 edition of Werther — that any internally generated philosophical theory must always be tested in the real world, not in the world of ideas. It must, to recall Goethe's critique of Schelling, be subjected to a "Bestimmung von außen," through which it is forced to account for the minute particulars of individual organisms.

The central proposition of this chapter now comes into view. In short, "Mächtiges Überraschen" is more poetic epistemology than it is autobiography; that is to say, Goethe's sonnet needs to be read, not in relation to biographical events that occurred close to the date of its composition, but rather in light of the philosophical methodology that Goethe developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, predominantly under the influence of Kant and the early *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling. Accordingly, the daemonic in "Mächtiges Überraschen" is neither the secret, formative power that regulates the unfolding of Goethe's

personal fate (as is suggested by Gundolf),[22] nor, as the ideologues of National Socialism would have it, the fate of the German people.[23] Rather, it is an expression of those aspects of human interaction with nature that cannot be understood in purely rational terms, and in this sense it is also a meditation on the limits of human truth.

In this connection, a useful post-Kantian methodology through which to read "Mächtiges Überraschen" exists in Martin Heidegger's essay "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit" (On the Essence of Truth, first published in 1943, but dating back to lectures given in the early 1930s).[24] In this essay, Heidegger aims to bring into question the traditional enlightenment understanding of truth — originally derived from Aristotle and later from Thomas Aquinas's notion of *adequatio intellectûs et rei* (the accordance of intellect and thing) — as correspondence.[25] Similarly, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno have seen a central feature of enlightenment (as a mode of thinking rather than as a historical period) being expressed in the idea that matter or nature could be "beherrscht . . . ohne Illusion waltender oder innenwohnender Kräfte, verborgener Eigenschaften" (*AGS* 3:22). Both points of view — that of truth as correspondence expressed by Aquinas, and the notion that nature can be brought into line and mastered by reason and enlightenment thinking — tend to elide the degree to which there may in fact be a discontinuity or gap between human concepts regarding nature and nature in itself.

Keeping these points of view in mind, we might now begin to see the protagonist-stream in the first stanza of "Mächtiges Überraschen" as the enlightenment subject par excellence. Its aim to return to its Father, the ocean, is an expression of the desire for truth as correspondence; a return to, or coincidence with, the father as *logos.* More specifically, when we recall the central question of Goethe's quest for the *Urpflanze* — the desire to achieve an exact correspondence or unity between the subject's ideas or scientific theories regarding nature, and nature as a collection of noumena or "Dinge an sich" — it becomes clear that the *Strom* must inevitably be shocked and astonished into a state of recognition by the infinite particularities of natural objects. In this state of affairs, truth ceases to

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[22] Friedrich Gundolf, *Goethe* (1916; Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1922), 3.

[23] See, for example, Walther Linden, "Im Ringen ein neues Goethebild," *Goethe* 3 (1938): 158–80; here, 180; August Raabe, *Das Erlebnis des Dämonischen in Goethes Denken und Schaffen* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1942), 374–75.

[24] Martin Heidegger, "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit," in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klosterman, 1967), 73–97.

[25] David Farrell Krell, "Introduction to *On the Essence of Truth,*" in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 112–14.

be *adequatio intellectûs et rei;* rather, it becomes an act of recognition: an apprehension of both the limits of human knowledge and of the necessary discontinuity between idea and object.

While "Mächtiges Überraschen" predates Heidegger's formulation of the problems associated with enlightenment understandings of truth by over one hundred years, two philosophical systems that undoubtedly underlie Heidegger's critique were expounded by contemporaries of Goethe: the critical philosophy of Kant and the early *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling. It is in terms of these thinkers that we can reread the second stanza of "Mächtiges Überraschen":

> Dämonisch aber stürzt mit einem Male —
> Ihr folgen Berg und Wald in Wirbelwinden —
> Sich Oreas, Behagen dort zu finden,
> Und hemmt den Lauf, begrenzt die weite Schale.

In Kantian terms, the daemonic — as it is expressed in this stanza — represents the inevitable discontinuity or gap that exists between nature "an sich" and the subject's ideas or theories regarding nature. Thus, in line with the aims of Kant's critical philosophy and with Goethe's own Kantian scientific methodology, the daemonic is a concept or *topos* that alerts us to the necessary limits of human knowledge. This is essentially the position adopted by Benjamin in the essay "Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften," when he describes the daemonic as the "Erfahrung unfaßbarer Naturzweideutigkeit."

From the perspective of Schelling, on the other hand, the daemonic reveals or shows itself in a more dualistic sense. Goethe's subject (the *Strom*) is represented as an integral part of nature. Being conditioned by nature, this subject can never know nature as a totality since it is impossible fully to cognize that which is one's own ground and condition. Indeed, any sense in which the subject knows nature must itself to some degree be *infiltrated* by nature, since all thinking for Schelling is an effect of natural processes — hence Goethe's use of water as a metaphor for human subjectivity. In this connection, the daemonic represents the nonrational element in nature in two interrelated senses: it is both the infinite particularity of the natural world that cannot be understood or contained by any overarching idea or theory, while also being the natural or nonrational element in all human thought processes — that which makes us perpetually fall short of being totally objective or purely rational.

More than a hundred years after the philosophical *Zeitgeist* of Kant and Schelling, Heidegger expresses the essence of truth as the essence of *Dasein* itself: *alêtheia* or "lichtendes Bergen" — a sheltering that lightens,

a concealment that also reveals.[26] While there is no suggestion here that Goethe's understanding of subjectivity in limitation can be equated with truth as it is delineated by Heidegger in the concept of *Dasein,* there is, in Goethe's sonnet, an intimation that human truth exists only in the recognition of limits, and that within truth concealment and human error must always exist alongside that which is shown or revealed. It is precisely in this sense that Heidegger speaks of the essence of truth as being errancy or "die Irre."[27] Thus, only in its "begrenzt" state depicted in the last stanza can the subject-*Strom* of Goethe's sonnet mirror the constellations, and this mirroring represents only a linguistic and rhetorical mediation of the truth, truth infiltrated and grounded by error, not the truth in itself.

Writing within the post-Heideggerean framework of modern rhetoric — a tradition that will, through the work of Hans Blumenberg, be explored in greater depth in chapter 7 — Walter F. Veit, in his essay "Selbstverwirklichung, Entsagung und der Orient" (2000), also points out that the daemonic in "Mächtiges Überraschen" functions only as a rhetorical limit-concept, which alerts us to what cannot be accessed, understood, and controlled by human rationality. For Veit, the term *dämonisch* refers to that which is inaccessible through rationality, and cannot be mastered through human means.[28] Veit's essay deepens our understanding of the daemonic in "Mächtiges Überraschen" by seeing it in relation to Goethe's notions of *Entsagung* and *Weltfrömmigkeit. Entsagung,* a concept given centrality in Goethe's oeuvre by *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (subtitled "Die Entsagenden"), is seen by Veit, not simply as a literary/poetic motif of Weimar Classicism, but also as a term with epistemological significance, as that which brings about a process of "Entselbstigung" (unselfing, or limitation of the self and its desires and projects). Arguing in a similar vein to Veit, Nicholas Boyle also contends that *Entsagung* in Goethe's works represents the "negative image of desire," a recognition that arises "in the light of an original dependence on things which is beyond our control, and which relegates unity, harmony and perfection to the status of ideals which we cannot compel into reality" (*BGA* 2:324–25). Hence for Boyle, Goethean *Entsagung* is also epistemological in the sense that it represents the "renunciation of the hope of possessing the object," the object in this case being the truth "an sich," as opposed to the truth mediated by human concepts and language (*BGA* 2:325).

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[26] Heidegger, "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit," 96–97.

[27] Heidegger, "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit," 93.

[28] Walter F. Veit, "Selbstverwirklichung, Entsagung und der Orient," in *Westöstlicher und Nordsüdlicher Divan: Goethe in interkultureller Perspektive,* ed. Ortrud Gutjahr (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000), 89–108; here, 101.

For Veit, "Mächtiges Überraschen" depicts a process of *Entsagung* and *Entselbstigung* insofar as the hero of the sonnet — Goethe's *Strom* — is forced to recognize the limits of its own rationality when confronted by an often unaccountable natural order. The last stanza of Goethe's sonnet, according to Veit, reveals a situation in which the limitlessness of the subject's striving has been obstructed. This obstruction, however, is not to be interpreted as a complete loss; rather, it gives rise to a situation in which something new is created. Goethe's *Strom* — in its attempts at a totally free and unhindered *Selbstverwirklichung,* a completely uninterrupted and pure correspondence (*adequatio*) between idea and object — falls into error. But this errancy (in Heidegger's sense of "die Irre" outlined in "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit") also conditions the possibility for truth as a temporal re-cognition.

It is also here that Veit sees the daemonic in relation to Goethe's conception of *Weltfrömmigkeit,* arguing that this concept opposes the notion of onto-theological transcendence with an ontology of immanence.[29] Veit suggests that "Mächtiges Überraschen" operates within an immanentist framework that is redolent both of Spinoza's notion of *Deus sive Natura* and Schelling's conception of the divine as a *Weltseele.* Both of these conceptions arguably provide a philosophical background to Goethe's use of the untranslatable term *Weltfrömmigkeit,* which can only be approximated in English through a series of phrases: world-piety, respect for the world, a sense of duty towards the world.

It is from the perspective of Goethe's notion of *Weltfrömmigkeit* that we can return to the second and third stanzas of the poem, as well as to my earlier proposition that "Mächtiges Überraschen" effects a refinement — if not a complete critique — of Goethe's earlier conception of the subject as a poetical formative drive that strives for expansion or *Selbstverwirklichung.* As was seen in both "Mahomets Gesang" and *Werther,* this demand for total self-realization can end in a loss of identity on the part of the subject. By contrast, "Mächtiges Überraschen" differs from these two works by displaying a double sense of temporality akin to the notion of *anagnôrisis* alluded to by Nicholas Boyle: a sense of temporality that depicts the act of striving or longing itself, combined with a recollection of, or a reflection upon, this selfsame striving. This recollection accounts for the phenomenon of the daemonic (embodied in the figure of Oreas) as that aspect of nature that hinders and renders formal the boundaries (*Schale:* meaning bowl, outer layer or shell) of the subject. Thus, when the third stanza of the poem presents us with a subject-stream that is broken, transformed into spray, and forced "sich immer

[29] Veit, "Selbstverwirklichung, Entsagung und der Orient," 101.

selbst zu trinken," we are at the same time confronted with a subject that has, through circumstances beyond its control or understanding, been coerced into self-awareness.[30]

Through the concept of *Weltfrömmigkeit,* Goethe seeks to place the individual desires, strivings, longings, and fantasies of the high-Romantic, Werther-style subject within a wider order that is at once social, natural, and ultimately cosmic. Goethe's conception of the daemonic in "Mächtiges Überraschen" needs to be understood in relation to the notion of *Weltfrömmigkeit,* since it is the subject's encounters with this wider natural and cosmic order — encounters that may, for want of a better term, be called *dämonisch* — that lead the subject to an awareness of its epistemological limits. Seen in this light, Goethe's sonnet is no longer the sentimental, autobiographical reflection discussed by scholars like Heinrich Viehoff, Paul Hankamer, and Emil Staiger; rather, it becomes an exemplary case of early nineteenth-century poetic epistemology.

In the course of this study I have suggested there are two fundamental senses in which the notion of the daemonic can be seen to exist within Goethe's oeuvre. "Mächtiges Überraschen" is the first text by Goethe that begins to show how these two senses of the daemonic interact with one another. The sonnet depicts a striving subject that wishes to unify itself with nature, a subject that is a later version of the genius-stream that appears in "Mahomets Gesang." This stream is daemonic in the *Sturm und Drang* sense of the term, in that it represents the Leibnizian monadic subject, the subject endowed with an indwelling *Kraft,* which wishes to expand at all costs. In "Mächtiges Überraschen," this daemonic genius or striving subject is represented by Goethe in a retrospective or *anagnôristic* mode. Writing in 1807–8, some twenty-five years after the height of the *Sturm und Drang* period and the composition of "Mahomets Gesang" (1772–73), Goethe is able to show how the trajectory of this daemonic genius is obstructed and diverted by an oppositional daemonic force, mythically embodied in the figure of Oreas. Here the adjective *dämonisch,* now consciously used by Goethe, designates an incomprehensible ambivalence in nature that disrupts the aims, goals, desires, and theories of the striving subject, thereby producing a new sense of self-awareness and self-limitation.

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[30] This particular reading of "Mächtiges Überraschen" has been most recently proposed by Van Dijk, who argues that the daemonic force represented by Oreas leads the subject to a new state of stability, self-knowledge, and individuality. Aran van Dijk, "Das Dämonische als moderne Rezeptionskategorie: Dargestellt an Goethes *Egmont* und *Torquato Tasso,*" *Neophilologus* 83, no. 3 (1999): 427–43; here, 428.

7: After the Ancients: *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and "Urworte. Orphisch"

NACH DEM BEISPIEL DER ALTEN" — this is the phrase that Goethe attaches to his famous discussion of *das Dämonische* in part 4 (book 20) of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. In what sense is Goethe's concept of the daemonic conceived in relation to the tradition of classical thought? And can it even be called a *Begriff* in the strict philosophical sense of this term as it is defined by Goethe's philosophical contemporaries, particularly by Immanuel Kant? The earlier chapters of this study have traced the philosophical lineage of the daemonic from classical sources into the works of Goethe, a lineage that, as will be seen in the latter stages of this chapter, Goethe invokes explicitly in his explanation of the poem "Urworte. Orphisch." But the predominant aim of the present chapter is to consider not so much the lineage as the *function* of the daemonic in Goethe's later works. In order to appreciate this function, it is also necessary to return to debates that first arise in ancient philosophy — namely, those concerning the relationships between *mythos* and *logos,* and between rhetoric and philosophy.

