

2475/3825

MONASH UNIVERSITY
THESIS ACCEPTED IN SATISFACTION OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ON..... 1 March 2002

.....
Jen Sec. Research Graduate School Committee

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ADDENDUM.

p. 18, footnote 49. Add after the first sentence:

“Throughout this study the term *logos* is deployed in the broad sense adopted by Horkheimer and Adorno in their Dialektik der Aufklärung, and by Hans Blumenberg in his Arbeit am Mythos; that is to say, as a concept which refers to the exclusive use of reason and rationality at the expense of non-rational or mythic modes of thinking.”

p. 113, paragraph 3, 2nd sentence: delete “and which is rationally ordered by God”.

p. 114, footnote 2: Add after the first sentence:

“It should be noted, in this context, that while the term ‘nature’ approximates ‘substance’ in the philosophy of Spinoza, it cannot be simply equated with the world of objects, which Spinoza sees as a secondary infinite mode in the attribute of extension.”

p. 114, paragraph 3, 4th sentence: delete “or attributes”.

p. 116, paragraph 4, 1st sentence: delete “is located within the substance of the organism, and”.

p. 117, paragraph 4, 4th sentence: delete “which for Leibniz is concomitant with the natural universe”.

p. 118, paragraph 2, 1st sentence: delete “divine *logos* or”.

p. 145, paragraph 2, 4th sentence: replace “heteronomous” with “heterogeneous”.

p. 156, paragraph 2, 3rd sentence: delete “or divine *logos*”.

p. 157, paragraph 4, 3rd sentence: delete “a divine reason or *logos*, referred to as”.

p. 203, paragraph 3, 3rd sentence: delete “divine *logos* or”.

p. 212, paragraph 1, 3rd sentence: delete “divine *logos* or”.

p. 221, paragraph 4, 1st sentence: delete “divine *logos*, the”.

p. 226, paragraph 4, 1st sentence: delete “divine *logos* or”.

p. 233, paragraph 1, 4th sentence: delete “divine *logos* or”.

p. 245, paragraph 4, 3rd sentence: delete “divine *logos*”.

THE MANTIC ART.

**An Examination of the Notion of the Daemonic in the Writings of Plato, Goethe
and Goethe's Contemporaries.**

Submitted by

Angus Nicholls, B.A. (Hons.) Monash University.



**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.**

**Centre for Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies.
Monash University.**

August 2001.

SOCRATES:

False is the tale which says that because the lover is mad and the non-lover sane the non-lover should be given preference when one might have a lover. If it were true without qualification that madness is an evil, that would all be very well, but in fact madness, provided it comes as the gift of heaven, is the channel by which we receive the greatest blessings. Take the prophetess at Delphi and the priestesses at Dodona, for example, and consider all the benefits which individuals and states in Greece have received from them when they were in a state of frenzy, though their usefulness in their sober senses amounts to little or nothing. And if we were to include the Sibyl and others who by the use of inspired divination have set many inquirers on the right track about the future, we should be telling at tedious length what everyone knows. But this at least is worth pointing out, that the men of old who gave things their names saw no disgrace or reproach in madness; otherwise they would not have connected with it the name of the noblest of all arts, the art of discerning the future, and called it the manic art. The fact that they did so shows that they looked upon madness as a fine thing, when it comes upon a man by divine dispensation, but their successors have bungled matters by the introduction of a T, and produced the word mantic....So, according to the evidence provided by our ancestors, madness is a nobler thing than sober sense, in proportion as the name of the mantic art and the act that it signifies are more perfect and held in higher esteem than the name and act of augury; madness comes from God, whereas sober sense is merely human.

– Plato, Phaedrus 244a-244d.

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Abstract.

This thesis is a comparative study of the related notions of the 'daemon' and 'the Daemonic' in the writings of Plato (c.427-347 B.C.) and Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832).

Beginning with an analysis of the notions of the daemon and the Socratic *daimonion*, primarily in Plato's writings and secondarily in the works of Aristotle and in the thought of Stoicism and early Neo-Platonism, the thesis attempts to demonstrate the ways in which a constellation of themes surrounding Plato's notion of the Daemonic continues to be addressed by some of the key figures in German intellectual life during the 'Age of Goethe': commencing with the *Sturm und Drang* period of the late 1760's and the early 1770's, and ending with some of Goethe's final statements on the Daemonic in Johann Peter Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe* (1835).

In its broadest and most general sense, the notion of the Daemonic in both Plato and Goethe is seen to refer to the ways in which humans experience phenomena which are regarded as being 'divine', 'numinous', 'non-rational' and 'mythic'. In pre-Socratic philosophy and in the thought of Plato, 'daemons' are seen as intermediaries which transport divine messages to the material world. Keeping this ancient notion of the Daemonic in mind, this study investigates the increasingly secular ways in which similar experiences of the divine and the non-rational are represented both poetically and philosophically by Goethe and some of his key literary-philosophical contemporaries: Immanuel Kant, Johann Georg Hamann, Johann Gottfried Herder, Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller, and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling.

With regard to the writings of Goethe, the thesis initially argues that an untheorised notion of the Daemonic exists in two of his early works: the poem 'Mahomets Gesang' and Goethe's first novel, *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*. The notion of the Daemonic represented in these works is discussed in connection with the discourse on the concept of 'Genius' propagated by Hamann and Herder in the second half of the eighteenth century, a discourse which is seen to be contemporaneous with the origins of the European Romantic movement.

The thesis then goes on to discuss a consciously theorised notion of the Daemonic in Goethe's later works. Proceeding from an analysis of Goethe's confrontations with Kantian thought and the early *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling, the thesis argues that Goethe's later notion of the Daemonic is used to refer to those aspects of experience which both obstruct and exceed rational explanations and logical

concepts. This argument takes into consideration Goethe's key texts on the notion of the Daemonic: the sonnet 'Mächtiges Überraschen', Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the poem 'Urworte. Orphisch', and Johann Peter Eckermann's record of his conversations with Goethe, entitled *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*.

The concluding chapters of this study outline a future area for research in relation to the notion of the Daemonic – namely, the field of psychoanalysis, and in particular, the work of Sigmund Freud - while at the same time suggesting some ways in which Goethe's notion of the Daemonic might be seen to elucidate the philosophical function of myth.

Statement.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree in any university, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material which has been previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Melbourne. August 6, 2001.



Angus Nicholls.

Preface and Acknowledgements.

This thesis began its life in late 1996 as a history of the notion of the Daemonic in Western letters. After my initial research, it became clear that three major figures – Plato, Goethe and Freud – use the notion of the Daemonic in different, epoch-making senses. The present study can only do some justice to the notion of the Daemonic in the thought and writings of the first two of these figures: Plato and Goethe. With regard to Freud's use of the term 'daemonic', I will make some suggestions for future research in Part Nine of this study. These suggestions are also outlined, in connection with a broad historical analysis of the notion of the Daemonic, in my journal article 'The Secularisation of Revelation from Plato to Freud' in *Contretemps* 1(2000): 60-68, Online at: www.usyd.edu.au/contretemps.

My aim in this study is to examine the various ways in which the related terms 'daemon' and 'the Daemonic' are used by Plato and Goethe. This examination proceeds on the basis of Goethe's own acknowledgement – in Book Twenty of his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* – that he chose to invoke the notion of the Daemonic (*das Dämonische*) "nach dem Beispiel der Alten" ("after the example of the Ancients"). Despite the fact that Goethe's notion of the Daemonic has been subjected to over one-hundred and fifty years of philological analysis and exegesis, no previous study has attempted to clarify and demystify this notion by thoroughly investigating its detailed philosophical origins in the writings of Plato.

This situation might be attributed to the fact that Plato and Goethe are such strange bedfellows. The former is largely understood to have been concerned with an abstract realm of 'forms' beyond the material world, the latter with a *Naturphilosophie* ('philosophy of nature') which arises from the ontological primacy of organic matter. In making such a comparison of two thinkers separated by a vast historical distance, I do not wish to suggest that there are any inherent or overriding similarities between their respective world-views. Rather, my aim is to demonstrate the ways in which an ancient literary-philosophical idea which receives its strongest and most detailed treatment in Plato – the notion of the Daemonic – becomes of importance to philosophers and writers working in Germany during a period in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which is often referred to as the *Goethezeit* or 'Age of Goethe'. Within this examination, I hope to show that certain themes which surround Plato's notion of the Daemonic continue to be of key importance during the latter stages of the European Enlightenment in Germany, particularly insofar as they are addressed firstly by Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), and secondly by some of his key literary-philosophical

contemporaries: Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854). In this connection, I also wish to make a certain aspect of Goethe's literary-philosophical development – his use and theorisation of the terms 'daemon' and 'daemonic' – available to an Anglophone readership. As a means to achieving this aim, I have attempted, wherever possible, to provide English translations for both primary and secondary German-language texts which are quoted throughout this study. All previously existing English translations, some of which have been altered, are cited in footnotes beneath the original German source. The absence of a footnote for an English translation indicates that the translation is my own.

This study asks to be read as a contribution to the field of Comparative Literature in three different senses. Firstly, it aims to compare and contrast the ancient and modern literary-philosophical manifestations of a particular theme or idea: the notion of the Daemonic. Secondly, it seeks to bring about a dialogue between two fields of endeavour that have, at least since Plato's *Republic*, often been seen as inimical to one another: literature and philosophy. Finally, it attempts to bring together two different traditions in the fields of literary criticism and literary theory: the German and the Anglo-American.

Many people have assisted me to complete this thesis. Associate Professor Walter Veit has supervised this project since its inception in late 1996 up until its conclusion. I am indebted to Professor Veit's broad and rich knowledge of the Western literary/philosophical tradition, and particularly to the generosity with which he has communicated this knowledge to me during our countless meetings in Melbourne and Berlin. Professor Veit has invested a wealth of time and energy into the development of this project. From the minutiae of its literary/philosophical translations, to its broadest conceptual schemes, this thesis would not have been possible without his unfailing assistance and support.