Dichtung und Wahrheit I: *Das Dämonische* as a Rhetorical *Bild*

In part 4 (book 20) of *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* Goethe elaborates upon his notion of the daemonic in two passages written in early to mid-1813, some six years after the composition of "Mächtiges Überraschen."[1] The first of these two passages constitutes what Erich Trunz calls Goethe's most detailed, most conclusive, and deepest statement about the daemonic (*HA* 10:632). It is, however, in this statement, and in others like it made to Eckermann, that Goethe's notion of the daemonic arguably begins to operate, not so much as a concept, but rather as something like a rhetorical *Bild* or *topos* through which he attempts to understand or at the very least address what Hans Blumenberg calls "der ungelöste Rest" of human experience. Blumenberg elaborates upon this point by arguing,

[1] Goethe wrote in his *Tagebuch* on 4 April 1813: "Conception des Dämonischen und Egmonts." See Erich Trunz's commentary in *HA* 10:632.

contra the position of Erich Trunz, that what matters about Goethe's famous statement is not so much the term *das Dämonische* and the "Deutungslust" that it has created in the history of Goethe scholarship; rather, what matters for philosophical purposes is the "ungelöste Rest" or excess to which it refers (*BAM,* 437). In order to assess these competing claims, and to make my own, I quote Goethe's passage in full.

> Man hat im Verlaufe dieses biographischen Vortrags umständlich gesehn, wie das Kind, der Knabe, der Jüngling sich auf verschiedenen Wegen dem Übersinnlichen zu nähern gesucht, erst mit Neigung nach einer natürlichen Religion hingeblickt, dann mit Liebe sich an eine positive festgeschlossen, ferner durch Zusammenziehung in sich selbst seine eignen Kräfte versucht und sich endlich dem allgemeinen Glauben freudig hingegeben. Als er in den Zwischenräumen dieser Regionen hin und wider wanderte, suchte, sich umsah, begegnete ihm manches was zu keiner von allen gehören mochte, und er glaubte mehr und mehr einzusehn, daß es besser sei den Gedanken von dem Ungeheuren, Unfaßlichen abzuwenden. Er glaubte in der Natur, der belebten und unbelebten, der beseelten und unbeseelten etwas zu entdecken, das sich nur in Widersprüchen manifestierte und deshalb unter keinen Begriff noch viel weniger unter ein Wort gefaßt werden könnte. Es war nicht göttlich, denn es schien unvernünftig, nicht menschlich, denn es hatte keinen Verstand, nicht teuflisch, denn es war wohltätig, nicht englisch, denn es ließ oft Schadenfreude merken. Es glich dem Zufall, denn es bewies keine Folge, es ähnelte der Vorsehung, denn es deutete auf Zusammenhang. Alles was uns begrenzt schien für dasselbe durchdringbar, es schien mit den notwendigen Elementen unsres Daseins willkürlich zu schalten, es zog die Zeit zusammen und dehnte den Raum aus. Nur im Unmöglichen schien es sich zu gefallen und das Mögliche mit Verachtung von sich zu stoßen. Dieses Wesen, das zwischen alle übrigen hineinzutreten, sie zu sondern, sie zu verbinden schien, nannte ich dämonisch nach dem Beispiel der Alten und derer die etwas Ähnliches gewahrt hatten. Ich suchte mich vor diesem furchtbaren Wesen zu retten, indem ich mich, nach meiner Gewohnheit, hinter ein Bild flüchtete. (*FA* 1,14: 839–40)

In this passage, we can detect the double structure that I alluded to in the previous chapter in my discussion of a term used by Nicholas Boyle, namely, the concept of *anagnôrisis,* through which past events in the subject's life are reflected upon and re-cognized in terms that directly influence the present. Boyle's application of the notion of *anagnôrisis* to Goethe's works also echoes Benno von Wiese's contention that the daemonic is experienced by the young Goethe, and then consciously theo-

rized or meditated upon by the late Goethe.[2] When this double structure of experience and reflection is applied to the passage from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* quoted above, the following conclusions can be drawn.

First, the daemonic is something that can only be cognized in retrospect, and in this regard its function in the above passage is to enable a recognition of previous strivings, efforts, and desires.[3] Thus Goethe begins the passage by focusing on his youth. As I argued in chapter 3, youth is for Goethe the period in which the subject tries to negotiate, and eventually to overcome, the "Zwischenräume" that lie between the sensible and the "Übersinnliche." Just as in the philosophy of Plato, daemons are those intermediate beings that move between the material world and the realm of the forms, so in Goethe the first, un-theorized sense of the daemonic manifests itself in the subject's efforts to bridge the gap between the sensible and the "Übersinnliche." These efforts and strivings are, however, at least partially displaced in Goethe's thought, and in the epoch of European Romanticism generally, onto the plane of immanence. In this context, the subject does not so much wish to achieve knowledge of or communion with an external and transcendent deity or realm of forms; rather, it wishes to overcome the modern split or scission between the human sphere and the pantheistic All of God/Nature, either through the deployment of religious contemplation (whether this religion be natural or otherwise) or through other means — in Goethe's case means that are poetic (as is the case in "Mahomets Gesang"), erotic (as in *Werther*), or scientific (as in the project of the *Urpflanze* and the work on comparative anatomy). It is, however, in the very act of striving or longing that the subject encounters the phenomenon of the daemonic in its second sense: as a phenomenon that frustrates all attempts at universal synthesis by manifesting itself in contradictions that exceed rational explanations. Indeed, Goethe points out that the daemonic is fundamentally excessive in terms of both conceptual and linguistic representation.

In the remainder of the passage, Goethe begins to use terminology that points to an ambiguity in his presentation of the daemonic, and indeed in his thought *per se;* namely, the question as to whether the author subscribes to a pantheistic or a panentheistic understanding of existence. In this connection it is extremely significant that Goethe begins his discussion of the daemonic in the above passage by stating that he observed

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[2] Wiese, "Das Dämonische und seine Gegenkräfte in der Tragödie Goethes," in *Der deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel,* 81.

[3] In this connection, see Sprengel's discussion of this passage as a retrospective "Deutungsmuster" within the narrative of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*MA* 16:1073).

and uncovered its effects in nature. Goethe's use of the verb *entdecken* is suggestive of a completely immanent revelation in the sense of another German word, *Enthüllung,* which, unlike its brother-term (*Offenbarung,* also translated as revelation) retains a distinctly immanent resonance.[4] But just as we begin to approach an understanding of the daemonic as a phenomenon that is suggestive of immanence, Goethe introduces distinctly transcendent Platonic/Christian terminology into the equation, albeit by way of negation. The daemonic, we are told, is not "göttlich," nor is it "teuflisch," or "englisch." By the same token, however, it is also not "menschlich," it resembles "Vorsehung," and it feels at home only "im Unmöglichen." In essence, Goethe seems to suggest that the daemonic is neither immanent nor transcendent; rather, it tends to escape this kind of distinction, and indeed the confines of conceptual thought, altogether.

How might this passage be interpreted in relation to the philosophical systems with which Goethe grappled during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? The apparent location of the daemonic within nature, combined with the sense in which it suggests an excess in nature that surpasses human attempts to cognize it, brings to mind the early Schelling. In connection with Schelling's claim that nature — as the ground of the subject and therefore also of reason — is something that cannot be known or represented by the rational subject as a totality, we might recall Goethe's suggestion that the daemonic penetrates or surpasses "Alles, was uns begrenzt." In a Kantian context, the *Grenzen* of which Goethe speaks might be those *a priori* aspects of human cognition that allow us access only to representations or mediations of external objects, rather than to objects *an sich.*

In this connection, Rudolf Otto's approach to the daemonic in Goethe is worthy of consideration. In *Das Heilige,* Otto attempts to examine the non-rational aspects of religious experience in light of the author's contention that there exists a bias towards rationalization in orthodox Christianity. Of particular interest is the Kantian framework around which Otto erects his study of the holy. Pursuing a direct analogy with Kant's *a priori* categories of the understanding, Otto contends that the category of the numinous or holy is also an *a priori* condition of experience rather than a secondary effect of experience. The facts of numinous experience, according to Otto, point to a "verborgenen selbständigen Quell von Vorstellungs- und Gefühls-bindung, der

[4] See U. Dierse, W. Lohff, and G. Scholtz, "Offenbarung," in *HWP* 6:1105–30.

unabhängig von Sinneserfahrung im Gemüte selber liegt."[5] Otto goes on to propose that Goethe possessed "eine divinatorische Natur" that manifests itself most readily in his utterances on *das Dämonische* as they appear in Eckermann's *Gespräche* and in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.[6] Goethe's notion of the daemonic, according to Otto, displays many features that are normally associated with the religious category of the numinous, including: "das ganz Irrationale, durch Begriff Unerfaßliche, das Mysteriöse, und das fascinans, das tremendum, das energicum."[7]

Otto's approach to the daemonic is prefigured by the interpretation of the Socratic *daimonion* offered by Hamann in *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten,* since both thinkers propose that there exists within the subject an *a priori* predisposition towards non-rational experiences that, in the final analysis, can only be attributed to the divine manifesting itself within the human sphere. Accordingly, Otto compares Goethe's reaction to the daemonic with Job's revelation of the Elohim, in which Job completely renounces any attempt to understand or encompass the Divine's overwhelming power and mystery.[8]

Before assessing Otto's arguments, we can first of all weigh up the competing claims of Erich Trunz and Hans Blumenberg regarding this first passage on the daemonic in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. First, Trunz's claim that it is conclusive cannot be substantiated, while his assertion that it is detailed certainly can. From reading the passage, we definitely gain some idea about what the daemonic is not, but what it is still eludes us. Second, Blumenberg's suggestion that in our interpretation of the passage we should disregard the term daemonic and instead focus on the "ungelöste Rest" to which it apparently refers is also deficient, as ignorance of this term amounts to a failure to account for the classical heritage that underlies it, a heritage plainly present in Goethe's use the of term *dämonisch* "nach dem Beispiel der Alten."

Blumenberg's reading of Goethe's notion of the daemonic becomes more compelling, however, when we investigate it in light of Goethe's admission: "Ich suchte mich vor diesem furchtbaren Wesen zu retten, indem ich mich, nach meiner Gewohnheit, hinter ein Bild flüchtete." This admission is consistent with Blumenberg's notion that rhetorical or

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[5] Otto, *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen,* 11th ed. (1917; Stuttgart: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1923), 132.

[6] Otto, *Das Heilige,* 175.

[7] Otto, *Das Heilige,* 171.

[8] Otto, *Das Heilige,* 171–72.

mythic thinking — that is to say, the creation of *Bilder* or images — serves its purpose in precisely those situations where rational, conceptual thought becomes impotent: situations not unlike those encountered by Socrates when he takes counsel in the dissuasions of his divine sign or *daimonion*.

The philosophical anthropology that lies behind Blumenberg's theorizations of rhetoric and myth emerges directly from the tradition of Platonism. In this respect, the key essay by Blumenberg is "Anthropologische Annäherung an die Aktualität der Rhetorik" (translated as "An Anthropological Approach to the Contemporary Significance of Rhetoric").[9] One of the central aims of Blumenberg's essay is to reconsider the opposition between philosophy and rhetoric that originates in Plato's dialogues, particularly in the *Gorgias*. At 462d–465c of the *Gorgias,* Socrates compares rhetoric to cookery. Rhetorical speeches, he argues, aim to please and persuade audiences through flattery, regardless of the truth or lack thereof contained within them, just as cookery aims to create pleasant tastes regardless of the wholesomeness of the food being served. Socrates' analogy expresses the Platonic distinction between philosophy and rhetoric, in which philosophy (as the love of wisdom) functions as the desire for truth and knowledge of the forms, while rhetoric is merely a technique of persuasion with no essential relation to truth.

A thoroughgoing revision of this Platonic distinction between rhetoric and philosophy has been one of the central tasks undertaken by philosophical hermeneutics, and in this respect Blumenberg's main forerunner is Hans-Georg Gadamer. Following in the wake of Martin Heidegger's attempt to retrieve the primordial relationship between *logos* and speech,[10] and his contention that language constitutes the predominant modality through which the question of Being is opened,[11] Gadamer seeks to understand what he calls "die universelle Sprachlichkeit des menschlichen Weltverhaltens" through a reconsideration of the role played by rhetoric in philosophy.[12] Central to Gadamer's rehabilitation of

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[9] Blumenberg, "Anthropologische Annäherung an die Aktualität der Rhetorik," in *Wirklichkeiten, in denen wir leben: Aufsätze und eine Rede* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), 104–36.

[10] On this question, see Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit,* pt. 1, vol. 2 of *Gesamtausgabe,* ed. Friedrich Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), 43–46.

[11] See Heidegger, "Brief über den Humanismus," in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967), 145–94, particularly 145, 150, and 158.

[12] Gadamer, "Rhetorik, Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik," in *GGW* 2:232. For further discussions of rhetoric by Gadamer, see "Rhetorik und Hermeneutik," in

rhetoric is a section of Plato's *Phaedrus* in which Socrates offers a more positive evaluation of rhetoric than that offered in the *Gorgias*. At 260d of the *Phaedrus,* Socrates proposes that rhetoric is an essential component of philosophical dialectic, in that he who possesses the truth must be able to persuade others of his case through the deployment of appropriate language.[13] Rhetoric is thus, in the words of Gadamer, "nicht ablösbar von Dialektik" precisely because the acquisition of knowledge is dependent upon persuasion, especially in those cases where truths must be concretized in empirical actions.[14]

Blumenberg combines Gadamer's reevaluation of rhetoric with a philosophical anthropology based upon the concept of *Entsagung* or renunciation. The human being, according to Blumenberg, is a "Mängelwesen" or creature of deficiency.[15] Unlike other animals, who deal with reality in an instinctive way, the human individual is an "aus den Ordnungsleistungen der Natur zurückgefallenes Wesen," and therefore finds itself in a situation in which reflective and consensual action must take the place of instinctual behavior.[16] Here a tentative analogy with Schiller's *Über naïve and sentimentalische Dichtung* becomes possible. For Blumenberg, a naïve unity between humanity and nature was never possible; rather, collective reflection and deliberation must suffice for a species that has at least partially separated itself from the instinctive and natural.

It is necessary here to make a clear distinction between Blumenberg's theorization of rhetoric and that offered by Plato at 260d of the *Phaedrus*. While Plato's positive characterization of rhetoric is based upon the assumption that the dialectician who deploys rhetorical means is already in possession of the truth, Blumenberg, writing after the critical philosophy of Kant and the thought of Nietzsche, founds his philosophical anthropology upon the "Prinzip des unzureichenden Grundes,"[17] arguing that

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GGW 2:276–91, and "Hermeneutik als theoretische und praktische Aufgabe," in *GGW* 2:301–18.

[13] For Gadamer's interpretations of this passage from the *Gorgias,* see Gadamer, "Hermeneutik als theoretische und praktische Aufgabe," in *GGW* 2:301–18, and "Die Ausdruckskraft der Sprache: Zur Funktion der Rhetorik für die Erkenntnis," in *Jahrbuch der deutschen Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1979), 45–55.

[14] Gadamer, "Hermeneutik als theoretische und praktische Aufgabe," in *GGW* 2:308.

[15] Blumenberg, "Anthropologische Annäherung," 105.

[16] Blumenberg, "Anthropologische Annäherung," 108.

[17] Blumenberg, "Anthropologische Annäherung," 124.

humanity is situated irretrievably "außerhalb der Idealität."[18] Philosophy, according to Blumenberg, has not been able to escape the "Verzicht" (renunciation) that also characterizes rhetoric.[19] In a world in which both the Platonic forms and the truth "an sich" are inaccessible to human reason, action based upon persuasion and consensus is the only option, and in this sense rhetoric becomes "die letzte und verspätete Disziplin der Philosophie."[20] It would be wrong, however, to suggest that Blumenberg sees rhetoric as being superior to *logos* or dialectic. Rather, rhetoric and its associated means of persuasion — including narrative, myth, and metaphor — exist alongside *logos* as part of a collection of methods through which human beings represent and come to terms with their existential situation.

In *Arbeit am Mythos,* Blumenberg extends this philosophical anthropology into a specific discussion of myth. Myth-making, writes Blumenberg, is the activity through which "was durch den Namen identifizierbar geworden ist, wird aus seiner Unvertrautheit durch die Metapher herausgehoben, durch das Erzählen von Geschichten erschlossen in dem, was es mit ihm auf sich hat" (*BAM,* 12). Accordingly, Blumenberg sees Goethe's notion of the daemonic as a means through which the unnameable is named, thereby also being rendered slightly more familiar and slightly less frightening. What Goethe calls the daemonic, says Blumenberg,

> gehört der Kategorie des Mythischen an. Damit soll nicht mehr gesagt sein als dies, daß es unaufgelöste historische Potenz umgreift, nicht erklärt, vielleicht nur benennt. Das mag der Urteilsschwäche eines einzelnen Faszinierten anzulasten sein. Aber ein ganzes Jahrhundert analytischer und deskriptiver Auflösung des Phänomens durch die Historie, die Mythisches nicht dulden darf, läßt als Widerstand gegen den theoretischen Zugriff etwas von der Art übrig, was der Dichter zumindest benannt hat. Die Verblüffung Goethes angesichts eines vermeintlich Numinosen transformiert sich in die theoretische Enttäuschung, das Zentrum der Erscheinung, die Kraftquelle ihrer Dominanz, die Herkunft ihrer Energien und Imaginationen seien im Grunde unberührt, unaufgedeckt geblieben. (*BAM,* 559)

Does Blumenberg's analysis serve to substantiate the claim made by Walter Benjamin that Goethe's late conception of the daemonic reverts to the

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[18] Blumenberg, "Anthropologische Annäherung," 107.

[19] Blumenberg, "Anthropologische Annäherung," 112.

[20] Blumenberg, "Anthropologische Annäherung," 107.

canon of mythic thinking? The answer to this question must be a qualified yes. That is to say, Goethe's late conception of the daemonic does — particularly in the poem "Urworte. Orphisch" — invoke notions that can be traced back to classical myths, but this does not necessarily amount to a philosophical reversion or regression on his behalf. In fact it would be absurd to suggest that, after two decades in the late eighteenth century devoted to the development of his cognitive theories, via major digressions into the philosophical hinterlands occupied by both Kant and Schelling, Goethe suddenly decided, late in life, to adopt a literally mythic attitude toward existence. Rather, Goethe's late notion of the daemonic suggests that both poetry and myth can be deployed in a philosophical context, as for Goethe the task of the poet is precisely that of creating a *Bild* for that which cannot be rationally explained.[21]

In this regard, Goethe's attitude to myth approximates the role that Hans Blumenberg ascribes to mythic thinking in *Arbeit am Mythos.* That is to say, in those situations where rationality cannot serve us — and Kant does, after all, teach us that there are limits to reason — myth can operate as a kind of supplement. In these situations we do not assert the absolute or literal truth of mythic thinking; rather, we accept its metaphorical status, its ability at least to name the un-nameable, to substitute the familiar for the unfamiliar, and finally to rationalize anxiety into fear by providing it with an object (*BAM,* 11).

In light of Blumenberg's analysis, Rudolf Otto's suggestion that the daemonic in Goethe stems from an *a priori* source akin to Kant's pure concepts of the understanding or categories is correct only in a very limited sense. This is because Otto neglects to consider the extent to which *das Dämonische* in Goethe is an *effect* rather than a *condition* of empirical experience. When, for example, Goethe uses the term *dämonisch* in "Mächtiges Überraschen," he refers to the discontinuity between human ideas about nature and nature "an sich." This discontinuity can only become apparent when the subject confronts nature as a collection of empirical objects — it is effectively a "Rest" or excess in nature that escapes the confines of conceptual thought. The daemonic in Goethe is *a priori,* not in relation to a pure concept or category of the holy or numinous, but only in the sense that human rationality is limited by the modes of human cognition (as in Kant), and by the fact that reason is grounded in nature (as in Schelling).

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[21] On this question, see also Gerhard Schultz, "Chaos und Ordnung in Goethes Verständnis von Kunst und Geschichte," *Goethe Jahrbuch* 110 (1993): 173–83; here, 178–80.

Dichtung und Wahrheit II: *Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse*

It is also within the context of the mythic as it is outlined by Blumenberg that we can begin to approach the second statement on the daemonic to appear in part 4 (book 20) of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. The background to this passage lies in Goethe's discussion of Egmont,[22] the eponymous main character of a drama that he composed between 1775 and 1787.[23] In this connection, Erich Trunz draws attention to the entry in Goethe's diary on 4 April 1813 headed "Conception des Dämonischen und Egmonts" (*HA* 10:632). Trunz argues that on this day the section of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* that deals with the genesis of *Egmont* was conceived, alongside a renewed attempt to conceptualize the daemonic. The simultaneous appearance of *Egmont* and *das Dämonische* is, according to Trunz, no coincidence, since he sees the second passage on the daemonic in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* as an attempt to explain theoretically a phenomenon that Goethe had represented poetically in his play (*HA* 10:632).

Trunz's comments substantiate the theory that Goethe wrote about the daemonic in his youth, particularly in works like "Mahomets Gesang," *Werther,* and *Egmont,* while at the same time being unable — or at the very least unwilling — to engage in a theoretical account of it as a concept. Given that this second passage on the daemonic is written in a reflective mode that accounts for Goethe's activity in the mid 1770s — during the height of the *Sturm und Drang* period — it is no surprise that it actually presents to the reader a quasi-theoretical account of the aesthetics of genius that were examined in chapters 2, 3, and 4. In this connection, Goethe sees the daemonic as something that manifests itself in individuals, as well as in nature generally:

> Obgleich jenes Dämonische sich in allem Körperlichen und Unkörperlichen manifestieren kann, ja bei den Tieren sich aufs merkwürdigste ausspricht; so steht es vorzüglich mit dem Menschen

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[22] The following articles address the theme of the daemonic in *Egmont:* Wiese, "Das Dämonische und seine Gegenkräfte in der Tragödie Goethes," 84–99; Konrad Schaum, "Dämonie und Schicksal in Goethes *Egmont,*" *Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift* 10 (1960): 139–57; George A. Wells, "Egmont and *Das Dämonische,*" *German Life and Letters* 24 (1970–1971): 53–67; Aran van Dijk, "Das Dämonische als moderne Rezeptionskategorie: Dargestellt an Goethes *Egmont* und *Torquato Tasso,*" *Neophilologus* 83, no. 3 (1999): 427–43.

[23] For an account of the genesis of *Egmont,* see Boyle, *BGA* 1:356–61.

> im wunderbarsten Zusammenhang und bildet eine der moralischen Weltordnung wo nicht entgegengesetzte, doch sie durchkreuzende Macht, so daß man die eine für den Zettel, die andere für den Einschlag könnte gelten lassen. . . . Am furchtbarsten aber erscheint dieses Dämonische, wenn es in irgend einem Menschen überwiegend hervortritt. Während meines Lebensganges habe ich mehrere teils in der Nähe, teils in der Ferne beobachten können. Es sind nicht immer die vorzüglichsten Menschen, weder an Geist noch an Talenten, selten durch Herzensgüte sich empfehlend; aber eine ungeheure Kraft geht von ihnen aus, und sie üben eine unglaubliche Gewalt über alle Geschöpfe, ja sogar über die Elemente, und wer kann sagen wie weit sich eine solche Wirkung erstrecken wird? Alle vereinten sittlichen Kräfte vermögen nichts gegen sie; vergebens, daß der hellere Teil der Menschen sie als Betrogene oder als Betrüger verdächtig machen will, die Masse wird von ihnen angezogen. Selten oder nie finden sich Gleichzeitige ihres Gleichen, und sie sind durch nichts zu überwinden als durch das Universum selbst, mit dem sie den Kampf begonnen; und aus solchen Bemerkungen mag wohl jener sonderbare aber ungeheure Spruch enstanden sein, nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse. (*FA* 1,14:841–42)

Goethe's initial contention that the daemonic presents itself "aufs merkwürdigste" through the behavior of animals might best be interpreted in relation to the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling. In this context, Goethe appears to suggest that the daemonic is a force or phenomenon that can be found in nature as a whole, and not just within the human sphere. Connected with this link between the daemonic and the animal kingdom is the sense in which daemonic phenomena, when manifested in the human sphere, often stand in opposition to, or at the very least in a kind of ambivalent discord with, "der moralischen Weltordnung." Again, the suggestion here appears to be that insofar as the daemonic is common to both humans and animals, daemonic phenomena might point to the underlying ground upon which humans and animals may be united: nature.

Nature, according to Walter Benjamin, often displays an *unfaßbare Zweideutigkeit,* and it is within this context that we can begin to approach the way in which Goethe understands the daemonic to operate within the human sphere. He begins this discussion by observing that the daemonic is "am furchtbarsten" when manifested within humans. Such daemonic humans are, says Goethe, characterized by an "ungeheure Kraft" that opposes itself to the moral world order, and that has the capacity to intoxicate the masses. Here Goethe appears to be referring to the daemonic in its first or early sense: as an indwelling energy or power not unlike that found in individuals of genius. Finally, he asserts that neither the moral world order nor the masses, but only the universe itself can

overcome such daemonic beings, as it is ultimately the universe in its totality that they seek to oppose. This, he says, is the underlying meaning of the simultaneously powerful and dreadful saying ("ungeheuere Spruch"): *nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse,* meaning, "No one (can stand) against God unless it is God himself."

As I suggested earlier, our way into the meaning of this passage is through a reconsideration of the aesthetics of genius that characterized the period of the *Sturm und Drang.* In this context, we need to recall the way in which both Herder and Goethe understood the genius to stand in a close relationship with the indwelling *Kräfte* of nature. The genius, says Herder, is "rasend, reißt alles nieder, und schreckt Gelehrte und Ungelehrte" (*HW* 1:411), while for the early Goethe, the genius is a "Halbgott" who must be "unbekümmert" with anything extraneous to his own creative projects (*FA* 1,18:116–17).

Seen within this context, the daemonic individuals discussed in the above section of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* are also energetic, sometimes destructive, and — like daemonic animals — natural. But by April 1813, Goethe had also learnt, through the composition of *Werther,* through his philosophical encounters with both Kant and Schelling, and through his forays into science, that while the genius or daemonic individual may in some ways resemble nature, he can neither overcome nature nor create a second nature. That is to say, the genius — who is, at the same time, the poet, the philosopher, the scientist, and perhaps even the politician — cannot defeat the powers of nature or the powers of the universe with powers of his own. To attempt to do so would be to assume that one is a god, or that one is a windowless monad that is impervious to external obstructions and restrictions.

Thus, as Hans Blumenberg comments, Goethe may have interpreted the saying *nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse* in relation to the "Prometheus-Programm" of the *Sturm und Drang* period. This program decreed "daß man ein Gott sein *müsse,* als Genie aber auch sein *könne,* um den eigenen Weltwillen durchzusetzen, als gäbe es noch keine Welt, die den Künstler unter die Bedingungen ihrer 'Realität' stellte" (*BAM,* 597). Blumenberg argues that Goethe reverses this Prometheus program in his later life. He who would be a God, according to the later Goethe of *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* invites the universe to oppose and destroy the "zum Gott sich reckenden Dämon" (*BAM,* 597). Here Blumenberg's comments demonstrate, once again, the way in which the first and second senses of the term daemonic interact with one another. Daemonic individuals — that is to say, those individuals who strive to overstep the limits of human endeavor as they are circumscribed by God/Nature — invite daemonic consequences, through which the striving individual is obstructed through means that are beyond his rational comprehension.

The question as to the origin and meaning of the saying *nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse* has produced a wealth of speculation that cannot be discussed here.[24] It is, however, necessary to consider the possible religious context of the saying. Is this god or universe that opposes the daemonic individual the pantheistic god of Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura*? Or can we interpret the saying *nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse* within the context of a polytheism similar to that found in the Greco-Roman pantheon? According to Eduard Spranger, a Spinozist interpretation of the saying would lead to the following proposition: if all substance that exists within the world is ultimately reducible to god, then that which opposes god is itself necessarily a manifestation of god. Thus, the statement must mean that the only thing that can oppose god is part of god itself, or, as Spranger puts it: "die dämonischen Naturen sind aus dem göttlichen Universum geboren, stellen sich ihm selbstmächtig entgegen und werden von ihm wieder ruiniert."[25] By contrast, Hans Blumenberg complicates Spranger's position by arguing that the saying is simultaneously suggestive of both a neo-Spinozist pantheism and a pagan polytheism. It is, argues Blumenberg, a mythic "Grenzvorstellung" with a structure that is not susceptible of any interpretation that could exist within strictly theoretical confines like those suggested by terms like monotheism, pantheism, or polytheism. On the contrary, such a limiting idea may only suggest that some higher principle or power — perhaps the universe or God/Nature — will ultimately always obstruct, disrupt, and limit the strivings of any human who wishes to be a god (*BAM,* 569).