Dr. Kate Rigby began to co-supervise this project in 1999, while I was in the middle of writing the initial drafts of its chapters, up until its conclusion. The passion and enthusiasm with which she read my drafts, combined with the depth and conceptual rigour of her readings, her intricate knowledge of Romantic literature and philosophy, and her assistance with translations, have marked this thesis indelibly.

I also wish to thank Dr. Catherine Runcie at the University of Sydney for her interest in this project at its earliest stages.

Among the staff working in both the Centre for Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies, and in the School of Literary and Visual Culture, I wish firstly to thank Gail Ward for her friendship, and for her expert assistance in helping me to negotiate the bureaucratic labyrinth which is the modern University. I would also like to thank Professor Kevin Hart for supporting my initial research proposal, Dr. Christopher Worth, Dr. Kevin Foster, and Professor Clive Probyn for giving me the opportunity to teach during my candidature, and Dr. Alan Dilnot for showing confidence in my ability to complete the thesis within the time stipulated by the Completion Assistance Award, which I was generously granted by the Faculty of Arts.

My gratitude also extends to the Research Graduate School at Monash University for administering my Monash Graduate Scholarship, for awarding me the Postgraduate Travel Grant which enabled me to undertake research in Germany, and for providing me with office space and computer facilities during the latter stages of my candidature. In this connection, I wish especially to thank Joanne Ligouris and Anna Hussar for their kindness and assistance.

Many fellow graduate students have discussed this project with me. In particular, Mark Stockdale and Rebecca Lucas commented on early drafts of the project's conceptual scheme, while also continuing to share with me their ideas, as well as their friendship. Louise Mills, with whom I shared office space, ideas, food and friendship during my candidature, also discussed this project with me on many occasions, while also proof-reading many of its chapters and its bibliography. Robert Savage, Chris Churchill, John O'Dea, Mark Manolopoulos and Dany Jitnah also provided me with invaluable assistance during the final stages of the project's compilation.

Finally, I wish to thank my other friends and my family. In this regard, I thank Dr. Rashmi Desai for his sage advice on all things academic and otherwise, Judith Clarke for her encouragement, and Yask Desai and Shweta Kishore for introducing me to India during a much needed break in my candidature. I would also like to thank Warren Batchelor for his loyal friendship over the years, Darriel Jeffree and Maria Bikos for their on-going friendship, wit and good humour, and all of those friends who encouraged me along the way, while also tolerating my reclusiveness towards the end of the project. Special thanks are extended to Sabar Rustomjee and friends, along with David Sturrock, all of whom were continual providers of insight, encouragement and kindness. My sister, Jane Nicholls, and my brother-in-law, Christopher Millard, along with my grandparents, Haley and John Heath, have been constantly supportive of my endeavours. My parents – Ian and Christina Nicholls – have, as always, encouraged and assisted me at every stage, especially during the most difficult times. Last of all, I wish

to thank my partner, Soe Tjen Marching, who has helped me in ways that exceed my ability to express them.

– Angus Nicholls. Melbourne. August 6, 2001.

Textual Note.

I have used a variety of Plato translations throughout this thesis. In the first citation of any given translation, full publication details will be listed. In subsequent citations, I have listed the name of the text, followed by the translator's name (in brackets) and the relevant page number.

- For convenience and ease of reference, I have used the *Hamburger Ausgabe* of Goethe's *Werke*:

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Werke. Hamburger Ausgabe*. Erich Trunz Hg. Neunte Auflage. 14 Bänden. 1949. Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1972.

Each reference to Goethe's texts from the *Hamburger Ausgabe* will be cited with the abbreviation 'HA', followed by volume and page numbers. Textual commentary from the *Hamburger Ausgabe* will be cited firstly by the commentator's name, followed by volume and page numbers.

In certain sections of the thesis, I have also used commentary from the more recent *Münchener Ausgabe* of Goethe's *Werke*:

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens. Münchner Ausgabe*. Karl Richter, Herbert G. Göpfert, Norbert Miller und Gerhard Sauder Hg. 21 Bänden. München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1985-1997.

References to commentary in the *Münchener Ausgabe* will cite the commentator's name, followed by the abbreviation 'MA', volume number and page number.

The image which appears on the title page is by Philipp Otto Runge, and is entitled:

Genius auf Amaryllisblüte.
Entwurf zum Rahmenbild des Großen Morgens, 1809.

I have taken this image from:

Jörg Traeger, *Philipp Otto Runge, oder die Geburt einer neuen Kunst.*

München: Prestel Verlag, 1977.

1. Introduction.

1.1. The Daemonic.

This study seeks to investigate the meaning of a notion which first appears in pre-Socratic philosophy and in the philosophy of Plato, and which subsequently makes a spectacular return to Western thought, during the latter stages of the European Enlightenment, in the works of Goethe: the notion of the daemon (*Dämon*) δαίμων also written by Greek scholars as *daimon*.¹ The effects of what I will describe as the daemon are also often encompassed in the adjective 'daemonic'. Chiefly as a result of its extensive use by Goethe, this adjective has also come to function as a proper noun: the Daemonic (*Das Dämonische*), a term which closely resembles the Greek noun *daimonion* (τὸ δαιμόνιον).

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 *daio* (δαίω) – meaning both to 'light up' or 'kindle' and to 'distribute' or 'divide'.² In this context, the Daemonic refers to the process by which the Gods both inspire and illuminate humans, and allot to them divine gifts and fates. 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' which shapes a person's life.³ This particular resonance of the term is most readily found in Orphic beliefs.⁴ 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

¹ The two different ways of spelling daemon (*daemon* and *daimon*) appear to reflect different historical manifestations of the term. In English, *daimon* generally refers to the Ancient Greek notion of δαίμων, while *daemon* carries with it the resonances of European Romanticism, and Goethe's revival of the term. Only one form of spelling (*Dämon*) is used in German.

² H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* ed. Sir Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie, 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 365-366. Liddell and Scott's etymology is confirmed by H.S. Versnel in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*: see H.S. Versnel, 'daimōn' *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 426. For an elaboration of this etymology, see Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology* (London: Epworth Press, 1949) 84, and David Farrell Krell *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life Philosophy* (Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992) 20. In this sense, Angus Fletcher observes that the daemon is a "distributor of destinies". Angus Fletcher, 'The Daemonic Agent', *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964) 42-43.

³ H.G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* 322. For this resonance of the term daemon, see Homer's *Odyssey* V. 396. See also Karl Kerényi's discussion of the term 'daimon' in his *Antike Religion* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1995) 57, 76, 148. Kerényi observes, on page 57, that 'daimon' refers to: "jener Aspekt des Göttlichen, in dem es Menschen als sein Schicksal erscheint" ("that aspect of the godlike/divine, which appears to humans as their fate or destiny").

⁴ Jane Ellen Harrison observes that "Orphism tended rather to the worship of potencies (δαίμονες) [*daimones*] than of anthropomorphic divinities". Jane Ellen Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908) 587. Brackets added.

'other self'. A person's daemon is thus seen as his or her 'life principle' or *entelechy* – the *entelechy* being Aristotle's term for the indwelling biological 'law' or determinant characteristic of all living organisms.⁵ Heraclitus also spoke of this notion of the Daemonic when he stated that a man's daemon is his fate.⁶ The term daemon can also, however, refer to mythical "men of a golden race who came first",⁷ and, more generally, to a 'winged' soul or being, intermediate between man and God, which distributes divine or numinous messages to the secular realm.⁸ Included in this latter category are semi-divine intermediaries like Cupid.⁹ Finally, in its most general sense, the term 'daemon' can, in its original adjectival form – *daimonios* (*δαίμωνιος*) – refer to beings which are god-like, and to things, people or events which seem to be influenced by divine intervention.¹⁰

Within the course of this study, I will attempt to elucidate both the historical and philosophical contexts in which the terms 'daemon' and 'daemonic' are used by two of the most influential figures in Western thought: Plato and Goethe. But before we turn to a discussion of these figures, it is necessary to make a few further observations concerning the definition of the term 'Daemonic'.

⁵ 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* Band I 403-404.

⁶ See Fragment 119. Heraclitus, *Fragments* trans. T.M. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) 69.

⁷ Plato, *Cratylus* 397d. trans. Benjamin Jowett *The Dialogues of Plato* ed. Benjamin Jowett Volume III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953) 57.

⁸ See, for example, Plato's *Phaedrus* at 246e.

⁹ See Robert Stock, *The Flutes of Dionysus: Daemonic Enthrallment in Literature* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1989) 11.

¹⁰ See, for example, Homer, *The Illiad* I.222 and III.420, and also Plato, *The Republic* 509c. This is also the first meaning of the term 'Dämonen' offered by F.P. Hager in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Joachim Ritter Hg. Band II (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971-1998) 1-2.

1.2. Daemonic/Demonic.

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 the Daemonic or *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.)"¹¹ These entries tell us something about 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, over-written, or even repressed by the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In short, the Daemonic has literally been *demonised* by the English language.¹² The reasons for this demonisation are complex, and an exhaustive account of them would no doubt involve another thesis on the connections between the philosophical traditions of Ancient Greece and Judaeo-Christian thought.¹³ One plausible explanation is, however, offered by Leonard Barkan in his book *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (1986):

In Judaeo-Christian culture, Eros is suppressed or infantilized and the daemonic splits off into angels and 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 Judaeo-Christian

¹¹ Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* also defines the term *Dämonisch* by referring to its use by Goethe. Their definition is: "von dem Dämon beherrscht, besessen, wirkend wie ein Dämon" ("controlled, possessed by a daemon, having the effect of a daemon"). Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* Band II (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1860). In the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Band II 4-5, C. Axelos also defines 'Das Dämonische' as it is used during the *Sturm und Drang* movement, as being equivalent to 'genial': that is, relating to productivity or the powers of genius.

¹² See, for example Werner Foerster's entry under *δαίμων* (daemon) in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley Volume II (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.M.B. Eerdmans, 1964) 8. Foerster observes that the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (c.30 C.E.-100 C.E.) sees the adjective *δαίμωνιος* (*daimonios*) as referring to things which are both 'dreadful' and 'superterrestrial' (see Kittel, 10). Similarly, in his essay 'Das Unheimliche' ('The Uncanny') Sigmund Freud observes that, in Arabic and Hebrew, 'uncanny' means the same as 'daemonic' and 'gruesome'. Freud, 'The Uncanny', trans. Alix Strachey *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* ed. and trans. James Strachey and Anna Freud Volume XVII (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955) 221. See Part Nine of this study for a further discussion of Freud's understanding of the Daemonic.

¹³ In his book *Daemonic Figures: Shakespeare and the Question of Conscience* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), Ned Lukacher describes the demonisation 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 internalisation 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 demonisation of the Daemonic in terms of the overlapping traditions of Ancient Greece and Judaeo-Christianity.

usage, that positional ambiguity is polarized and an unbridgeable chasm set up between heaven and hell, good and evil.¹⁴

For the purposes of this study, it is only necessary to point out, following Barkan, that the idea of the Daemonic as it occurs in Plato is pre-Christian and refers to an agency which is morally ambivalent. As Barkan observes, slippage between the terms *daemonic* and *demonic* began to occur when Judaeo-Christian culture divided the hitherto ambivalent force of the Daemonic into an opposition between the angelic and the demonic or the devilish.

Another possible reason for this division may be the institutionalisation of the Christian Church, which also marked a kind of regulation of the relationship between the human and the divine. It was not the province of pre-Lutheran Christians to mediate between themselves and God, unless, of course, they were priests. In literary terms, the fate of those who would assert this kind of spiritual independence from Christian law is summed up in the character of Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost* – a would be daemon who wished to announce his own personal vision of the divine, and was consequently demonised and sent to hell for doing so. When William Blake wrote over one hundred years later in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that Milton was “a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it”, Blake was of the daemon's party – and he knew it.¹⁵ It was only about fifteen years after Blake's birth in 1757 that the Daemonic, in its Neo-Platonic sense, returned with full force to European literature, particularly during Goethe's early *Sturm und Drang* period. It is from this period, and particularly from Goethe's re-mobilisation of the term under the influence of philosophers like Hamann and Herder, that the *OED* derives its second definition of the Daemonic as “of the nature of supernatural power or genius”. It is primarily this second definition – that is to say, the Daemonic as a Neo-Platonic/Romantic phenomenon, a phenomenon which relates to subjectivity and to genius – which forms the subject of this study.

In German, the term *das Dämonische* has a more complex resonance than do either of the words *daemonic* or *demonic* in English. In effect, *das Dämonische* represents something like a fusion of the *Daemonic* and the *demonic*. On the one hand, it harbours the sense of a supernatural force which relates to artistic inspiration or genius, and which also encompasses something like an indwelling destiny or fate, while at the same time carrying with it a sense of anxiety, malignancy or evil,

¹⁴ Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986) 99.

¹⁵ William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (London: J.M. Dent, 1927) 6.

particularly when used in theological contexts.¹⁶ At this juncture it is necessary to observe that, owing to the very indeterminacy of the Daemonic as a mode or conduit which mediates between phenomena and noumena, or the visible and the invisible, it has often been consigned to the basket of evil – as the *demonic* or the *demoniacal* – in an attempt to neutralise 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 a tendency to divide the Daemonic into separate categories of good and evil,¹⁷ or, as is more often the case, to simply attribute it to the influence of Satan or the Devil, as the *demonic*. An example of this occurs repeatedly in English translations of Goethe, in which *das Dämonische* often becomes either the *demonic* or the *demoniacal*.¹⁸ These mistranslations occur despite the fact that Goethe himself took the time to point out, in Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, that the Daemonic is “nicht teuflisch” (“not devilish”).¹⁹

Addressing the subject of the *demonic* in his comprehensive study of the *topos* of the Daemonic in Western Literature – *The Flutes of Dionysus: Daemonic Enthralment in Literature* (1989) – Robert Stock writes that the term *demonic* is appropriate for “those instances, usually presented from a Christian point of view, where the agent is clearly satanic, or where there is some sort of idolatry.”²⁰ It is precisely these instances, where the origins of either daemonic or demonic phenomena are apparently ‘clear’, that this study will seek to avoid. The reason for avoiding Christian theology on the Daemonic/Demonic is that the subject loses its force when depicted from the perspective of strict

¹⁶ See, for example, Søren Kierkegaard’s use of the term in *The Concept of Anxiety*. Kierkegaard states: “If the question were raised as to what extent the daemonic is a problem for psychology, I must reply, the daemonic is a state. Out of this state, the particular sinful act can constantly break forth.” *The Concept of Anxiety* trans. Reidar Thomte and A.B. Anderson (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980) 122-123. (I have changed Thomte’s and Anderson’s translation from *demonic* to *daemonic*). Karl Jaspers uses the term in a similar way to Kierkegaard in *Der philosophische Glaube* (1948): “Das Dämonische als der trotzig Wille zum eigenen zufälligen Selbst ist ein Verzweifelt-man-selbst-sein-wollen” (“The Daemonic as the defiant intention toward an autonomous accidental self is a despairing-will-to-be-oneself”). Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube* (Gastvorlesungen, München: 1948) 111. Jaspers is quoted in the article ‘Dämonisch’ by Axelos, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Band II 6.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ This occurs, for example, in John Oxenford’s translation of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, in which *das Dämonische* becomes “Demoniac”. *The Autobiography of Goethe* trans. John Oxenford Volume II (New York: John D. Williams, 1882) 321. R.O. Moon’s translation of Eckermann’s *Gespräche mit Goethe* translates *das Dämonische* as the “demoniacal”. *Eckermann’s Conversations with Goethe* trans. R.O. Moon (London: Morgan Laird, no date). 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: Suhrkamp/Insel, 1983) 176, 177.

¹⁹ See, in this connection, the first major statement made by Goethe on the Daemonic in Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band X 175-176. This passage from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is discussed in section 7.4. of this study.

²⁰ Robert Stock, *The Flutes of Dionysus* xiv.

theological doctrine. Ned Lukacher argues in this vein that the Daemonic "becomes demonic precisely to the extent that spirit is subjectivized by univocal interpretations."²¹ The Christian view of the Daemonic as *demonic* constitutes just such a univocal interpretation, in that it amounts to an attempt at absolute interpretative closure. This is not to suggest that the Daemonic is not, in the broadest sense of the term, a religious phenomenon. Insofar as the word 'religion' can be seen to embrace the Pantheism of someone like Goethe, or the philosophy of Plato, the Daemonic is indeed a religious subject. Moreover, this study will consider the perspectives of writers like Søren Kierkegaard, Walter Benjamin and Rudolf Otto, all of whom might be broadly termed 'religious', while at the same time not being subject to the kind of philosophical strictures normally associated with theology.

1.3. Plato and Goethe.

When one searches for examples of the Daemonic in Western thought, the results of such a search 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 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* (1928), Stefan Zweig makes the following observation on the impossibility of exhaustively defining the term:

Dämonsich: 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.²²

Daemonic: the word has meandered through so many different senses and definitions, since its emergence from the mythic-religious world-view of the ancients until its arrival into our times, that it is necessary to stamp the term with a personal meaning.

This study seeks to investigate the way in which the terms 'daemon' and 'Daemonic' are used by two key figures in the history of Western thought: Plato and Goethe. These thinkers have been chosen as the subjects for this study, not because of any inherent similarity in their respective world-views, and not even from the perspective of the always existing possibility of influence, but rather for the different

²¹ Lukacher, *Daemonic Figures* 4.

²² Stefan Zweig, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag: 1928) 9.

historical contexts in which they, and some of their contemporaries, use the terms 'daemon' and 'daemonic'. To the best of my knowledge, the only previous study which has, in part, attempted to bring together the world-views of Plato and Goethe through the theme of the Daemonic is volume one of Paul Friedländer's *Platon: Seinswahrheit und Lebenswirklichkeit* (1954).²³ We will frequently turn to Friedländer's discussion in Part Two of our analysis.

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* (1925) – Walter Benjamin is faced with a similar problem to that which arises in this study: namely, the difficulty of presenting the meaning or essence of a particular idea or notion (in Benjamin's case *Trauerspiel*, in our case, the Daemonic) by referring to its singular manifestations within the works of particular authors. In response to this methodological problem, Benjamin argues, in the 'Erkenntniskritische Vorrede' ('Epistemo-Critical Prologue') of his study, that the absolute essence of the *Trauerspiel* cannot be brought into presentation. Rather, aspects of its central 'idea' may be revealed to us in a fragmentary way when we investigate its concrete, singular manifestations through "genauester Versenkung in die Einzelheiten eines Sachgehalts" ("immersion in the minutest details of subject matter").²⁴ Generalised notions, concepts or *topoi* can only be understood, according to Benjamin, in terms of their individual or particular manifestations:

Vom Extremen geht der Begriff aus. Wie die Mutter aus voller Kraft sichtlich erst da zu leben beginnt, wo der Kreis ihrer Kinder aus dem Gefühl ihrer Nähe sich um sie schließt, so treten die Ideen ins Leben erst, wo die Extreme sich um sie versammeln. Die Ideen – im Sprachgebrauche Goethes: Ideale – sind die faustischen Mütter. Sie bleiben dunkel, wo die Phänomene sich zu ihnen nicht bekennen und um sie scharen.²⁵

The concept has its roots in the extreme. Just as a mother is seen to begin to live in the fullness of her power only when the circle of her children, inspired by the feeling of her proximity, closes around her, so do ideas come to life only when extremes are assembled around them. Ideas – or, to use Goethe's term, ideals – are the Faustian 'Mothers'. They remain obscure so long as phenomena do not declare their faith to them and gather around them.