"Urworte. Orphisch" and the Figure of Socrates

On 31 March 1818, Goethe wrote the following to his son August:

> Das nächste Mal daß wir zusammen kommen muß ich dir noch einen Begriff vom Dämonischen geben, dann bedarf es nichts weiter. Eine Reihe orphischer Urworte die du nächstens in Stanzen aufgeklärt erhalten wirst sind nur Zugabe und Umschreibungen. (*FA* 2,8:186)

Goethe is of course referring to "Urworte. Orphisch," a poem written between 6 and 8 October 1817, first published in the volume *Zur Mor-*

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[24] In *Goethe: Seine geistige Welt* (Tübingen: Hermann Leins, 1967), Eduard Spranger speculates at some length on the question of where Goethe first encountered the saying, only to conclude that its origin cannot be clarified. For Spranger's speculations on the origin of the saying, see pages 416–19.

[25] Spranger, *Goethe: Seine geistige Welt,* 417.

phologie in 1820, and then later republished in the same year, along with Goethe's own interpretation of the text, in *Über Kunst und Altertum*.[26] It is necessary here to delve briefly into the detailed and complex background to the poem, since this background bears directly upon Walter Benjamin's contention that Goethe, faced with the incomprehensible ambivalence of the daemonic, reverts in "Urworte. Orphisch" to a belief in "die Astrologie als den Kanon des mythischen Denkens." The formulation that Goethe uses in his letter to August — "in Stanzen aufgeklärt" — may suggest that Benjamin's assessment of Goethe's relationship to myth requires some further clarification.

In his extensive and learned study on "Urworte. Orphisch," Theo Buck writes that this poem was informed by an academic debate concerning the interpretation of Orphic myths.[27] The two parties involved were Johann Gottfried Jakob Hermann (1772–1848), professor of classical philology at Leipzig, and the Heidelberg philologist Georg Friedrich Creuzer (1771–1858), author of *Symbolik and Mythologie der alten Völker* (Symbolism and Mythology of the Ancient Peoples, 1810–12). Hermann's approach to Orphic texts, an approach similar to Goethe's own, was to consider them as early examples of poetic and symbolic representation. Creuzer, on the other hand, a figure influenced by the Heidelberg Romanticism favoured by Joseph Görres (1776–1848), was more inclined to take a mystical-allegorical approach, which was later dismissed by Goethe as a species of "Überdeuteley" (*WA* 1,53:428). The final product of this dispute was the published correspondence of Hermann and Creuzer, entitled *Briefe über Homer und Hesiodus vorzüglich über die Theogenie* (Letters about Homer and Hesiod, Particularly in Relation to Theogony, 1817). This volume was sent to Goethe by Creuzer in September 1817, and entries in Goethe's *Tagebuch* reveal that its contents preoccupied him during the week from 26 September to 3 October 1817.[28] A further source of inspiration was later provided by the *Abhandlungen* of a Danish archaeologist named Georg Zöega (1755–1809), which were published in German by the Göttingen professor Friedrich

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[26] It is the text of the second version of "Urworte. Orphisch," published in *Über Kunst und Altertum,* that will be used in the analysis that follows.

[27] Theo Buck, *Goethes "Urworte. Orphisch"* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 21–29.

[28] See, in particular, the entries dated 26 and 27 September and 1, 2, and 3 October 1817. Goethe, *Tagebücher,* ed. Gerhart Baumann, 3 vols., vol. 2, *1811–1823* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1957), 455, 457–58.

Gottlieb Welcker.[29] It was in this text that Goethe came across a reference to the ancient belief that at the birth of the individual, the four gods *Daimon* (Dämon), *Tyche* (das Zufällige), *Eros* (Liebe), and *Ananke* (Nötigung) are in attendance.[30] The fifth God or "Urwort" used in Goethe's poem — *Elpis* (Hoffnung) — was probably provided by Zöega's own elaborations on the Orphic tradition.[31]

In his explanation of the poem that appears in *Über Kunst und Altertum,* Goethe observes of its mythic-philosophical origins: "Was nun von älteren und neueren orphischen Lehren überliefert worden, hat man hier zusammenzudrängen, poetisch, compendios, lakonisch vorzutragen gesucht" (*FA* 1,20:492). The apparent laconic presentation of the poem and its meaning offered here by Goethe demonstrate his personal distance from any literal belief in the mythic *Weltanschauung* presented in "Urworte. Orphisch," particularly in its first section, entitled "Dämon":

Δαιμων, Dämon

Wie an dem Tag der Dich der Welt verliehen
Die Sonne stand zum Gruße der Planeten,
Bist alsobald und fort und fort gediehen
Nach dem Gesetz wonach Du angetreten.
So mußt Du seyn, Dir kannst Du nicht entfliehen,
So sagten schon Sybillen, so Propheten,
Und keine Zeit und keine Macht zerstückelt
Geprägte Form die lebend sich entwickelt.

(*FA* 1,20:492)

It is no coincidence that Goethe first published "Urworte. Orphisch" in the volume *Zur Morphologie,* as the section of the poem entitled "Dämon" offers a neat summary of the Aristotelian-Leibnizian teleology that underlies much of Goethe's morphological research. In chapter 4 of this study we saw how the Leibnizian monadic subject was exposed to a profound critique in the character of *Werther*. In relation to this monadic subject, Walter F. Veit observes that it is natural for every monad to strive for fulfillment and self-expression. This also means, however, that the monad is only happy in a state of fulfillment, and any monad that is

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[29] Georg Zöega, *Abhandlungen,* ed. Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1817).

[30] Goethes *Tagebuch* notes on 7 October 1817, "Zöega's Abhandlungen mit Welckers Noten. Orphische Begriffe" (Goethe, *Tagebücher,* 2:459).

[31] On this issue, see Walter Dietze, "Urworte, nicht sonderlich orphisch," in *Goethe Jahrbuch* 94 (1977): 11–37, particularly 25–26.

hindered in its self-realization dwells in a state of un-fulfillment in which its essence has been denied: a state of sorrow and of possible destruction.[32] According to the cosmology of Leibniz, the monad is akin to Aristotle's notion of the entelechy. The monad or entelechy (Leibniz himself says that these terms are interchangeable),[33] is related to the soul of the organism: the principle that animates its development or *Bildung,* and that determines its characteristics from birth until death. In this context, *Werther* demonstrated the highly individualistic sense in which the *Sturm und Drang* Goethe interpreted the philosophy of Leibniz. In Werther's case, the monad is only happy in a limitless state of *Vollendung* that refuses to take into account the autonomous existence of both external objects and external subjects.

In "Urworte. Orphisch," by contrast, we gain a sense of boundaries, limits, and laws that are divinely decreed and determined. We might recall, in this connection, Leibniz's comment that monads originate "through continual fulgurations of the divinity from moment to moment."[34] Rather than following literally Leibniz's suggestion regarding the divine origin of the monad, the late Goethe prefers to interpret this aspect of the monad or entelechy within a mythic context, by invoking what Walter Benjamin has called "die Astrologie als den Kanon des mythischen Denkens."

The invocation of astrological symbols is not particularly unusual within Goethe's oeuvre. A glance, for example, at the opening passages of *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* in which Goethe outlines the propitious arrangement of the planets during the hour of his birth, demonstrates the extent to which he was influenced by astrological thinking. This influence, however, manifested itself not so much in terms of mysticism or superstition but rather in terms of symbolism. As Erich Trunz observes, Goethe was not an astrologer, and he made many clear remarks to this effect (*HA* 9:635).[35] Thus, when Goethe refers to the daemon in "Urworte. Orphisch" as the "Gesetz, wonach du angetreten," and as the "geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt," he has in mind not divine predestination as it appears in the canon of Greco-Roman astrology but the decid-

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[32] Walter F. Veit, "Selbstverwirklichung, Entsagung und der Orient," in *Westöstlicher und Nordsüdlicher Divan: Goethe in interkultureller Perspektive,* ed. Ortrud Gutjahr (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000), 89–108; here, 104.

[33] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Monadology,* trans. Nicholas Rescher (Pittsburgh, PA: U of Pittsburgh P, 1991), § 18, 87.

[34] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Monadoloy,* § 47, 162.

[35] See, for example, Goethe's comments on astrology in his letters to Schiller dated 5 and 8 December 1798 (*FA* 2,4:618–21).

edly more secular Aristotelian entelechy or Leibnizian monad. Goethe in fact clarifies the meaning of the daemon in the following remarks: "Der Dämon bedeutet hier die nothwendige, bey der Geburt unmittelbar ausgesprochene, begränzte Individualität der Person. . . . Hiervon sollte nun auch das künftige Schicksal des Menschen ausgehen" (*FA* 1,20:492).

If we are to interpret this section of the poem while keeping in mind the context in which it was first published — that is to say, within the greater scope of Goethe's work on morphology — then it becomes clear that its meaning is more pantheistic than astrological in its orientation. As we saw in chapter 5, morphology is, for Goethe, the study of *Gestalt* and *Verwandlung* in both inorganic and organic objects (*LA* 10:128). Seen in this light, Goethe's references to astrological thinking can only be metaphorical and symbolic rather than literal. The daemon in this poem is the law allotted to the individual, not by the gods and the planets, but by God/Nature.

It is in relation to the subject's position within nature that Goethe's formulation in his letter to August — "in Stanzen aufgeklärt" — can be examined, and here it is also necessary to reconsider Walter Benjamin's view that Goethe reverted to mythic thinking in "Urworte. Orphisch." In an essay entitled "Zum Klassizismus von Goethes Iphigenie" (translated as "On the Classicism of Goethe's Iphigenie"), Theodor W. Adorno argues that the mythic manifests itself in the totality of Goethe's works as a kind of "gegenwärtige Vorwelt" (*AGS* 11:495). This mode of mythic thinking does not, according to Adorno, refer to something "Überzeitliches oder Transzendentes," but rather to the subject's "Verstricktheit in Natur." "Blinde, naturwüchsige Verhältnisse," writes Adorno, "überdauern auch in der Gesellschaft des aufgeklärten Zeitalters" and it is in this belated and secularized form that they persist in Goethe's works. Goethe's invocations of a mythic tradition do not, therefore, amount to a literal belief in myth; rather they constitute at attempt to symbolize and come to terms with the non-rational component of human experience (*AGS* 11:495–97). The fact that Goethe was troubled by the non-rational and the mythic, and therefore sought to enlighten and clarify what he termed the "die orphischen Finsternisse,"[36] is revealed in a comment written to Creuzer on 1 October 1817: "Sie haben mich genötigt in eine Region hineinzuschauen, vor der ich mich sonst ängstlich zu hüten pflege" (*FA* 2,8:143).

Notwithstanding Adorno's analysis of the status of myth in Goethe's works, recent criticism has questioned to what extent "Urworte. Orphisch" is in fact enlightened. In her recent essay on "Urworte. Or-

[36] Goethe to Knebel, 9 October 1817, in *WA* 4,28:272.

phisch," Erika Swales alerts readers to what she perceives to be the "inherent dangers of the Daimon concept."[37] These dangers consist in the connections drawn by Goethe between the biological *Gesetz* associated with the concept of *Dämon* and the characteristics of nations and tribes, including the Germans, the French, and the English, not to mention "die Judenschaft" (*FA* 1,20:493). Even more troublingly, Goethe also observes that *Tyche* ("das Zufällige") can only influence the fate of the predetermined individual in cases of inter-ethnic "Vermischung" or interbreeding (*FA* 1,20:493).

What are we to make of such comments? As Theo Buck shows, these troubling aspects of "Urworte. Orphisch" led to some highly questionable interpretations of the poem before, during, and even after the period of National Socialism in Germany.[38] The ambivalent political implications of the daemonic in Goethe's works will be further explored in chapter 8. For now it is necessary to note that Goethe does not, in his commentary on "Urworte. Orphisch," express any opposition to or disapproval of interethnic "Vermischung," and his interest in the history and characteristics of nations and tribes has a more or less contemporaneous source in Herder's philosophical anthropology. When these factors are taken into account, it becomes clear that to read a National Socialist ideology back into "Urworte. Orphisch" would, as Swales herself acknowledges, be to a certain degree an oversimplification. Does, however, the presence of the theory of morphology in the first section of the poem amount to total biological determinism? When we read this first section of "Urworte. Orphisch" in conjunction with the poem's other parts, the answer to this question must be no. As Walter Dietze notes, Goethe's notion of the *Dämon* must be distinguished from the windowless Leibnizian monad, in that it embodies the relationship between self and world.[39] Thus, while Goethe does see the *Dämon* as a *Gesetz* governing an individual's existence, this existence can also be worked upon and adjusted by the four other formative principles discussed in the poem: *das Zufällige, Liebe, Nötigung,* and *Hoffnung*.

Das Zufällige can, according to Goethe, manifest itself within the upbringing of the individual, through the influence of parents, teachers, and guardians, or through local environmental factors (*FA* 1,20:493). *Liebe,*

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[37] Erika Swales, "Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'Urworte. Orphisch,'" in *Landmarks in German Poetry,* ed. Peter Hutchinson (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000), 57–71, particularly 70.

[38] See Buck, *Goethes "Urworte. Orphisch,"* 62–64.

[39] Walter Dietze, "Urworte, nicht sonderlich orphisch," *Goethe Jahrbuch* 94 (1977): 11–37; here, 22.

on the other hand, is often the means through which the daemon and *das Zufällige* are conjoined: "hier verbinden sich der individuelle Dämon und die verführende Tyche mit einander," says Goethe (*FA* 1,20:494). But love also presents the individual with a degree of choice in life, as through the experience of love he discovers that "er nicht allein durch Natur bestimmt und gestempelt sey; jetzt wird er in seinem Innern gewahr daß er sich selbst bestimmen könne" (*FA* 1,20:495). Finally, while *Nötigung* serves to bring the capacity for self-determination within strict limits determined by divine powers or "die Sterne," *Hoffnung* announces the possibility of a complete release from earthly necessity, through metaphysical salvation.