²³ Paul Friedländer, *Platon: Seinswahrheit und Lebenswirklichkeit* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1954). Translated by Hans Meyerhoff as *Plato Volume I: An Introduction* (New York: Bollingen, 1958). See, in particular, Chapter Two of Friedländer's analysis, entitled 'Dämon und Eros' (translated as 'Demon and Eros'). Meyerhoff translates the term *Dämon* into Demon. Hereafter I will replace this with 'daemon'. At the time of writing, the original German version of Friedländer's text was unavailable.

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* *Gesammelte Schriften* Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser Hg. Band I.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974) 208. Translated by John Osborne as *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London: NLB, 1977) 29.

²⁵ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* 215. Trans. Osborne, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* 35.

Following the example set by Benjamin, this study does not pretend to bring the theoretical 'essence' of the notion of the Daemonic into view. Rather, its aim is to reveal both similarities and differences in the ways in which two key thinkers – one characteristically ancient or 'Classical', the other, particularly in his emphasis upon individualism and subjectivity, paradigmatically modern – use the same term or notion.

On the one hand, Plato (427-347 B.C.) is the Classical philosopher whose theory of the forms is the point of departure for the whole history of Western philosophy, from Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), through Stoicism and Neo-Platonism, to the Judaeo-Christian tradition as it is manifested in figures like Philo of Alexandria (c.20B.C–54A.D.), Augustine (354-430) Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) and Meister Eckhart (c. 1250–1329). By virtue of his attempts to demonstrate the priority of universal, super-sensuous Ideas or *eide* over the existence of particular, sensuous material objects, Plato is traditionally seen as the father of Western Rationalism²⁶: the figure who proclaims at 247c of the *Phaedrus* that truth or the *eide* are apprehensible "only by intellect or reason alone, which is the pilot of the soul."²⁷ When we add to this picture Plato's apparent preference for philosophy over poetry, and his apparent belief in the superiority of Socrates's dispassionate dialectical methods over the passionate and 'irrational' behaviour of poets, we are 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 the question as to 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 which I will seek to answer by investigating the meaning of Plato's conception of the Daemonic, and his presentation of the *daimonion* or 'divine voice' experienced by Socrates. In answering this question I will make use of two modern interpretations of the Platonic Socrates: Søren Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates* (1841), and Georg Lukács's early essay 'Longing and Form' (1910).

²⁶ 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." Daniel Garber, 'Rationalism', *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 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. These figures will be discussed in Part Four of my analysis.

²⁷ Plato, *Phaedrus* trans. Walter Hamilton. *Plato: Phaedrus and the Seventh and Eighth Letters* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) 52.

Goethe (1749-1832), on the other hand, is born during the latter stages of the Enlightenment, and becomes productive at a time in which many of the central precepts of that movement begin to be questioned by the European movement known broadly as 'Romanticism'. One of the first critics to recognise Goethe's significance in this respect was Wilhelm Dilthey. In *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (1906), Dilthey writes:

Ich habe am Eingang dieses Bandes die Bewegung der europäischen Literatur geschildert, die von der Entstehung der modernen Wissenschaft bestimmt war. Beinahe anderthalb Jahrhunderte hatte dieselbe gedauert, als Goethe geboren wurde. Unter ihrem Einfluß ist er aufgewachsen, und die Summe ihrer Ergebnisse wirkte in ihm fort. Und nun umgab ihn die deutsche Aufklärung; als er zu dichten begann, stand Lessing auf der Höhe seines Wirkens. Auch ihre eigenste Richtung, die durch unsere ganze Geschichte bestimmt war, hat er in sich aufgenommen: die Vertiefung des Menschen in sich selbst und in das Ideal seines allgemeinen Wesens. Aber darin lag nun seine geschichtliche Mission, daß er, festwurzelnd in den großen Errungenschaften der Aufklärung, ein neues Zeitalter der Dichtung heraufführen sollte. In Deutschland entstand diese neue Zeit; Goethe und die Romantik als ein Unzertrennliches halfen überall bei der Befreiung der dichterischen Phantasie von der Herrschaft des abstrakten Verstandes und des von den Kräften des Lebens isolierten guten Geschmacks. Wer kennt nicht die Vorbereitungen dazu in den verschiedenen Ländern, die englische Genielehre, Rousseau, Hamann, Herder, Sturm und Drang? Goethe wurde vorwärts getragen von dieser Bewegung. Aber die neue Dichtung selbst war sein Werk. Und der Kampf seiner dichterischen Phantasie mit der Aufklärung, ja mit dem Geist der damaligen Wissenschaft selbst ist ein Schauspiel ohnegleichen in der Geschichte der Literatur.²⁸

In the introduction to this volume, I described how the course of European literature was determined by the emergence of modern science. This literary movement had endured for almost a century and a half when Goethe was born. He grew up under its influence, and the sum of its accomplishments was preserved by him. He was also surrounded by the German Enlightenment; when he began to write poetry, Lessing was at the pinnacle of his influence. Goethe adopted as his own the most characteristic tendency of this German Enlightenment – which was determined by our entire history – that of man's immersion in himself and in the ideal of his universal nature. But the historical mission of Goethe, building on the great achievements of the Enlightenment, was to introduce a new era of poetry. It was in Germany that this new era arose. Goethe and the Romantics were inseparably linked in their efforts to further the emancipation of the poetic imagination from the domination of abstract thought and 'good taste' which knew nothing of the power of life. We all know how this emancipation was initiated in various countries, in the English doctrine of genius, in Rousseau, Hamann, Herder, *Sturm und Drang*. Goethe was carried forward by this movement. But the new poetry was his creation. And the struggle of the poetic imagination with the Enlightenment – even with the spirit of science at that time itself – is a spectacle unparalleled in the history of literature.

²⁸ Wilhelm Dilthey, 'Goethe und die dichterische Phantasie', *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (1906; Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft, 1957) 111-112. Translated by Christopher Rodie in: Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Works Volume V: Poetry and Experience* ed. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985) 235-236.

Dilthey's analysis raises a major question discussed 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 work of figures like August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel and Friedrich Leopold von Hardenberg (Novalis),²⁹ 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.³⁰

German scholars have, moreover, tended to avoid labelling 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. 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 and Hans Blumenberg, and taking into account some of the conclusions drawn by Goethe's most recent biographer (Nicholas Boyle), this study will seek to address Goethe's notion of the Daemonic in connection with some of the literary-philosophical ideas which proliferated during the broad period of European – and not exclusively German – Romanticism.

In 1990, Nicholas Boyle wrote that the "secondary writing about Goethe long ago grew to a point at which no one man could hope to encompass it."³¹ My purpose here is not to give a history of Goethe criticism, as this undertaking would surely amount to an ambitious doctoral thesis in itself. Nevertheless, a philosophical reading of Goethe's works requires us to acknowledge certain developments in literary criticism which took place in the second half of the twentieth century, while also demanding that we consider some of the philosophical interpretations of Goethe's works which have been published since Dilthey's *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (1906).

²⁹ See, for example, Heinrich Heine, *Die Romantische Schule Werke Band IV: Schriften über Deutschland* Helmut Schanze Hg. (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1968) 180. Translated by Jost Hermand and Robert C. Holub *The Romantic School and Other Essays* ed. Jost Hermand and Robert C. Holub (New York: Continuum, 1985) 16.

³⁰ See, in this connection, Harold Bloom, *The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971) and M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

³¹ Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and The Age* Volume I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) x.

From the time of Goethe's death (1832) up until the early twentieth century, Goethe criticism tended, for the most part, to follow the narrowly biographical approach to Goethe's *oeuvre* which was in fact initiated by Goethe himself in his autobiography (*Dichtung und Wahrheit*) and particularly in Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe* (1835) – a book described by Nietzsche as the best German book that exists.³² Such an approach urged the reader to understand Goethe's works as reflections upon actual events in his life. 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 art (*Kunst*) is first and foremost "Nachahmung des Lebens" ("the imitation of life").³³ 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-outline, and cannot be viewed within the broader context of the history of ideas. As Walter Benjamin observes, Gundolf's approach leads only to the transformation of Goethe into a "mythical hero", and in fact tells us very little about the literary-philosophical issues of his *Zeitgeist*.³⁴

Occurring some twenty-five years after the publication of Gundolf's *Goethe*, the movement in Anglo-American literary theory known as the New Criticism, which first arose with John Crowe Ransom's book *The New Criticism* (1941), tended to focus more upon the internal structures of a particular poetic work, rather than upon the social, historical, or indeed biographical conditions which purportedly gave rise to it.³⁵ In its most radical form, the New Criticism held that poetic works should be read as 'heterocosms' or a 'worlds on the page': that is to say, they should be regarded independently of external historical, social or biographical determinants.³⁶ Both derivative of, yet also opposed to, the New Criticism was the movement known as Structuralism, which also held that the poetic text, and not its author, should be the primary issue in any critical enterprise. While Structuralism differed from the New Criticism in that it argued that a poem or work can never be seen purely as a heterocosm which is isolated from its socio-historical conditions, it also tended to radicalise the New Criticism's diminution

³² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches Werke in Drei Bänden* Karl Schlechta Hg. Band I (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1960) 921.

³³ Friedrich Gundolf, *Goethe* (Berlin: 1916) 2.

³⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'Comments on Gundolf's *Goethe*', trans. Rodney Livingstone *Selected Writings Volume I 1913-1926* ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996) 98.

³⁵ See Cleanth Brooks and T.V.F. Brogan, 'New Criticism', *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* ed. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993) 833-834. See also René Wellek, 'The New Criticism', *A History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950* Volume XI (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986) 144-158.

³⁶ Terence Hawkes, 'New Criticism', *Structuralism and Semiotics* (London: Routledge, 1977) 151-156.

of the life of the author as an interpretative source for his or her texts.³⁷ This particular strain of Structuralism eventually led Roland Barthes to proclaim the 'Death of the Author' in his famous essay of the same title.³⁸

Existing both prior to, and 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 and Georg Simmel's *Kant und Goethe* (1906) and followed by Simmel's *Goethe* (1913). 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" ("the secret of nature") by forging a seamless continuity between poetry and lived experience,³⁹ 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 depicted in Max Weber's *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (1904).⁴⁰ 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 Wahlverwandschaften' (both published in 1924). In the post-war 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' (1947) and Georg Lukács's *Goethe und seine Zeit* (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 a rhetorical analysis by Hans Blumenberg in two key works: *Arbeit am Mythos* (1979) and *Goethe zum Beispiel* (1999).

Emerging out of 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

³⁷ See Johnathan Culler, 'Structuralism', *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* 1215-1222.

³⁸ See Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Image-Music-Text* trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977).

³⁹ Dilthey, 'Goethe und die dichterische Phantasie', *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* 124. Trans. Rodie, *Poetry and Experience* 250.

⁴⁰ Georg Simmel, *Goethe* (Leipzig: Verlag von Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1913) 7.

Goethe's works. In *Dictations: On Haunted Writing* (1986), Avital Ronell argues that 'Goethe' has become an 'excessive signifier': a textual site upon which, partly due to the efforts of Eckermann's *Gespräche*, various narratives and myths have accumulated to such an extent that we can no longer distinguish Goethe the man from his works.⁴¹ David E. Wellbery, in his book *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (1996), argues for a new reading of Goethe's early lyrics which sees these lyrics as key moments in the origins of European Romanticism. Wellbery contends, at the same time, that we need to deconstruct the metaphysics of presence which underlie the early Romantic lyric: the notion that they communicate to the reader something prior to the act of linguistic signification itself.⁴² Certain aspects of Wellbery's methodology will be pursued in Part Five of our analysis, as a means to understanding the discourse on genius which took place in Germany in the late eighteenth century, and which presents itself most obviously in Goethe's *Werther*.

Although we 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 which 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* (1982-1985) and particularly to Nicholas Boyle's excellent, eminently philosophical study, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* (Volume I, 1991; Volume II, 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 which threatened to overwhelm his literary legacy – the intention of this study is not completely to 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.⁴³ Indeed, the dearth of post-structuralist interpretations of Goethe's works might be seen to

⁴¹ Avital Ronell, *Dictations: On Haunted Writing* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

⁴² David E. Wellbery, *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

⁴³ Ronell writes, on page xix, that: "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." Ronell, *Dictations: On Haunted Writing* xix.

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 to suggest that literary texts are often influenced, and perhaps even to some degree produced, by the social 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, it is submitted 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, into *Wilhelm Meister*, *Die Wahlverwandschaften* and Part Two of *Faust* – is to develop new ways of depicting and theorising 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, we must assume that there is a human subject – named 'Goethe' – to which we can refer throughout 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 which has secure foundations in three main fields; Firstly, in the recent, even-handed biographies of Conrady and Boyle. Secondly, in a tradition of philosophically inclined Goethe criticism, most readily exemplified in the aforementioned works by Mahnke, Benjamin, Gadamer, Lukács and Blumenberg. And thirdly, in the extensive array of existing critical approaches to Goethe's notion of the Daemonic which are dealt with later in this chapter.⁴⁴

Keeping these sources in mind, Goethe's conception of the Daemonic or *das Dämonische* will be seen, throughout this study, as a lens through which we can view his attitude to a central concern of Romanticism: the theorisation and delineation of the boundaries of the subject. Goethe scholars have tended to view the Daemonic as a phenomenon which Goethe *experiences* in his youth, and then subsequently *theorises* in the latter stages of his life, particularly in autobiographical works like

⁴⁴ See section 1.5.3. of this chapter, entitled 'Works Addressing the Notion of the Daemonic in the Writings of Goethe'.

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.⁴⁵

There is no doubt that the young Goethe was more emotionally involved with the Daemonic than the old, who retrospectively understood it more and more as a secret of the universe. In Goethe's youth the Daemonic penetrated the dithyrambic experience of the Genius and his presentiments regarding the whole world. It then blends with an awareness of an inexorable and elemental fate, which leads the chosen one into its merciful but also deadly path. The word certainly belongs completely in the sphere of the old Goethe, just as surely as the young Goethe experienced the extraordinariness, effusiveness and individuality of human existence as daemonic.

When seen within the context presented to us by Wiese, many of Goethe's early *Sturm und Drang* works are preoccupied with the theme of subjectivity, and particularly with the question as to exactly how far the internal wishes, desires and longings of the subject can be fulfilled in the real, external world: a world inhabited by natural objects and by other subjects. This question presents itself to us in early lyrics like 'Mahomets Gesang' and 'Prometheus', and in the major literary accomplishment of Goethe's youth: *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*). I will submit that all of these works concern themselves with the following questions; To what extent can the human subject, the human 'Genius', be godlike? Can human subjects, like the 'daemons' of antiquity, mediate between the realms of the secular 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 term 'daemonic' will be seen to function in Goethe's works: that is to say, within the notion that the *internal* powers and capabilities of the artistic subject or genius can be 'daemonic', in the sense of mediating between the secular and the divine – or, in Goethe's pantheistic terminology, between the human and God/Nature.

⁴⁵ Benno von Wiese, 'Das Dämonische und seine Gegenkräfte in der Tragödie Goethes', *Die Deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1948) 81.

Goethe's later works, by contrast, appear to reflect upon the question of subjectivity from both a *scientific* and a *mythic* perspective. In scientific essays like 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt' ('The Experiment as Mediator between Object and Subject'), Goethe attempts to outline the extent to which natural objects may in fact contradict the theories imposed upon them by the subject or scientist. In this way, he may be seen to suggest that the desires of the subject are limited and obstructed by natural or even divine forces which cannot be understood in purely rational terms, and which are consequently described as 'daemonic'. In fact, Goethe's apprehension of the limits of rational or scientific inquiry often serves to introduce him to the mythic dimensions apparent in human existence: those dimensions which 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 (*Bilder*).

Here we find the *second sense* in which the term 'daemonic' will be understood to operate in Goethe's works: that is to say, as an apparently *external* force in God/Nature which serves to obstruct the aims, goals, desires and projects of the striving subject – a force which 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 – that is, the Daemonic as an *internal* and subjective creative power or energy, and the Daemonic as an apparently *external* force in God/Nature which obstructs the desires and goals of the subject – are not mutually exclusive of one another. Particularly in late texts like *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and Eckermann's *Gespräche*, Goethe often seems to oscillate between these two basic formulations of the Daemonic. The underlying relationship between the internal or subjective sense of the Daemonic, and its external, natural or 'objective' manifestations, will be approached in Part Seven of our analysis, through the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling.

Thus, in the cases of both Plato 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 encountered by intuitions of the 'non-rational'. Such encounters will also be seen to introduce situations in which 'rational' concepts are challenged by non-rational or mythic images (*Bilder*).

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

This study will argue that the phenomenon known 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 which 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....⁴⁶

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 which has no substantive basis in fact, while *logos* corresponds 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.⁴⁷ Thus, even when 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*)

⁴⁶ Plato, *Phaedo* trans. Hugh Tredennick *The Last Days of Socrates* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1954) 103. Brackets added.

⁴⁷ The above analysis is indebted to the work of Luc Brisson in his book *Plato the Myth Maker*. See in particular, section Ten, ‘The Opposition between Myth and Argumentative Discourse’, (112-115) and section Eleven, ‘The Utility of Myth’, 116-121. Luc Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker*, trans. Gerard Naddaf, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). See also Robert Scott Stewart’s article ‘The Epistemological Function of Platonic Myth’, *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22.4 (1989): 260-280. Stewart argues that myth fulfils two epistemic functions in Plato’s philosophy. Firstly, myths provide interlocutors with physical images or metaphors which assist them in moving from ‘physical’ modes of thought to ‘abstract’ or metaphysical modes of thought. Secondly, and most importantly, 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.” 275-276. Brackets added.

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.⁴⁸

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 which drives the process of dialectic) while also denoting the divine plan or intelligence which created the universe (as is discussed at 265c of the *Sophist*).⁴⁹

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* (1944) Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno famously state that:

...schon der Mythos ist Aufklärung, und: Aufklärung schlägt in Mythologie zurück.⁵⁰

...myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology.

The philosophical argument behind Horkheimer's and Adorno's statement is roughly as follows; In its attempts to find a rational ground (*logos*) from which to interpret, conceptualise and ultimately to control nature, enlightenment was forced to expel and repress the non-rational and the mythical (*mythos*) from its field of vision.⁵¹ 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 power and mysteries of nature. Thus, according 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.

⁴⁸ Plato, *The Republic* trans. Paul Shorey Plato: The Collected Dialogues ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961) 766. Brackets added.

⁴⁹ For a comprehensive account of the concept of *logos* in Plato see Hugo Perls, Lexicon der Platonischen Begriffe (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1973) 212-215.

⁵⁰ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialektik der Aufklärung (1944; Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1969) 6. Translated by John Cumming as The Dialectic of Enlightenment (London: Allen Lane, 1972) xvi.

⁵¹ I use capital letters to refer to the historical period of the 'Enlightenment'. The non-capitalised term 'enlightenment' refers to the philosophical concept or project of enlightenment as discussed in Horkheimer's and Adorno's Dialektik der Aufklärung.

At the same time, however, when 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 which threaten the autonomy of the subject.