Of greater interest for our present purposes is the comment that Goethe makes, in his explanation of "Urworte. Orphisch," with regard to the daemon of Socrates. While *das Zufällige* may, according to Goethe, wax and wane throughout the life of the individual, the daemon nevertheless "hält sich alles durch" as the "eigentliche Natur" of the individual (*FA* 1,20:494). Goethe then elaborates upon this notion with reference to Socrates, observing that "in diesem Sinne einer nothwendig aufgestellten Individualität hat man einem jeden Menschen seinen Dämon zugeschrieben, der ihm gelegentlich ins Ohr raunt was denn eigentlich zu thun sey, und so wählte Sokrates den Giftbecher, weil ihm ziemte zu sterben" (*FA* 1,20:494).

This passage presents us with a number of difficulties, in that it complicates the initial supposition that the daemon is akin to the Aristotelian entelechy or the Leibnizian monad. While the daemon was initially represented by Goethe in terms of a "geprägte Form" (minted, stamped, or pressed form), which determines the development of the individual, the above passage indicates that, at least in the case of Socrates, the daemon (or perhaps Goethe means Socrates' *daimonion* or divine voice) is something that endows the individual with a sense of freedom from determination, and that enables the individual to make not just personal but also political choices or choices of conscience, at certain crucial moments.

Goethe would of course have been aware that Socrates' decision, represented in the *Phaedo,* to cooperate with the death sentence served upon him by the state of Athens was, in the highest sense, a political act and perhaps also an act of freedom. But it is also worth noting that this decision is not, at least according to the events presented in the *Phaedo,* connected with any advice conferred on Socrates by any daemon, nor by his *daimonion* or divine voice. We cannot know whether Goethe's contention that Socrates drank the poison on the advice of a daemon or his *daimonion* is simply a misunderstanding or the use of creative license. We do, however, have access to Socrates' discussion of the daemon or tutelary

genius allotted to each individual in the following passage from the *Phaedo*. When an individual dies, says Socrates at 107d,

> his own daimon,[40] which was given charge over him in his life, tries to bring him to a certain place where all must assemble, and from which, after submitting their several cases to judgment, they must set out for the next world, under the guidance of one who has the office of escorting souls from this world to the other. (*PCD,* 89)

We must, when considering Plato's texts, take care to distinguish the general sense of the daemon, personal genius, or tutelary spirit used here from the more specific instances of the *daimonion* or divine voice of Socrates. While the daemon in Plato is, in the broadest sense, a kind of intermediary that operates within the gulf between the secular and the divine,[41] the *daimonion* of Socrates performs the very limited function of dissuading Socrates from certain courses of action.[42] What, then, does Goethe mean when he refers to the daemon of Socrates in his explanation of "Urworte. Orphisch"? Is he suggesting that Socrates is compelled by his own entelechy or indwelling fate to drink the hemlock provided to him by the state of Athens? Or is he, by contrast, drawing attention to the fact that Socrates chose freely and rationally to make this decision — a decision that in fact confirms for the reader Socrates' belief in the immortality of the soul, a belief outlined at some length by Socrates in the earlier stages of the *Phaedo*?

The latter of these two alternatives appears to be correct. Although Goethe calls the voice that whispers to Socrates his daemon, he is clearly referring to Socrates' *daimonion:* the voice or sign that dissuades Socrates from certain courses of action, and a voice that Goethe encountered in his reading of Hamann's *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten*. But if this is the case, we have a further problem. According to Gregory Vlastos, the *daimonion* never actually tells Socrates that he should perform any specific action.[43] In fact, it only ever suggests to Socrates which actions he should not perform — most notably in its suggestion (at 31c of *The Apology*) that Socrates

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[40] The translation by Hugh Treddenick used above translates *δαιμων* as "guardian spirit." I have altered Tredennick's translation by using the English equivalent of the original Greek term, "daimon."

[41] As is suggested by Diotima's discussion of the daemon in the *Symposium* at 202e–203a.

[42] See, for example, the function of the *daimonion* in the *Phaedrus* at 242b–c, and in *The Apology* at 31c–32a.

[43] Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1991), 282–83.

should not become actively involved in Athenian politics. If, then, Goethe intends to suggest that Socrates chose to die on the counsel of his *daimonion,* we should, notwithstanding the inaccuracy of this suggestion, seek to uncover its meaning. What, in other words, do Goethe's notion of the daemonic, and the dissuasions of Socrates' *daimonion* have in common?

I submit here that both are expressive of the negativity and incompleteness of all theory or epistemology. In chapter 1 of this study, I entered into an examination of Socrates' famous statement, made at 21d in *The Apology,* that his wisdom consists in his acknowledgement that he knows nothing. The truth of this statement lies, for Socrates, in his belief that all earthly or human knowledge must always be limited and incomplete, in comparison with the absolute perfection and unity of the forms. In fact it is Socrates' acknowledgement of his own ignorance that leads him to discover his own philosophical vocation: the role of elenchus or critique, through which he endeavors to refute claims to absolute wisdom made by others. In the opinion of Socrates, any claim to absolute wisdom is at the same time a hubristic claim to divinity, and in this regard he too may have subscribed to the saying *nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse.*

Socrates' admission of ignorance is made within the context of Plato's cosmology. Since the world that Socrates inhabits is mortal, secondary, and derivative, in comparison with the divine realm of Plato's forms, so too is his knowledge always less than complete. Indeed, on those occasions when Socrates appears to be completely correct about a given topic — as is the case at 242c in the *Phaedrus,* when he asserts that non-lovers are preferable to lovers — his *daimonion* or divine voice dissuades him from making an absolute conclusion to this effect, thereby exhorting him to question his own arguments and to begin his deliberations anew.

I do not wish to suggest that Goethe's later notion of the daemonic can in any way be equated with the intuition of the *daimonion* experienced by the Platonic Socrates, nor do I wish to claim that Goethe was in any way completely conscious of any similarity between his own world-view and that of the Platonic Socrates. Goethe's *Weltfrömmigkeit* is, especially when we take into account its secular and pantheist tendencies, far closer to the *Weltanschauungen* of Aristotle, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Schelling than it is to the grand metaphysical cosmology of Plato. Nevertheless Goethe was, in a similar way to Plato's Socrates, led to an intuition of the ultimate negativity or incompleteness of all exclusively rational epistemology, by virtue of his later acquaintance with the daemonic as both an "Unfaßbare Naturzweideutigkeit" (Benjamin), and as the "ungelöste Rest" (Blumenberg) of his experience. Thus, while the *Sturm und Drang* Goethe may have believed that there could be a complete continuity or confluence between the strivings of the monadic subject and the objects of nature, the later Goethe was led to recognize an epistemological abyss

between subject and object. Through his failed attempts to synthesize his internally generated scientific theories with external phenomena, accompanied by his willingness to accommodate the critical aspect of Kant's philosophy and his ultimate acceptance of Schelling's assertion that reason can never fully theorize nature while at the same time existing within nature, Goethe was led to an intuition of the limits of human knowledge: limits to which the elenctic methods of Plato's Socrates also draw attention.

Here Hans-Georg Gadamer's contention that Goethe displays a deep connection with ancient Greek philosophy, and especially with the Platonic Socrates, is worth noting. In the essay "Goethe und die Philosophie," Gadamer compares Goethe's relationship with the philosophy of his age — in particular, his relationship with German idealism — to Socrates' relationship with the Sophists. Just as, according to Gadamer, Socrates tested the philosophical abstractions of the Sophists through the deployment of his dialectical methods, so too did Goethe test the theories or "Lebensformen" of German idealism, not through dialectical argumentation, but in terms of their ability to account for the infinite particularities of sensuous reality. As we have seen in chapter 6, Schelling failed to convince Goethe of his capacity to achieve what Gadamer calls an "Übereinstimmung" between matter and thought, and between "Leben" and "Lehre" (*GGW* 9:69–70). Likewise, the "ungelöste Rest" of Goethe's own attempts to conjoin theory with nature is the aspect of his experience that he named daemonic after the example of the ancients, thereby consigning that which resists the explanatory efforts of theory to the realm of the mythic. This act of consignment is, at the same time, an act of *Entsagung* or renunciation, in that it acknowledges limits beyond which exclusively rational human knowledge cannot pass.

8: Eckermann, or the Daemonic and the Political

In Johann Peter Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens* (1835), Goethe elaborates upon his notion of the daemonic in a series of conversations, the dates of which range from 1829 right up to June 1831, less than one year before his death. The breadth and variety of these statements is simply too great to be encompassed within the confines of the present study. Hans Blumenberg observes, in relation to Goethe's use of the notion of the daemonic during the latter stages of his life, that by this time the godlike or the divine was no longer seen by Goethe as being exceptional. Thus everything that Goethe sees as being superhuman and everything that possesses "die Qualität der 'Unerreichbarkeit'" is categorized as *dämonisch* (*BAM,* 520).

Previous attempts to encompass the notion of the daemonic in Goethe's works have often expended enormous energy on his ruminations on the subject found in Eckermann's *Gespräche,* only to conclude (unsurprisingly) that the concept is not unified,[1] or that Goethe's use of the term borders upon the burlesque.[2] At the same time, however, Blumenberg's assessment is not entirely correct, since many of Goethe's utterances on the daemonic in Eckermann's *Gespräche* are made in earnest and within a specific philosophical context. Indeed, some of them suggest to the reader that the daemonic is a kind of mysterious higher power in the Neo-Platonic mold, a power that, especially in the case of Napoleon — a figure about whom Goethe was not inclined to speak lightly — has the capacity to shape history. We will turn to the question of Goethe's fascination with Napoleon as a daemonic individual shortly.

In chapter 3 we saw that Goethe contends, in his conversation with Eckermann dated 11 March 1828, that all artistic creativity can be associated with a divine or godlike influence that exists beyond all earthly power, and that he sees as being related to the daemonic (*FA* 2,12:657).

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[1] Hans Joachim Schrimpf, *Das Weltbild des späten Goethe* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1956), 303.

[2] Wiese, "Das Dämonische und seine Gegenkräfte in der Tragödie Goethes," in *Der deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel,* 83.

From this passage, I concluded that even by 1828 Goethe had been unable to dismiss transcendent explanations for so-called daemonic phenomena. In this connection it is useful to recall Goethe's abiding attraction toward the philosophy of Hamann, who, as I argued in chapter 2, maintains in his *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* that the *daimonion* or divine voice of Socrates is a transcendent mystery that cannot be resolved through rational explanations. Likewise, as late as 1800, Goethe's erstwhile mentor — Johann Gottfried Herder — still maintains in his *Kalligone* a belief in the daimon or divine spirit as it is manifested in both Neo-Platonism and Stoicism, albeit within a more secular *Weltanschauung* than that adopted by Hamann (*HW* 8:835).

Did Goethe, even after his attempts to overcome the narcissistic model of subjectivity found in *Werther,* still subscribe to this essentially *Sturm und Drang* conception of the daemonic genius in the late 1820s and the early 1830s? And how seriously should we take his comments to Eckermann on the subject of the daemonic? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to examine some of the statements that Goethe made to Eckermann on the subject of Napoleon, as Napoleon was, according to Goethe, the model of the historical genius, the "höchste Erscheinung, die in der Geschichte möglich war."[3]

The Genius of History: Eckermann, Goethe, and Napoleon

On 6 December 1829, Eckermann reports the following remarks made by Goethe concerning Napoleon:

> Wenn man alt ist, sagte er, denkt man über die weltlichen Dinge anders als da man jung war. So kann ich mich des Gedankens nicht erwehren, daß die Dämonen, um die Menschheit zu necken und zum Besten zu haben, mitunter einzelne Figuren hinstellen, die so anlockend sind, daß jeder nach ihnen strebt, und so groß, daß niemand sie erreicht. So stellten sie den *Raphael* hin, bei dem Denken und Tun gleich vollkommen war; einzelne treffliche Nachkommen haben sich ihm genähert, aber erreicht hat ihn niemand. So stellten sie den *Mozart* hin, als etwas Unerreichbares in der Musik. Und so in der Poesie *Shakspeare.* Ich weiß was Sie mir gegen diesen sagen können, aber ich meine nur das Naturell, das große Angeborene der Natur. So steht *Napoleon* unerreichbar da. Daß die Russen sich gemäßigt haben und nicht nach Constantinopel

[3] Goethe to Knebel, Weimar, 3 January 1807, in *FA* 2,6:165.

> hineingegangen sind, ist zwar sehr groß, aber auch ein solcher Zug findet sich in Napoleon, denn auch er hat sich gemäßigt und ist nicht nach Rom gegangen. (*FA* 2,12:364)

Here Napoleon is initially characterized as daemonic in that he possesses the natural, indwelling *Kräfte* associated by Herder and Goethe with the concept of genius. He is thus placed within a category of geniuses to which Raphael, Mozart and Shakespeare also belong. The powers and capabilities of such geniuses are, according to Goethe, unattainable precisely because they are granted to the individual by the incalculable powers of God/Nature and cannot be achieved through the deployment of reason. In this instance Napoleon is seen as being daemonic in Goethe's early, *Sturm und Drang* sense of the term. He is the Promethean individual who, by virtue of a great natural, non-rational force, can be like a god. But later in the passage — in the sentence where Goethe discusses Napoleon's decision not to go to Rome — he opines that part of Napoleon's greatness also lies in his sense of self-moderation, his sense of limits. Here we find a duality in Goethe's notion of the daemonic as it is applied to Napoleon. While on the one hand the daemonic is associated with the natural powers of genius, on the other hand it also educates us as to the limits that such individuals may place upon themselves when they are confronted by an apparently incalculable universal order. Here we should note that Goethe uses the reflexive construction "sich mäßigen" in his description of Napoleon, thereby implying that the limits with which he is confronted are, at least to some degree, self-imposed.