More recently, Hans Blumenberg argues, along similar lines, that enlightenment or theory (*logos*) takes its bearings from questions already suggested by – and therefore also *conditioned* by – myth. Thus, according to Blumenberg:

Die klassische Desinformation, die in der Formel *vom Mythos zum Logos* liegt und in der Unentschiedenheit Platos zwischen Mythos und Logos noch unschuldig schlummert, ist dort fertig, wo der Philosoph im Mythos nur die Identität der Gegenstände erkennt, für die er das abschließende Verfahren gefunden zu haben glaubt. Der Unfug jener sinnfälligen Geschichtsformel liegt darin, daß sie im Mythos selbst nicht eine der Leistungsformen des Logos anzuerkennen gestattet. Daß der Gang der Dinge *vom Mythos zum Logos* vorangeschritten sei, ist deshalb eine gefährliche Verkennung, weil man sich damit zu versichern meint, irgendwo in die Ferne der Vergangenheit sei der irreversible Fortsprung getan worden, der etwas weit hinter sich gebracht zu haben und fortan nur noch Fortschritte tun zu müssen entschieden hätte... Der Mythos hatte kaum die Gegenstände des Philosophen bestimmt, wohl aber den Standard der Leistungen, hinter den er nicht zurückfallen dürfte... Die Theorie sieht im Mythos ein Ensemble von Antworten auf Fragen, wie sie selbst es ist oder sein will.⁵²

The classical 'disinformation' that is contained in the formula 'from mythos to logos' and that still lies innocently dormant in Plato's indecision between myth and logos is complete where the philosopher recognizes in myth only the identity of the objects for which he has found the definitive mode of treatment. The mischief of that obvious historical formula lies in the fact that it does not permit one to recognize in myth itself one of the modes of accomplishment of logos. That the course of things proceeded 'from mythos to logos' is a dangerous misconception because we think that we assure ourselves by it that somewhere in the distant past the irreversible 'spring forward' [*Fortsprung*] took place that determined that something had been put far behind us and that from then on only 'steps forward' [*Fortschritte* 'progresses'] had to be executed.... Myth had hardly defined the philosopher's objects, but it had defined the standard of achievements that he could not fall short of.... Theory sees in myth an ensemble of answers to questions, such as it is itself, or wants to be.

Keeping Blumenberg's comments in mind, we need to ask the following questions; Why does Socrates decide to write poetry – an activity which he says impairs the reason at 605b of *The Republic* – at the

⁵² Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979) 33-34. Translated by Robert M. Wallace as *Work on Myth* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985) 27.

very end of his supposedly 'rational' life?⁵³ And why does Socrates, and by 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 to us when we investigate that aspect of the non-rational which entered Socrates's life at its most crucial moments: namely the 'divine sign' or *daimonion*, and the general mode of the Daemonic, both of which will be discussed at length in Part Two of this study. Speaking of Plato's tendency to invoke the existence of daemons throughout his philosophy, Paul Friedländer makes the following comments, comments which are central to the purpose of this study:

The Platonists of antiquity assign to daemonology a definite place in the structure of the master's thought. Modern interpreters are too enlightened to take Plato's statements on this subject seriously. But how are we justified in regarding as mere play what is said about the daemons...? ...By the mere fact that we have a contemporary science of nature and language, but none of daemons?...As a matter of fact, there should be no doubt that, in his writings, Plato does not teach a science in our sense of the word. And while what the characters in his dramas say about the world of daemons is certainly 'play', it is – like all play in Plato's works – of a deeply serious nature.⁵⁴

Thus, while on the one hand we are extremely familiar with 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 the forms – on the other hand we will also encounter, within the confines of this study, the less well known Plato alluded to by Friedländer: a Plato who places great value upon the non-rational, 'mantic' arts, mantic meaning 'of divination'.⁵⁵ This image of Plato presents itself to us in the passage from which this study takes its title – a passage which can be found at 244a-244d of the *Phaedrus*. The speaker of these lines is Socrates:

⁵³ 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. In his book *Myth and Metaphysics in Plato's Phaedo*, David A. White writes that Socrates's decision to write poetry following the suggestions of his dream may correspond with his realisation that the goals of philosophy and dialectic may be assisted by myth. White writes that: "Socrates's 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." David A. White, *Myth and Metaphysics in Plato's Phaedo* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989) 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 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 behaviour of the inferior part of the soul." Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker* 112, 116.

⁵⁴ Friedländer, *Plato* Volume I 32.

⁵⁵ The word 'mantic' comes from the Greek term *mantikos* (μαντικός) meaning either 'prophetic' or 'oracular', as well as 'of divination' or 'prophecy'. Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* 920. In this passage, Socrates is careful to distinguish between *mantikos* (prophetic or divine madness) and *manikos* (madness or frenzy).

False is the tale which says that because the lover is mad and the non-lover sane the non-lover should be given preference when one might have a lover. If it were true without qualification that madness is an evil, that would all be very well, but in fact madness, provided it comes as the gift of heaven, is the channel by which we receive the greatest blessings. Take the prophetess at Delphi and the priestesses at Dodona, for example, and consider all the benefits which individuals and states in Greece have received from them when they were in a state of frenzy, though their usefulness in their sober senses amounts to little or nothing. And if we were to include the Sibyl and others who by the use of inspired divination have set many inquirers on the right track about the future, we should be telling at tedious length what everyone knows. But this at least is worth pointing out, that the men of old who gave things their names saw no disgrace or reproach in madness; otherwise they would not have connected with it the name of the noblest of all arts, the art of discerning the future, and called it the *manic* art. The fact that they did so shows that they looked upon madness as a fine thing, when it comes upon a man by divine dispensation, but their successors have bungled matters by the introduction of a T, and produced the word *mantic*....So, according to the evidence provided by our ancestors, madness is a nobler thing than sober sense, in proportion as the name of the mantic art and the act that it signifies are more perfect and held in higher esteem than the name and act of augury; madness comes from God, whereas sober sense is merely human.⁵⁶

In this passage, Socrates seeks to correct and amend the notion, outlined by him at an earlier stage of the *Phaedrus*, that non-lovers are preferable to lovers because they are free from the 'madness' or compulsion associated with the emotion of love. We need not enter into a major exegesis of this passage here, as we will return to it shortly in Part Two of our analysis. At this point I wish merely to suggest that Plato's Socrates is not always the rational Socrates of *The Republic*: the Socrates who extols the faculty of reason or *logos* at the expense of all others. Particularly in dialogues like the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, we will, in Part Two, encounter a Socrates who is an exponent of non-rational modes like *eros* and *mythos*, and a Socrates who often depends upon the non-rational voice of his divine sign or *daimonion*.

Accordingly, Part Two of this study will suggest that even in Plato, perhaps the founding father of Western Rationalism, there is no simple step or leap forward (*Fortschritt, Fortsprung*) from *mythos* to *logos*. Rather, there is something like a process of exchange, a dialectical relationship, between these two faculties or modes.

Part Three of our analysis will initially investigate the way in which the notion of the daemon begins to be immanentised⁵⁷ and secularised in the philosophy of Aristotle through his concept of the *entelechy*:

⁵⁶ Plato, *Phaedrus* (Hamilton) 46-47.

⁵⁷ The verb 'to immanentise', which cannot be found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, simply means to 'render immanent'.

a concept also deployed by Leibniz, and by Goethe. In Goethe's case the notion of the *entelechy* as espoused by both Aristotle and Leibniz will be seen to have direct consequences for his later understanding of the Daemonic as it manifests itself in the poem 'Urworte. Orphisch'. Following its discussion of Aristotle, Part Three will also examine the way in which the concept of reason or *nous* begins to be conflated with Plato's notion of the daemon, and with Socrates's 'divine voice' or *daimonion*, in Stoic thought (Posidonius and Marcus Aurelius), and in Neo-Platonic philosophy (exemplified by Plutarch and Plotinus).

Parts Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight of this study will all demonstrate the ways in which, throughout Goethe's *oeuvre*, the so-called passage from *mythos* to *logos* is called into question. As was mentioned earlier by Dilthey, Goethe was born during one of the high points of the Western *logos*, at the tail-end of the European Enlightenment. Inheriting philosophical systems which purportedly guaranteed the rationality of the universe through the invocation of a rational God or 'principle of sufficient reason' – here I am referring to the respective systems of Spinoza and particularly Leibniz – the young Goethe was led to an awareness, not of a serenely rational existence in line with the cosmologies offered by the aforementioned thinkers, but of an existence in which the imaginative subject or genius has the capacity to disrupt the universal order in its attempts to consummate its own subjective desires. The philosophical *Weltanschauung* of the seventeenth and eighteenth century European Enlightenment, a *Weltanschauung* into which Goethe was born, is described by Horkheimer and Adorno in the following way:

Als Sein und Geschehen wird von der Aufklärung vorweg nur anerkannt, was durch Einheit sich erfassen läßt; ihr Ideal ist das System, aus dem alles und jedes folgt. Nicht darin unterscheiden sich ihre rationalistische und empiristische Versionen. Mochten die einzelnen Schulen die Axiome verschieden interpretieren, die Struktur der Einheitswissenschaft war stets dieselbe. Bacons Postulat der *Una scientia universalis* ist bei allem Pluralismus der Forschungsgebiete dem Unverbindbaren so feind wie die Leibniz'sche *Mathesis universalis* dem Sprung. Die Vielheit der Gestalten wird auf Lage und Anordnung, die Geschichte aufs Faktum, die Dinge auf Materie abgezogen.⁵⁸

In advance, the Enlightenment recognizes as being and occurrence only what can be apprehended in unity: its ideal is a system from which all and everything follows. Its rationalist and empiricist versions do not part company on that point. Even though the individual schools may interpret the axioms differently, the structure of scientific unity has always been the same. Bacon's postulate of *una scientia universalis*, whatever the number of fields of research, is as inimical to the unassignable as Leibniz's *mathesis universalis* is to discontinuity. The multiplicity of forms is reduced to position and arrangement, history to fact, things to matter.

⁵⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno, Dialektik der Aufklärung 13. Trans. Cumming, Dialectic of Enlightenment 7.

Parts Four and Five will discuss how, in response to the rationalist and empiricist world-views presented above, the following questions were asked by the young Goethe, and by his *Sturm und Drang* contemporaries like Hamann and Herder; How can the enlightenment methodologies of Empiricism and Rationalism account for the preternatural creative powers of a genius like Shakespeare, or the 'divine voice' (*daimonion*) of Socrates? Is God completely identical with nature, or does the divine somehow exceed both nature, and human understanding? How can the origin of language, and its apparent connection with natural objects and local habitats be rationally explained? And how, finally, can the fate of a character like Werther be reconciled with an overriding 'principle of sufficient reason' akin to that proposed by Leibniz?