This latter sense of the daemonic as a limiting or hindering factor comes through in an earlier remark made by Goethe to Eckermann on the subject of Napoleon, a remark that also appears in the lengthy deliberation on the daemonic dated 11 March 1828. Earlier in that conversation, Goethe outlines his essentially Aristotelian/Leibnizian view — also apparent in "Urworte. Orphisch" — that the productivity or genius of a particular individual is directly related to the strength of his or her indwelling soul or entelechy:

> Ist diese Entelechie geringer Art, so wird sie während ihrer körperlichen Verdüsterung wenig Herrschaft ausüben, vielmehr wird der Körper vorherrschen, und wie er altert, wird sie ihn nicht halten und hindern. Ist aber die Entelechie mächtiger Art, wie es bei allen genialen Naturen der Fall ist, so wird sie, bei ihrer belebenden Durchdringung des Körpers, nicht allein auf dessen Organisation kräftigend und veredelnd einwirken, sondern sie wird auch, bei ihrer geistigen Übermacht, ihr Vorrecht einer ewigen Jugend fortwährend geltend zu machen suchen. (*FA* 2,12:656)

In this passage all of the terminology of the *Sturm und Drang* period is once more in view. The genius is seen to be natural, youthful, and endowed with spiritual strength, while his fate is underpinned by a Leibnizian teleology through which the isolated or windowless monad strives for self-realization. At this point it seems as though Goethe has reverted to his earliest conception of the daemonic subject as a monadic formative drive that must expand and impose itself upon the world at all costs, regardless of any determination from the outside. Later in the passage, however, we are once more introduced to Goethe's later notion of the daemonic as a limiting or hindering factor that is not unlike the universal order that is found in the saying *nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse*. Thus, while on the one hand the so-called daemonic individual in the early sense of the term — typified for Goethe in the historical figure of Napoleon — is the ever-expanding monadic soul that is embodied in the "Schreiten eines Halbgottes von Schlacht zu Schlacht und von Sieg zu Sieg" (*FA* 2,12:651), on the other hand, such monadic demigods are also ultimately confronted with other gods or *Dämonen* that limit this selfsame expansion in unaccountable ways. This is because, according to Goethe:

> Jeder außerordentliche Mensch hat eine gewisse Sendung, die er zu vollführen berufen ist. Hat er sie vollbracht, so ist er auf Erden in dieser Gestalt nicht weiter vonnöten, und die Vorsehung verwendet ihn wieder zu etwas Anderem. Da aber hienieden Alles auf natürlichem Wege geschieht, so stellen ihm die Dämonen ein Bein nach dem andern, bis er zuletzt unterliegt. So ging es Napoleon und vielen Anderen. (*FA* 2,12:660)

The implication of this passage appears to be that precisely when the individual's internal powers of self-limitation and self-moderation are insufficiently developed, the mythical daemons, who appear to represent the natural order of *Deus sive Natura,* are likely to intervene and impose external limits or obstructing forces on the hubristic strivings of such individuals.

On 2 October 1808, after conversing with Goethe on subjects ranging from *Werther* to Voltaire's *Oedipus,* a play that Goethe describes as a *Schicksalsstück,* Napoleon is reported to have made the following remark to Goethe: "Was will man jetzt mit dem Schicksal, die *Politik* ist das Schicksal" (*HA* 10:546). In this sentence, the notion of the daemonic genius is transposed for Goethe, perhaps for the first time, from the field of aesthetics into the realm of the political. Thus the figure of Napoleon is quite different from most of the other supposedly daemonic individuals of which Goethe speaks in Eckermann's *Gespräche:* Mozart, Raphael, Byron, and Shakespeare, among others. Unlike the political deeds of Napoleon, the activities of these figures were primarily confined to the artistic sphere,

and they did not exert an enormous political influence upon Europe. Goethe's life was, moreover, directly affected by the Napoleonic army's invasion of Weimar in October 1806.[4]

In the second volume of his Goethe biography, Karl Otto Conrady observes that politics and metaphysics are intermingled in Goethe's image of Napoleon,[5] and it is this observation that takes us to the heart of the problem that arises out of Goethe's characterization of Napoleon as daemonic. In essence, this problem is a direct consequence of Goethe's transposition of a term that had hitherto been confined, for the most part, to the field of aesthetics, into the sphere of political history. The daemonic genius becomes, in this sense, the genius of politico-historical events, who, through the sheer amoral force of his indwelling energy or entelechy, is able to overcome and eventually control fate by way of politics. As Jochen Schmidt observes, the notion of Napoleon-as-genius, a notion that gave rise to nothing less than a cult of Napoleon exemplified by works of mid-nineteenth century German authors like Christian Dietrich Grabbe (1801–36) and Heinrich Heine, has one of its most important roots in Goethe's conversation with Eckermann dated 11 March 1828.[6] Unlike the aesthetic genius, who produces great works of art, Napoleon, according to Goethe's conversation with Eckermann dated 11 March 1828, displays a "Productivität der Taten" (*FA* 2,12:652), the moral nature of which is not specified, precisely because the indwelling force that purportedly impels the daemonic genius — the force of nature — is not a moral phenomenon. Hence Goethe's statement to Riemer on 3 February 1807: "Außerordentliche Menschen, wie Napoleon, treten aus der Moralität heraus. Sie wirken zuletzt wie physische Ursachen, wie Feuer und Wasser" (*GG* 2:190).

In this transformation of the daemonic genius from poet into politician, the forces of secularization can be discerned; forces that, as we saw

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[4] See Karl Otto Conrady, *Goethe: Leben und Werk,* 2 vols. (Königstein: Athenäum, 1982–85), 2:327–37.

[5] Conrady, *Goethe: Leben und Werk,* 2:333.

[6] Jochen Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik 1750–1945,* 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), 2:69. See particularly Schmidt's chapter entitled "Grabbe, Heine und das Genie-Paradigma Napoleon im 19. Jahrhundert," 63–74. Gordon A. Craig also observes that "to Goethe and Johannes von Müller . . . Hegel and Heinrich Heine, Napoleon seemed to represent the rare combination of *Geist* and *Macht* that gave meaning to history" (Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Unpolitical: German Writers and the Problem of Power, 1770–1871* [New York: Oxford UP, 1985], xiv).

in chapter 2, originate in the pantheism of Spinoza. Since God is identical with the substance of the world, those who exist within the world can also harness its indwelling divinity, thereby becoming god-like themselves. This dangerous and uncivilized genius-idolatry emerges, according to Jochen Schmidt, from the pantheistic origins of the theory of genius in the eighteenth century, according to which these great men gain their energies from an intuitive connection with the All of Nature, with the world-soul.[7]

Seen in this light, Napoleon's observation that politics is fate attests to a worldview in which divine or supernatural forces are located within the realms of the natural and the human. No longer, suggests Napoleon in his statement, are human beings subject to a mysterious "unfaßbare Naturzweideutigkeit" that might be a manifestation of divine providence or the incalculable forces of God/Nature. In a world where politics is fate, the trajectory of historical events is reducible to the will of the most powerful leader. In fact according to Hegel, who reflects at some length upon Napoleon's conversation with Goethe in his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Lectures on the Philosophy of History, 1837), Napoleon announces here a new phase in the history of *Geist*. This is perhaps why Hegel describes Napoleon as "einer der welthistorische Individuen, welche den Beruf hatten, die Geschäftsführer des Weltgeistes zu sein."[8]

How, then, might we further Schmidt's analysis of Goethe's characterization of Napoleon as a daemonic genius, while at the same time taking into account political considerations? One way might be to compare Goethe's daemonic Napoleon with one of the earliest so-called daemonic individuals in the history of Western thought: Socrates. Of course, a comparison between Socrates and Napoleon must keep in mind both the vast historical distance that separates these figures, and the many differences in the respective historico-political contexts of the authors, Plato and Goethe, who portray them. Accordingly, the comparison entered into below seeks only to uncover the rhetorical dynamics at work in the deployment of the term daemonic in relation to both figures. In this comparison we need to keep in mind the following question: how does the notion of the daemonic, as manifested in the thought of both Plato and Goethe, impact upon their respective interpretations of the political existences of Socrates and Napoleon?

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[7] Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens,* 2:71.

[8] Hegel, *Werke,* ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols., vol. 12, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte,* 46–47.

Socrates and Napoleon

As we saw in chapter 1, Plato claims that the daemonic functions, in its most general sense, as an intermediary mode or conduit between the material world and the realm of the forms. The political implications of this intermediary mode are, however, rarely spelt out by Plato. In his most comprehensive treatise on political theory, *The Republic,* Plato in fact relegates those individuals who are subject to divine or non-rational inspiration (poets) to one of the lowest levels in his political hierarchy. At the same time, however, in the *Symposium,* Plato praises *eros* as a great daemon that is intermediate between the divine and the mortal, but this praise nevertheless has no immediate bearing upon political matters.

In fact, it is only with regard to the operations of Socrates' *daimonion* — most notably, at 31c–d of *The Apology* and at 496b–d of *The Republic* — that the general mode of the daemonic exerts any political influence within the works of Plato, and even this influence is, for the most part, negative in character. In both of these passages, the *daimonion* of Socrates counsels him to remain outside politics, or at the very most, to engage in a negative relationship with the political. We have already encountered, in chapter 1, the section of *The Apology* (31c–d) in which Socrates describes the *daimonion* as the sign that always dissuades him from certain actions, most notably from direct involvement in politics. This is because, according to Socrates at 32a, "the true champion of justice, if he intends to survive even for a short time, must necessarily confine himself to private life and leave politics alone" (*PCD,* 17). Likewise, a similar argument is advanced by Socrates at 496b–d in book 6 of *The Republic*. In this instance Socrates argues that those who involve themselves with the political multitude are more often than not corrupted by this multitude, thereby also being drawn away from the true pursuit of philosophy. Thus it is those who have a "wellborn and well-bred nature . . . held in check by exile," that are able to remain faithful to the true vocation of philosophy, and in the case of Socrates, it was the *daimonion* that encouraged his exile from political affairs (*PCD,* 732). The absurdity of Socrates' argument becomes apparent when we recall that, at 31d of *The Apology,* it was precisely Socrates' experience of his *daimonion* that led to the charge — put forward by Meletus — that he believes in gods or deities not sanctioned by the Athenian state. Far from keeping Socrates isolated from politics, the *daimonion* serves to place Socrates squarely within the realm of the political, in that it embodies, as Søren Kierkegaard has observed, his negative relation to the Greek state.[9]

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[9] Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony,* 160.

What function, then, does Socrates' supposed negative relation to the Greek state serve? In chapter 1 we saw how the negativity of the *daimonion* — that is to say, the sense in which it always dissuades Socrates — can be seen to resonate with his admission, at 21d of *The Apology,* that he knows nothing. It is this realization that leads Socrates to embark upon his philosophical mission: his aim of refuting the misplaced presumption of wisdom in those who claim to be wise. In this regard, Socrates' role consists not so much in revealing the worthlessness of all knowledge, but rather in demonstrating its limits, its incompleteness. This is due to the fact that human knowledge is, according to Socrates at 23a–b, always incomplete and fragmentary in comparison with divine knowledge.

Accordingly, in chapter 1 I concluded that Socrates' decision to eschew direct political action does not amount to political quietism on his behalf. Rather, this decision was seen to follow directly from his view that all human knowledge is incomplete. If, as Socrates suggests, there can be no absolute or positive knowledge within the human sphere, then the philosopher must confine his political involvement to the activity of elenchus or critique: to the role of warning political leaders against the hubris of believing themselves to be absolutely right in any given situation. Socrates' negative political role is most obviously embodied in his self-characterization — found at 30e of *The Apology* — as a fly appointed by God, whose role it is to sting the "thorough bred horse" of Athens into political self-awareness (*PCD,* 16–17).

At this point we can return to Goethe's repeated descriptions of Napoleon as a daemonic individual or political genius, and in particular, to the following section of the conversation with Eckermann dated 11 March 1828. Goethe observes, in the early stages of this lengthy rumination on the daemonic Napoleon:

> *Des Menschen Verdüsterungen und Erleuchtungen machen sein Schicksal!* Es täte uns Not, daß der Dämon uns täglich am Gängelbande führte und uns sagte und triebe, was immer zu tun sei. Aber der gute Geist verläßt uns und wir sind schlaff und tappen im Dunkeln. Da war Napoleon ein Kerl! — Immer erleuchtet, immer klar und entschieden, und zu jeder Stunde mit der hinreichenden Energie begabt, um das, was er als vorteilhaft und notwendig erkannt hatte, sogleich ins Werk zu setzen. Sein Leben war das Schreiten eines Halbgottes von Schlacht zu Schlacht und von Sieg zu Sieg. Von ihm könnte man sehr wohl sagen, daß er sich in dem Zustande einer fortwährenden Erleuchtung befunden, weshalb auch sein Geschick ein so glänzendes war, wie es die Welt vor ihm nicht sah und vielleicht auch nach ihm nicht sehen wird. (*FA* 2,12:651)

In these remarks, Goethe uses almost precisely the same words as those used, in the explanation of "Urworte. Orphisch," with reference to the daemon or *daimonion* of Socrates. In Socrates' case, Goethe (albeit incorrectly) sees Socrates' daemon as telling him "was denn eigentlich zu tun sei," while in the case of Napoleon, the daemon is also an illuminating force that tells him "was immer zu tun sei." The difference, however, between these two instances of so-called daemonic illumination lies in the function of the daemon or *daimonion,* and in this connection I agree with Hans Blumenberg's suggestion that Goethe's use of the term *Dämon* cannot be equated with Socrates' references to the *daimonion.*[10]

In the case of Napoleon, the daemon's function is *positive.* One presumes that the daemon indicates to him the *kairos:* the auspicious timing of certain military actions and invasions, thereby assisting him to stride, like a demigod, from victory to victory.[11] Here Napoleon is seen by Goethe as the historico-political genius who has the capacity to control, and therefore also to determine, fate. When, however, we look to the role played by the *daimonion* of Socrates — particularly within the political contexts outlined at 31c–d of the *Apology,* and at 496b–c of the *Republic* — we find that its function is essentially *negative.* It dissuades Socrates from direct political action and also operates as a warning or sign that indicates to Socrates that his reasoning is amiss, and that he needs to begin his deliberations anew.[12] In the case of Napoleon, then, the daemon might suggest that the historical genius can be like a god. By contrast, in the case of Socrates the *daimonion* functions, for the most part, as a kind of conscience, by reminding Socrates that his knowledge can never be god-like. Rather, human knowledge is, suggests the *daimonion,* always fallible, incomplete, and fragmentary. In short, the Socratic *daimonion* encourages reflection, self-examination, and deliberation before action, while the Napoleonic daemon is the daemon of divinely illuminated *Taten.*

What, then, are we to make of the way in which Goethe — a figure who, according to Gordon A. Craig, "had more practical political experi-

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[10] Blumenberg, *Goethe zum Beispiel,* ed. Hans Blumenberg-Archiv und Manfred Sommer (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1999), 229.