Part Six will show how Goethe finds, in his encounters with the Critical Philosophy of Kant, some answers to the question of subjective freedom as it is raised during the period of the *Sturm und Drang* and particularly in *Werther*. But within Goethe's apparent 'adoption' of Kant's Critical Philosophy further questions can still be seen to arise; How can the universal idea or theory of the scientist be applied to the external objects of nature without the individuality and particularity of those objects being obscured and effaced? How can the scientist become fully conscious of those elements in his theories, in his own subjective preoccupations, which lead him into error? How can a complete continuity between theory (*Lehre*) and life (*Leben*) be established? How, in short, can the realm of theory or *logos* explain the mysteries of existence without ultimate recourse to the realm of *mythos*?

These are also the questions which Goethe poses when he consciously invokes the term 'das Dämonische' (the Daemonic) in his late works, and it is these works which will form the central focus of Part Seven of this study.

In perhaps the finest essay in existence on the subject of the Daemonic as it manifests itself in Goethe's works, Benno von Wiese makes the following remarks:

Es ist uns im Rahmen eines Vortrages nicht vergönnt, die Idee des Dämonischen im gesamten Bereich der Goetheschen Dichtung sichtbar zu machen. Denn sie reicht vom Werther, Egmont und Tasso bis zum Faust, zu Mignon und dem Harfner in den Lehrjahren, zur Ottilie der Wahlverwandschaften und der Makarie der Wanderjahre, ohne im Bereich der Lyrik zu fehlen, wofür die Triologie der Leidenschaft, die selige Sehnsucht des West-Östlichen Divan, die Paria-Legende und die Orphischen Urworte die vielleicht eindringlichsten Zeugnisse sind. Wir können nur einige Beispiele herausgreifen...⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Benno von Wiese, Das Dämonische in Goethes Weltbild und Dichtung (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1949) 13. Brackets added.

It is not granted to us, within the confines of a lecture, to make visible the idea of the Daemonic in the entire area of Goethe's literary production. Because it extends from Werther, Egmont and Tasso to Faust, to Mignon and the harp-player in [Wilhelm Meister's] Years of Apprenticeship, to Otilie of the Elective Affinities and the Makarie of [Wilhelm Meister's] Journey Years, without being absent in the area of poetry, to which the Trilogy of Passion, the spiritual longing of the West-Eastern Divan, the Paria-Legends and the Orphic Primal Words bear perhaps the most vivid testimony. We can only pick out individual examples....

Wiese's comments demonstrate the extent to which the broad theme of the Daemonic manifests itself, in different ways, throughout Goethe's entire *oeuvre*, beginning with the early lyrics and ending with *Faust II* and Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe*. The present study cannot hope to give an exhaustive account of the theme of the Daemonic in Goethe's works, as this theme would, in all likelihood, resist all attempts at a unified theoretical analysis.⁶⁰ This study does, nonetheless, aim to do *two* things with regard to the notion of the Daemonic in the works of Goethe.

Firstly, it attempts to demonstrate, in Part Five, the existence of the underlying notion of the Daemonic in two specific early works: namely, the poem 'Mahomets Gesang' and Goethe's first novel: *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*. Here we find the *first sense* in which Goethe uses the term daemonic. For the early *Sturm und Drang* Goethe, the Daemonic is always connected with the concept of the genius: the figure who harnesses preternatural creative powers, and who is – not unlike the demigods or daemons of Classical mythology – perceived as being 'godlike' or at the very least in touch with Spinoza's pantheistic deity known as *Deus sive Natura* (God or Nature).

Secondly, this study will discuss the *second sense* in which Goethe uses the term 'daemonic' in a philosophical context: that is to say, with reference to an apparently external limiting force or *Urphänomen* ('Primal Phenomenon') in God/Nature. As a prelude to this discussion, Part Six will give an account of Goethe's philosophical development, beginning with a consideration of his understanding of the philosophies of Spinoza and Leibniz, and followed by an examination of his ambiguous responses to the Critical Philosophy of Kant. The early stages of Part Seven will continue this account, by turning to Goethe's response to the early *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling. My approach to Goethe's philosophical development will take its bearings from four main sources: Walter Benjamin's Essay 'Goethe's Wahlverwandschaften' (1924), Hans-Georg Gadamer's seminal essay 'Goethe und die Philosophie' (1947), Georg Lukács's famous book on Goethe, *Goethe und seine Zeit*

⁶⁰ A comprehensive list of the appearances of the terms 'Dämon' and 'dämonisch' can be found in the *Goethe Wörterbuch*, Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen und der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften Hg. Band II (Stuttgart: Verlag Kohlhammer, 1989) 1056-1058.

1.5. Literature Review.

1.5.1. Works on the Notion of the Daemonic in German.

In his half-serious, half-ironic essay 'Deutschland und die Deutschen' Thomas Mann suggests that the preoccupation with 'things dáemonic' manifests itself most readily in German literature, and particularly in German Romanticism:

Die deutsche Romantik, was ist sie anderes als ein Ausdruck jener schönsten deutschen Eigenschaft, der deutschen Innerlichkeit? Viel Sehnsüchtig-Verträumtes, Phantastisch-Geisterhaftes und Tief-Skurriles, auch ein hohes artistisches Raffinement, eine alles überschwebende Ironie verbindet sich mit dem Begriff der Romantik. Aber nicht dies ist eigentlich, woran ich denke, wenn ich von deutscher Romantik spreche. Es ist vielmehr eine gewisse dunkle Mächtigkeit und Frömmigkeit, man könnte auch sagen: Altertümlichkeit der Seele, welche sich den chthonischen, irrationalen und dämonischen Kräften des Lebens, das will sagen: den eigentlichen Quellen des Lebens nahe fühlt und einer nur vernünftigen Weltbetrachtung und Weltbehandlung die Widersetzlichkeit tieferen Wissens, tieferer Verbundenheit mit dem Heiligen bietet.⁶¹

German Romanticism, what is it but an expression of that finest German quality, German inwardness? Much that is full of longing and dreaming, the fantastic and the supernatural, and the deeply droll – also a high artistic refinement, an over-arching irony connects itself with the concept of Romanticism. But it is not exactly this that I have in mind, when I speak of German Romanticism. It is much more a conscious, dark powerfulness and piety, one could also say an antiquity of the soul, which feels itself to be close to the chthonic, irrational and daemonic powers of nature, that is to say, to the actual sources of life, and which presents a merely rational world-view and treatment of the world (*Weltbehandlung*) with the contrariness of a deeper knowledge, a deeper connection with and closeness to the holy.

The combined German cultural tendencies alluded to by Mann – that is to say, a kind of inwardness or deep subjectivity, a sense of world-piety or natural religion, and an intuition of the non-rational and its relation to the rational – can also be found in what might be called the tradition of German religious-philosophical considerations of the Daemonic and similar themes: beginning with the work of Hamann, continuing into the nineteenth century through Herder and Goethe, Schelling, Kierkegaard (a kind of honorary German) and Nietzsche, and extending into the twentieth century in the work of figures like Freud and Jung, Rudolf Otto, Stefan Zweig, Karl Jaspers, Paul Tillich, Martin Heidegger, Ernst Cassirer, Georg Lukács, Walter Benjamin, Erwin Reisner and Paul Friedländer.

⁶¹ Thomas Mann, 'Deutschland und die Deutschen', *Thomas Mann: Essays Band V 1938-1945* Hermann Kurzke und Stephan Stachorski Hg. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1996) 276.

This study will concern itself chiefly with the early stages of this tradition – namely, the work of Hamann, Herder and Goethe – while at the same time occasionally drawing upon its latter stages for interpretative assistance. The considerations of the Daemonic and themes surrounding it undertaken by Hamann, Herder, Goethe, Schelling, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, Jung, Otto, Heidegger, Lukács, Benjamin and Friedländer need not be entered into here, as they will all be addressed (some briefly, some in depth) throughout the body of this study. My main concern here is to give a brief history of the remaining twentieth century interpretations of the Daemonic that exist in German.

Twentieth century German-language literary critics and philosophers have tended to use the terms 'daemon' and 'daemonic' to suit their own theoretical ends, often defining them in highly idiosyncratic ways. Ernst Cassirer, in his book *Sprache und Mythos: Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Götternamen* (1925), uses the term 'daemon' in order to refer to those objects – like for example the axe and the hammer – which are invested with a kind of numinous significance in primitive religious beliefs. Cassirer's intention is to demonstrate the workings of a phenomenon which he calls "unconscious ideation",⁶² through which the subject invests inanimate objects with symbolic powers. In stark contrast to the definition offered by Cassirer is that put forward by Paul Tillich in his essay 'Das Dämonische: Ein Beitrag zur Sinndeutung der Geschichte' (1926). Tillich sees the Daemonic as:

...die übergreifende Form, die ein gestaltendes und gestaltzerstörendes Element in sich vereinigt... ein Gegen-Positives, eine positive, d. h. formschaffende Formwidrigkeit.⁶³

...the over-reaching form, which unites in itself a form-creating and a form-destroying element... an anti-positive, and a positive, that is to say, a form-producing form-contrariety.

Tillich goes on to distinguish the Daemonic from the Satanic ("das Satanische") in the following way:

Die Spannung zwischen Formschöpfung und Formzerstörung, auf der das Dämonische beruht, grenzt es ab gegen das Satanische, in dem die Zerstörung ohne Schöpfung gedacht ist.⁶⁴

The tension between form-creation and form-destruction, upon which the Daemonic rests, marks it off from the Satanic, in which destruction is thought of without creation.

⁶² Ernst Cassirer, *Sprache und Mythos: Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Götternamen* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1925). Translated by Susanne K. Langer as *Language and Myth* (New York: Dover, 1953). See pages 58-59 for Cassirer's reference to the term 'daemon'.

⁶³ Paul Tillich, *Das Dämonische, ein Beitrag zur Sinndeutung der Geschichte* *Gesammelte Werke* Renate Albrecht Hg. Band VI (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1959-1975) 44.