[11] *Kairos* is the Greek god who personifies opportunity. See Herbert Jennings Rose and Karim W. Arafat, "Kairos," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary,* ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 806.

[12] Here I am referring, in particular, to the role played by Socrates' *daimonion* at 242c of the *Phaedrus.*

ence than any German writer of his age"[13] — uses the term daemonic in relation to Napoleon? Was Goethe ultimately able to engage in a critique of the image of Napoleon as the all-powerful historical genius, or do his descriptions of the daemonic Napoleon provide us with grounds upon which to see him as a reactionary and conservative *Fürstenknecht,* as was famously alleged by the author, journalist, critic, and political campaigner Ludwig Börne (1786–1837)?

Although the scholarly literature on Goethe's political views is vast, complex, and fraught with contention, contemporary scholarship now generally accepts that Goethe's feelings toward the French Revolution oscillated between ambivalence and outright opposition,[14] and that his political orientation is therefore best described as having been a variety of enlightened absolutism.[15] Furthermore, if one takes into account Goethe's continuing loyalty to Duke Carl August of Saxe-Weimar from 1775 until 1828 (the year of Carl August's death), then Börne's assessment of Goethe would appear to be generally correct, although subject to the significant qualification that Goethe was often critical of his employer's military ambitions.[16]

At the same time, however, the allegation that Goethe was a *Fürstenknecht* is problematic when applied to his abiding interest in Napoleon. Although Goethe is reported to have worn the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor for five years after his meeting with Napoleon in 1808,[17]

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[13] Craig, *The Politics of the Unpolitical,* 3.

[14] In this connection, Craig writes that in relation to most issues Goethe "tended to be conservative . . . he was opposed to fundamental change and was a supporter of the corporative state, an admirer of the upper nobility," while also seeing the French Revolution as a "force that would bring social upheaval and distress to all classes of society" (*The Politics of the Unpolitical,* 10, 13). A notable but entirely understandable exception to this view can be found in Georg Lukács assessment of Goethe's politics. For ideological reasons, Lukács argues that Goethe decisively approved of the aims of the French Revolution and objected only to the violent methods of its realization (*GSZ,* 15). For the historical and ideological context of Lukács's views regarding Goethe see Ferenc Fehér, "Lukács in Weimar," in *Lukács Revalued,* ed. Agnes Heller (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 75–106.

[15] See, for example, W. Daniel Wilson, "Goethe and the Political World," in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe,* 207–18, and Wolfgang Rothe, *Der politische Goethe* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

[16] As is noted by W. Daniel Wilson, in "Goethe and the Political World," 216.

[17] Craig writes that Goethe "wore the red ribbon quite un-self-consciously . . . as Wilhelm von Humboldt noted with irritation when he visited Weimar during . . . 1813" (*The Politics of the Unpolitical,* 20).

it is nevertheless necessary to point out that Napoleon, a self-made military man from Corsica, was not a *Fürst* in precisely the same way as Carl August of Saxe-Weimar. In fact, in many ways Napoleon — the creator of legislative innovations like the *Code civil des Français* — was seen by some of Germany's greatest minds as a figure representing modernization, progress, and enlightenment, and not the old interests of the European nobility.[18]

As W. Daniel Wilson argues, it is in fact far more likely that Goethe's interest in Napoleon emerges from a mixture of aesthetic and political motivations, stemming on the one hand from "Goethe's fascination with the strong personality of Genius," and on the other from his "admiration for an unabashed representative of autocratic power at a time when the authority of monarchs was becoming unhinged."[19] In partial agreement with Wilson, Hans Blumenberg observes that Goethe's attitude towards Napoleon is always bound up with the two chief literary protagonists of his oeuvre: Prometheus and Faust. In Blumenberg's formulation, Napoleon is for Goethe the daemonic-Promethean individual who cannot renounce the limitlessness of his own ambitions. The senselessness and hubris of Napoleon's campaign in Egypt thus becomes the tragedy of the individual who cannot practice self-limitation or *Entsagung,* and in this regard Napoleon's defeat mirrors the fates of both Prometheus and Faust (*BAM,* 505). Hence, Goethe's statement to Eckermann dated 10 February 1830: "Napoleon gibt uns ein Beispiel, wie gefährlich es sei, sich ins Absolute zu erheben und alles der Ausführung einer Idee zu opfern" (*FA* 2,12:382).

Thus, according to Blumenberg, Goethe is able to preserve and defend the outline of his own "Lebenskonzept" by finding the mythically tragic propensities of the daemonic individual, not in his own life, but in the fates of two of his fictional characters (Prometheus and Faust) and in the life of one real character: Napoleon (*BAM,* 505). Similarly, Karl Otto Conrady suggests that there is a kind of conceptual nostalgia in Goethe's fascination with Napoleon, in which Goethe sees Napoleon as "einen neuen Täter-Prometheus . . . der ihn an frühe poetische Visionen erinnerte."[20] In this context, Goethe's daemonic Napoleon is "das Vollzugsorgan des Schicksals" — someone to be feared, but always with a

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[18] Hegel, for example, says of Napoleon: "Mit der ungeheuren Macht seines Charakters hat er sich dann nach außen gewendet, ganz Europa unterworfen und seine liberalen Einrichtungen überall verbreitet" (*Werke,* vol. 12, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte,* 533).

[19] W. Daniel Wilson, "Goethe and the Political World," 215.

[20] Conrady, *Goethe: Leben und Werk,* 2:331.

shudder of admiration from a poet who had, during his years in Weimar, reached renunciation and willingly accommodated the real demands of the day.[21]

Setting aside the psychological interpretations of Blumenberg and Conrady, what are the political implications of Goethe's preoccupation with Napoleon? In his book *Wie die Großen mit dem Menschen spielen: Goethes Politik* (How the Greats Play with the People: Goethe's Politics, 1988) Ekkehart Krippendorff argues that Goethe's fascination with Napoleon manifested itself as a preoccupation with moral questions surrounding political action: the term political designating, in this context, the possibility of realizing grandiose projects through the deployment of violence and power.[22] This question was, according to Krippendorff, foremost in Goethe's mind during the composition of late dramatic works like *Des Epimenides Erwachen* (The Awakening of Epimenides, 1814) and particularly the fifth act of *Faust, der Tragödie Zweiter Teil* (Faust, The Tragedy, Part Two), written in 1830.

In relation to Faust, Goethe is reported to have made the following comment to Boisserée on 3 August 1815: "Faust bringt mich dazu, wie ich von Napoleon denke und gedacht habe" (*GG* 2:1033). It is the ambiguous double sense of temporality in this sentence (combining the "wie ich denke" and the "wie ich gedacht habe") that is of particular interest in connection with Goethe's late conception of the daemonic and its embodiment in the figure of Napoleon. The "wie ich gedacht habe" in this statement presumably refers to Goethe's fascination with Napoleon that followed their initial meeting in October 1808. In this fascination we can see a late return of the aesthetic theory of the daemonic genius adopted by Goethe during the *Sturm und Drang* period, particularly in his representation of Prometheus. In the afterglow of Goethe's initial encounter with Napoleon — an afterglow strong enough to make its way into the late 1820s and early 1830s, in Eckermann's *Gespräche* — we are presented with Napoleon as the daemonic genius of history: the figure whose indwelling illumination provides him with the power to stride from battle to battle across Europe. In this connection Goethe may have seen Napoleon as being the Titan who was capable of restoring order to Europe following the French Revolution, a revolution that he viewed with a degree of antipathy.[23]

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[21] Conrady, *Goethe: Leben und Werk,* 2:333.

[22] Ekkehart Krippendorff, *Wie die Großen mit dem Menschen spielen: Goethes Politik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 129.

[23] Here I am paraphrasing the speculations of Conrady, *Goethe: Leben und Werk,* 2:333. Craig also writes, in this connection, that "after the famous meeting

The "wie ich denke," by contrast, would presumably constitute Goethe's reflections upon Napoleon in light of his (Napoleon's) eventual demise after the failed Russian campaign of 1812. If there is, in the second part of *Faust,* any suggestion that Faust is a daemonic figure who is in any way akin to Napoleon, then it can only be in terms of his being a prototype of the striving individual (a combination of the scientist, the artist, and politician) who is obstructed and eventually destroyed in his attempts to control and overcome God/Nature. The second part of *Faust* is, according to Krippendorff, Goethe's concluding judgment on the subject of Napoleon, a judgment that attempts to demonstrate the folly and hubris of pursuing the amoral agenda of power politics.[24]

While we should be wary of Krippendorff's tendency to draw a direct comparison between the character of Faust and a political figure like Napoleon, one can nevertheless possibly see, in Faust's grandiose attempts, portrayed in act five part two of Goethe's drama, to build a ring around the ocean, a belated image of Napoleon's hubristic efforts to annex far-flung territories like Egypt and Russia to his empire. Even Goethe, whose scientific ambitions often bordered upon hubris, may have seen elements of his own strivings in the fates of both Napoleon and Faust. In part two of *Faust* we encounter, once again, the questing Romantic subject — a subject that we have already seen, throughout this study, in figures as various as Mahomet, Werther, and the protagonist-stream in "Mächtiges Überraschen." This subject is now transformed by Goethe into the developer in the guise of Faust: a figure who seeks to encompass, contain, and control nature through the force of human will. As Marshall Berman observes, we find in Goethe's tragedy

> the romantic quest for self-development . . . working itself out through a new form of romance, through the titanic work of economic development. . . . He [Faust] has finally achieved a synthesis of thought and action, used his mind to transform the world. He has helped mankind assert its rights over the anarchic elements.[25]

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in Erfurt in 1808, at which Napoleon talked intelligently with him about *Werther* and made him a member of the Legion of Honor, he [Goethe] happily convinced himself that the Emperor was the guarantor of the kind of order that would benefit small states like Saxe-Weimar and creative individuals like himself" (*The Politics of the Unpolitical,* 20).

[24] Krippendorff, *Wie die Großen mit dem Menschen spielen,* 134, 138–39.

[25] Marshall Berman, "Goethe's *Faust:* The Tragedy of Development," in *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 62, 65.

Just as Faust believes himself to be capable of encircling the ocean through human endeavor, so too did Goethe once imagine that he could unite the particularities of nature under neo-Kantian ideas like the *Urpflanze* and the notion of comparative anatomy. But in the face of these projects, what Walter Benjamin calls an "unfaßbare Naturzweideutigkeit" shines forth, frustrating the grandiose theories of the striving subject and attesting to the power of what Marshall Berman calls the anarchic elements, and what Spinoza, Goethe, and Schelling might simply have called *Deus sive Natura*. Daemonic is the mythic term with which the older Goethe attempted to name, and therefore to reduce the fearful aspect of, the ambivalence located in nature.

Likewise, Faust is also finally haunted by daemons that oppose and frustrate his goals. In act five of part two, Faust encounters a figure not unlike the *daimonion* of Socrates. After hearing that Philemon and Baucis, the elderly couple whose linden tree and cottage obstructed Faust's view of his kingdom, have been burnt to death as a result of Mephistopheles' clumsy attempts to resettle them according to Faust's orders, Faust is visited by a spirit named "Sorge." After *Sorge* makes a speech to Faust in which she explains her capacity to make men indecisive and despairing, Faust replies with the following lines (11487–94):

> Unselige Gespenster so behandelt ihr
> Das menschliche Geschlecht zu tausendmalen;
> Gleichgültige Tage selbst verwandelt ihr
> In garstigen Wirrwarr netzumstrickter Qualen.
> Dämonen, weiß ich, wird man schwerlich los,
> Das geistig-strenge Band ist nicht zu trennen;
> Doch deine Macht, o Sorge, schleichend groß,
> Ich werde sie nicht anerkennen. (*FA* 1,7/1:443)

In a book entitled *Das "ewige" Augenblick* (The Eternal Moment, 1991) Andreas Anglet draws a connection between the daemonic and the concept of *Sorge*. According to Anglet, the daemonic indicates to the subject the danger of a catastrophe, since it marks a moment in which the limits of human endeavor have been transgressed.[26] Faust of course refuses to recognize such limits, and in response to Faust's words, *Sorge* curses Faust by blinding him. Thus, Faust's refusal to acknowledge the principle of *Sorge* makes him blind: blind as to the motivations behind his limitless strivings, and blind too as to the effects that these strivings have upon ex-

[26] Andreas Anglet, *Der "ewige" Augenblick: Studien zur Struktur und Funktion eines Denkbildes bei Goethe* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991), 390.

ternal objects (the world and the environment) and other subjects. In short, it is Faust's lack of *Weltfrömmigkeit* that leads to his downfall.

To understand the ways in which the notion of the daemonic operates within Faust would necessitate a separate study.[27] Here I merely wish to suggest that Goethe was, in his late judgment of Napoleonic power politics as depicted in the actions of Faust, perhaps led to an awareness of something akin to Socrates' experience of the *daimonion,* as the voice or conscience that always reminds us of the conditional and fallible nature of human knowledge and human reason. The function of this *daimonion* is, as we have seen, precisely to remind Socrates that there is always an outside, an uncontrollable excess or remainder, which exceeds the cognitive capacities of human reason, the ignorance of which may cause tragic consequences.

[27] For an account of the notion of the daemonic in *Faust II,* see Erich Franz, *Mensch und Dämon: Goethes Faust als menschliche Tragödie, ironische Weltschau und religiöses Mysterienspiel* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953), 161–72, and Wilhelm Emrich, *Die Symbolik von Faust II: Sinn und Vorformen* (Bonn: Athenäum, 1957), 82, 339–42.

Epilogue: Socrates and the Cicadas

KEEPING IN MIND GOETHE'S ADMISSION that he uses the term daemonic "nach dem Beispiel der Alten," it is useful to return in these concluding remarks to the ancient philosopher whose discussion of the daemonic is more detailed and comprehensive than that of any other figure in the canon of classical philosophy: Plato. In their eagerness to interpret one of the most famous appearances of the Socratic *daimonion* — at 242b–c of Plato's *Phaedrus* — many commentators have overlooked the pastoral setting of this dialogue. Socrates and Phaedrus are walking outside of the walls of Athens, and Socrates himself takes some time (at 230b–c) to describe the scene of their conversation. It is, he observes,

> a delightful resting place, with this tall spreading plane [tree], and a lovely shade from the high branches of the *agnos.* Now that it's in full flower, it will make the place ever so fragrant. And what a lovely stream under the plane tree, and how cool to the feet! . . . And then too, isn't the freshness of the air most welcome and pleasant, and the shrill summery music of the cicada choir. (*PCD,* 478–79)

Later in the dialogue, the story behind the most striking aspect of this setting — the "cicada choir" — is revealed. At 258e–259d we learn that the cicadas were in fact once, before the birth of the Muses, human beings. On hearing the Muses' song, these humans were so intoxicated that they forgot to eat and drink, eventually dying in a trance-like state. From these dead humans the Muses created cicadas, so that they could sing all day without need of sustenance, and also report back to the Muses how and by whom they are honored on earth.

According to G. R. F. Ferrari in his book *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus* (1987), it is no coincidence that Plato relates to us the myth of the cicadas at a crucial point in the *Phaedrus:* that is to say, at precisely the point where Socrates completes his highly rhetorical and mythic second oration in praise of love (at 242e–257b), an oration inspired by the *daimonion's* suggestion that Socrates' first, eminently logical speech against irrational lovers (237a–242a) was inadequate and one-sided. At this juncture (from 259e onwards) the focus of the *Phaedrus* shifts abruptly to a philosophical critique of the art of rhetoric, in which Socrates states (most notably at 260e) that rhetoric can only ever be genuine when it is based upon philosophical truth. The myth of the cica-

das appears at the very moment of this shift: the point at which a philosophical examination of rhetoric commences, after a highly rhetorical piece of philosophy (Socrates' encomium on love) has been completed.

What is the meaning of the elaborate setting of this dialogue, and what does Plato intend to suggest in his positioning of the myth of the cicadas? Here Ferrari can assist us:

> It is . . . the kinship in limitation of these otherwise very different paths of discourse, myth and argument — at least when the philosopher confronts his own art — that is of such philosophic interest.[1]

Ferrari's point is that precisely when the philosopher confronts his own art — the art of dialectic, of rational analysis, and of *logos* — he is forced at the same time to recognize one of the fundamental forms in which his art takes place: the form of *mythos* or myth-making, the creation of rhetorical images and narratives in order to persuade and communicate conceptual content. Here we should recall that Socrates' second speech on love — the speech inspired by the intervention of his *daimonion* — is full of myths, most notably the myth of the wings of the soul, outlined at 245c–252b.

The cicadas, moreover, are mythic embodiments of something else that stands in opposition to *logos* or reason in its purest, most abstract form: the non-rational element in human subjectivity. Here we should not forget that the cicadas were once humans who were so moved and intoxicated by the Muses' song that they forgot to eat and died. The drone of these cicadas is part of the background to the entire *Phaedrus*, and from time to time Socrates makes a point of reminding the reader of their presence. At 258e he remarks that he and Phaedrus should continue their dialogue so as not to displease the cicadas, while at 262d he observes that the cicadas (who are the interpreters of the Muses) are numbered among the local deities that inspire his oratory. Thus, says Ferrari, the implication of these references appears to be that the philosopher "never seems more a philosopher than when immersed in the everyday . . . for then it is most clear that his philosophic eye never sleeps."[2] It is the philosopher's contact with the everyday world of objects, and with the non-rational sources that help to inspire him, that prevents his philosophy from becoming a sterile abstraction or an intellectual game. This is perhaps why, at the end of the *Phaedrus* (at 279b–c), Socrates utters a prayer of thanks to the local deities that occupy the setting of his dialogue.

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[1] G. R. F. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987). 34.

[2] Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 20.

In their *Dialektik der Aufklärung* Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno refer to a myth that is in some ways similar to the myth of the cicadas discussed by Socrates in the *Phaedrus*. In book 12 of Homer's *Odyssey,* Odysseus and his oarsmen are confronted by the allurement of the Sirens, whose song suggests to them the simultaneously enticing and terrifying prospect of a return to unconscious nature. In order to prevent his oarsmen from hearing the Sirens' song, Odysseus plugs their ears with wax. At the same time, however, he allows himself to hear the Sirens, but only with the proviso that he remain tied to the mast of his ship, thereby insuring that he will be unable to race to the Sirens should he be seduced by the sweetness of their song. On hearing the Sirens' song, Odysseus longs to unify himself with them, but his oarsmen, having been told only of the song's danger and hearing none of its beauty, continue to row away from the object of Odysseus's longing.

For Horkheimer and Adorno, this episode from the *Odyssey* constitutes an allegory of enlightenment. In order to overcome the powers of unconscious, non-rational nature that the Sirens represent, Odysseus learns to curb, suppress, and control that aspect of nature that exists both within himself and in his oarsmen. This is because

> nur die bewußt gehandhabte Anpassung an die Natur bringt diese unter die Gewalt des physisch Schwächeren. . . . Der subjektive Geist, der die Beseelung der Natur auflöst, bewältigt die entseelte nur, indem er ihre Starrheit imitiert und als animistisch sich selber auflöst. (*AGS* 3:75–76)

By overcoming trials like that endured by Odysseus, the enlightenment subject eventually imagines itself to be a purely rational self that is capable of resisting all of the powers of nature. In this way, it comes to function as its own myth: the myth of a completely self-conscious, completely rational subject that has achieved a pure progression from *mythos* to *logos,* from the wholly non-rational to the purely rational.

Does Socrates' myth of the cicadas portray a similar progression from *mythos* to *logos*? For Socrates, the fate of the once-human cicadas represents the notion that one cannot completely return to unconscious nature and at the same time remain human. By the same token, however, Socrates does not wish to repress, overlook, or efface the non-rational element in humanity that the cicadas represent. In fact, Socrates is willing to acknowledge that his own dialectic is never purely rational, and is, at certain times, inspired by non-rational or extra-rational sources. One such source can be seen in the local divinities that abound in the setting of the *Phaedrus,* while another can be found in the existence of Socrates' *daimonion*.

In relation to the interpretation of Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics adopted by the Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno make the following observation:

> Die Aufklärung . . . erkannte im platonischen und aristotelischen Erbteil der Metaphysik die alten Mächte wieder und verfolgte den Wahrheitsanspruch der Universalien als Superstition. In der Autorität der allgemeinen Begriffe meint sie noch die Furcht vor den Dämonen zu erblicken, durch deren Abbilder die Menschen im magischen Ritual die Natur zu beeinflussen suchten. Von nun an soll die Materie endlich ohne Illusion waltender oder innewohnender Kräfte, verborgener Eigenschaften beherrscht werden. (*AGS* 3:22)

Following the suggestions of Horkheimer and Adorno, we can confirm that a certain species of "allgemeine Begriffe" did, in a sense, present Goethe with an experience of "Dämonen," albeit different daemons to those perceived by the Enlightenment thinkers in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. The *Dämonen* experienced by the later Goethe were, on the contrary, direct effects or consequences of the enlightenment belief — a belief that was perhaps momentarily shared by Goethe in his concept of the *Urpflanze* and his work on comparative anatomy — that matter could be *beherrscht* "ohne Illusion waltender oder innenwohnender Kräfte, verborgener Eigenschaften." The failed universal concept of the *Urpflanze* demonstrated to Goethe the ultimate resistance of natural phenomena to philosophical models that attempt to account for — and therefore also to control or contain — their infinite particularities. And given that the human subject is itself a natural object, Goethe was also led to acknowledge, after Schelling, that it too can be incomprehensibly ambivalent, that its inner workings — such as, for example, the preternatural creative powers of the genius, or the vagaries that attend scientific judgments — may be just as inexplicable as the mysteries of external phenomena.

In Socrates' myth of the cicadas, we find just one instance of the role played by myth in the dialogues of Plato, a role that I examined extensively in chapter 1 of this study. From these examinations it was concluded that Plato uses myths in order to access those regions of thought or experience that are inaccessible to the logic of Socrates. Seen in this way, the myths deployed by Plato point to a kind of truth that does not make any claims to philosophical correctness, rigor, or completeness. It is, moreover, in the spirit of this provisional and inexact mythic mode that Plato invokes both the general notion of the daemonic, and the divine voice of Socrates' *daimonion,* as phenomena that exist outside the bounds of rational thought.

Thus, while Plato is often described as the father of modern rationalism, he may at the same time be seen to concur with Horkheimer and Adorno's notion that truth is "nicht bloß das vernünftige Bewußtsein, sondern ebensosehr dessen Gestalt in der Wirklichkeit" (*AGS* 3:14). The Platonic Socrates whom we encounter at the beginning of the *Phaedrus* does not seek to outline his theory of the forms independently of the actual conditions of his existence. Rather, as G. R. F. Ferrari observes, the art of philosophy, which for Plato is the art of living well, involves an engagement with everyday life in both its rational and non-rational forms.[3] Likewise, in the opinions of Horkheimer and Adorno, the *Gestalt* that consciousness takes on in everyday life is a *Gestalt* that is not immediately reducible to rational concepts. There are, in other words, non-rational aspects of day-to-day consciousness, of human interaction with natural or divine phenomena, that are better represented in mythic modes than in the discourses of scientific rationalism. At the same time, however, Horkheimer and Adorno also observe that enlightenment has always seen the basic principle of myth as being

> Anthropomorphismus, die Projektion von Subjektivem auf die Natur. . . . Das Übernatürliche, Geister und Dämonen, seien Spiegelbilder der Menschen, die von Natürlichem sich schrecken lassen. (*AGS* 3:22)

This view of myth is most succinctly presented in the work of Freud, who clearly saw himself as an adherent to the enlightenment methodology that Horkheimer and Adorno describe.[4] But are invocations of myth always simply irrational, or are they sometimes better described, less pejoratively, as non-rational: as pointing to truths that escape the confines of rational analysis?

In answering this question we need to recall Hans Blumenberg's contention that: "Der Philosoph hat etwas für den Mythos übrig, weil er aus dem Stoffe ist, der auch die Attraktion der Theorie ausmachen soll" (*BAM,* 33). It is the inexact but suggestive mode of mythic thinking, argues Blumenberg, that constitutes the very wonder — the element of the unknown and the unknowable — contained in Aristotle's famous statement at 982b of his *Metaphysics* that "it is owing to their wonder that

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[3] Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas,* 20–21.

[4] See the section of Freud's *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* entitled "Determinismus, Zufalls- und Aberglauben," in which he observes: "Ich glaube in der Tat, daß ein großes Stück der mythologischen Weltauffassung, die weit bis in der modernsten Religionen hinein reicht, nichts anderes ist als in die Außenwelt projizierte Psychologie" (Freud, *Gesammelte Werke,* 4:287).

men both now begin and first began to philosophize" (*CWA* 2:1554). Aristotle elaborates on this contention (also at 982b) by observing that "the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of wisdom, for myth is composed of wonders" (*CWA* 2:1554). Here Blumenberg's objection is only to Aristotle's later suggestion (at 983a) that once the cause of a thing has been established, our wonder must cease, and myth can be consigned to the realm of poetic exegesis. This is due to the fact that such a purported progression from *mythos* to *logos* neglects to acknowledge that myth itself is "eine der Leistungsformen des Logos" (*BAM,* 34). In having originated in, and in having defined itself in opposition to *mythos, logos* can never completely dispense with the former, just as there is an inner logic that always prevails in myth.

It is submitted here, following the suggestions of Blumenberg, that the notion of the daemonic as it is used by Goethe in his late works — beginning with "Mächtiges Überraschen" and continuing through *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* "Urworte Orphisch," and in some passages of Eckermann's *Gespräche* — designates the sphere of the non-rational in human thinking and experience, a sphere that cannot be clarified through the deployment of purely rational concepts, but that nevertheless demands to be named and represented. Seen in this way, the use of the term daemonic by Goethe does not point to superstitious or irrational thinking on his behalf, but merely demonstrates his belief that the rational human subject is limited in its cognitive, scientific, and political capacities.

But while Blumenberg maintains that what matters in Goethe's conception of the daemonic is not the term itself but the "ungelöste Rest" to which it refers (*BAM,* 437), the central purpose of this study has been to show that this term — *δαίμων,* daemon — springs from a rich heritage of ancient Greek philosophy, most notably embodied in the writings of Plato and especially in Plato's representation of the Socratic *daimonion*. Without considering Goethe's notion of the daemonic in conjunction with this tradition, we can scarcely approach its historical meaning and its philosophical purpose.

Thus the daemonic spirits or *Dämonen* that, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, enlightenment sees in the Platonic universals or forms, find their purpose insofar as they embody the notion of there being an outside, an unknown and unknowable excess, a sense of wonder, that escapes the confines of a human epistemology, thereby demonstrating this epistemology's negativity and incompleteness. Enlightenment thinkers fled from these *Dämonen* precisely because, when such phenomena disappear from view, man imagines himself to be free from fear. Enlightenment, then, corresponds with what Horkheimer and Adorno refer to as the "reine Immanenz des Positivismus" in which "es darf

überhaupt nichts mehr draußen sein, weil die bloße Vorstellung des Draußen die eigentliche Quelle der Angst ist" (*AGS* 3:32).

Instead, however, of taking refuge from this fear of an outside through the erection and maintenance of purely rational concepts, Goethe sought solace in the realms of the mythic, by hiding behind a rhetorical image that he called the daemonic. In hiding behind this image Goethe does not regress to a pre-Enlightenment mode of mythic thinking; rather, Goethe's aim is to show us that enlightenment's attempted progression from *mythos* to *logos* is never complete, nor susceptible of completion.

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