⁶⁴ Tillich, *Das Dämonische* 45.

The latter passage exists in contrast to Tillich's formulation of *Das Dämonische* in an earlier text – *Religionsphilosophie* (1925) – in which he defines the Daemonic more specifically as the demonic: “In the sphere of the holy there arises the polarity of the divine and the Daemonic. The Daemonic is the holy (or the sacred) with a minus sign before it, the sacred anti-divine (*das heilig Gegengöttliche*).”⁶⁵

Unlike Tillich, Karl Jaspers discusses the Daemonic in a pre-Christian context. In his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1925), Jaspers sees the belief in daemonic forces as being coexistent with primitive mythological beliefs. According to Jaspers, such beliefs are not grounded in concrete concepts, but rather in images and narratives which confer upon the “mythologisch-dämonische Weltbild” (“mythological-daemonic World-image”)⁶⁶ a diversity and verisimilitude which is resistant to the confines of rational analysis. In support of his contention that the Daemonic is essentially a mythic force which is not susceptible of rational analysis, Jaspers introduces Goethe's discussions of the term in Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and in various passages from Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe*. Jaspers concludes that, like the Ancients, Goethe experienced and respected the Daemonic as the “Grenze seiner Erfahrung” (“boundary of his experience”), while at the same time not attempting to bring its many manifestations within the confines of a unified concept.⁶⁷

The Austrian author and critic Stefan Zweig tackles the theme of the Daemonic in his study of Hölderlin, Kleist and Nietzsche, titled *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon* (1928). Invoking the rhetoric of high Romanticism, Zweig argues, in the introduction to his study, that Hölderlin, Kleist and Nietzsche are similar in that “etwas Außermenschliches wirkt in ihnen, eine Gewalt über eigene Gewalt” (“something superhuman works within them, a power which is above individual power”).⁶⁸ These three figures were, according to Zweig, “Besessene einer höheren Macht, der dämonischen” (“possessed by a higher power, the daemonic”).⁶⁹ Zweig defines this power as follows:

⁶⁵ Paul Tillich, *Religionsphilosophie Gesammelte Werke*, Band I 338. Translated by J. Luther Adams in: Paul Tillich, *What is Religion?* ed. and trans. J.L. Adams (New York: Harper and Row, 1969) 85. I have changed Adams's translation of *das Dämonische* from *demonic* to *daemonic*.

⁶⁶ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophie der Weltanschauungen* (Berlin: Verlag von Julius Springer, 1925) 191.

⁶⁷ Jaspers, *Philosophie der Weltanschauungen* 198. See also footnote 16 of this chapter (in section 1.2.) for Jasper's discussion of the Daemonic in *Der philosophische Glaube*.

⁶⁸ Zweig, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon* 9.

⁶⁹ Zweig, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon* 9.

(1947), and the first two volumes of Nicholas Boyle's comprehensive biography of Goethe: *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* (Volume I, 1991, Volume II, 2000).

In Part Seven, two poems: 'Mächtiges Überraschen' and 'Urworte. Orphisch', will be seen as paradigmatic examples of Goethe's attempts to present his later notion of the Daemonic as an existential principle or *Urphänomen*. As a means to understanding Goethe's later notion of the Daemonic as it is manifested in these poems, Part Seven will also make extensive use of Walter Benjamin's essay 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften'. Goethe's two lengthy autobiographical discussions of the phenomenon of the Daemonic, both of which appear in Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, will be interpreted in terms of the understanding of myth outlined by Hans Blumenberg in his book *Arbeit am Mythos* (1979).

Part Eight will seek to interpret the way in which the adjective 'daemonic' is used by Goethe in Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe*. In this connection, particular attention will be given to Goethe's repeated descriptions of Napoleon as a 'daemonic' individual. The political implications of Goethe's remarks in relation to Napoleon will be assessed with the help of Ekkehart Krippendorff's book *Wie die Großen mit den Menschen spielen: Goethes Politik* (1988) and Katharina Mommsen's essay 'Faust II als politisches Vermächtnis des Staatmannes Goethe' (1989).

Part Nine of this study will suggest future areas of research in relation to the notion of the Daemonic. In this connection, particular reference will be made to the historical context in which the foremost figure in the history of psychoanalysis – Sigmund Freud – deploys the term 'dämonisch' ('daemonic') in two of his most famous late texts: *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) and the essay 'Das Unheimliche' ('The Uncanny'), both of which were written in 1919. Finally, Part Ten will make some concluding remarks concerning our entire discussion.

Dämonisch nenne ich die ursprünglich and wesenhaft jedem Menschen eingeborene Unruhe, die ihn aus sich selbst heraus, über sich selbst hinaus ins Unendliche, ins Elementarische treibt, gleichsam als hätte die Natur von ihrem einstigen Chaos ein unveräußerliches unruhiges Teil in jeder einzelnen Seele zurückgelassen, das mit Spannung und Leidenschaft zurück will in das übermenschliche, übersinnliche Element.⁷⁰

I name daemonic the original and essential restlessness innate within each person, which drives him out of himself and over himself into the infinite, into the elemental, just as if nature had left behind, in every individual soul, an inalienable restless part of its former chaos, which wishes, with tension and passion, to return to the superhuman, supersensuous element.

The connection made by Zweig between the Daemonic and nature will, in Part Nine of this study, be seen to place him within a tradition occupied by both Schelling and Freud. In this connection it is noteworthy that Zweig dedicated his study on the Daemonic to Freud. We will briefly examine Freud's response to this dedication in Part Nine of our analysis.

Finally, in *Der Dämon und sein Bild* (1947) Erwin Reisner engages in a proto-Romantic, highly rhetorical analysis of both daemons and the Daemonic, both of which he views as having been passed over, repressed and forgotten by Western civilization, as a consequence of "Die Blindheit der Aufklärung" ("the blindness of the Enlightenment").⁷¹ Published three years after Horkheimer's and Adorno's *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, *Der Dämon und sein Bild* offers a similar view of the Enlightenment to that found in the former text, while at the same time using few concrete philosophical examples to illustrate its two central theses. Firstly, that the Western world mistakenly "meinte die Dämonen überwunden oder richtiger ihrer Nichtigkeit, ihr Nichtvorhandensein endlich erkannt zu haben" ("thought itself to have overcome the daemons, or, more correctly, to have finally recognised their emptiness and absence").⁷² And secondly, that the daemon is "definiert oder gekennzeichnet als der Andere" ("defined or characterised as the other") precisely because it is an integral and insurmountable aspect of the human self or soul.⁷³ Reisner's analysis ranges from Christian theology, Greek mythology and comparative religion to psychoanalysis, while at the same time not being a specialist or scholarly text in any of these fields.

⁷⁰ Zweig, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon* 9.

⁷¹ Erwin Reisner, *Der Dämon und sein Bild* (1947; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989). This phrase is a subheading used by Reisner, the content of which is outlined on pages 22-24 of *Der Dämon und sein Bild*.

⁷² Reisner, *Der Dämon und sein Bild* 22.

⁷³ Reisner, *Der Dämon und sein Bild* 35.

1.5.2. Works on the Notion of the Daemonic in English.

Within the realms of English-language literary criticism, literary theory, and philosophical commentary, the notion of the Daemonic has become a topic of particular interest – especially in the field of literary studies – since the early 1960's. This explosion of interest has led to an extremely broad range of interpretations of the term.

By far the best conceptual authority on the notion of the Daemonic in the English language is Angus Fletcher's *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (1964). Fletcher sees daemonic forces as "participants in the cosmic drama of man versus god, almost as if the daemons were the relationships, personified, of man to god."⁷⁴ For Fletcher, the Daemonic is an allegorical sensibility, through which the subject is merged with or possessed by a numinous "other". Thus, according to Fletcher, the "increase of daemonic control over the character amounts to an intensification of the allegory".⁷⁵

Related to Fletcher's notion of the Daemonic is Harold Bloom's conception of the term, which appears in his famous book *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), as well as in other volumes. Bloom speaks of the Daemonic as the indefinable agency that endows writers with poetic gifts, thereby assisting them in overcoming their precursors. "The power that makes a man a poet" says Bloom, following Fletcher, "is daemonic, because it is the power that distributes and divides (which is the root meaning of *daiomai*). It distributes our fates, and divides our gifts."⁷⁶ Bloom argues for a Freudian definition of the Daemonic by coining his own term: *daemonization*. This term refers to the process through which poets conceive of their literary precursors as mythic or numinous fathers, thereby overcoming them, both psychologically and artistically, as humans.⁷⁷ In *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (1976), Bloom continues to see the Daemonic in Freudian terms as "the survival of an archaic narcissism, which is defined in our faith that mind can triumph over matter."⁷⁸ Thus, according to Bloom, the "daemonic... [is]...merely another evasion of the unacceptable necessity of dying."⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964) 61.

⁷⁵ Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* 49.

⁷⁶ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* 2nd ed. (1973; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 100

⁷⁷ Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* 101.

⁷⁸ Bloom, *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1976) 209.

⁷⁹ Bloom, *Poetry and Repression* 209. Brackets added. For a further discussion of Bloom's conception of the Daemonic see David Fite, *Harold Bloom: The Rhetoric of Romantic Vision* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985) 82-84, 87.

More recently, an erstwhile student of Bloom's, Camille Paglia, has related the Daemonic specifically to Freud's realm of the unconscious as a manifestation of the indwelling powers of nature.⁸⁰

Within the confines of strictly literary scholarship, by far the most comprehensive study of the Daemonic in English is Robert Stock's *The Flutes of Dionysus: Daemonic Enthrallment in Literature* (1989). Stock deals with the Daemonic exclusively in terms of the ideas of possession and enthrallment, and defines the term in relation to the effects historically attributed to the cult of Dionysus. Dionysus is, for Stock, "the chief symbol of a complicated numinous experience, daemonic dread."⁸¹ This definition of the Daemonic is more specific than that offered by Stock in an earlier work: *The Holy and the Daemonic from Sir Thomas Browne to William Blake* (1982). In this earlier volume Stock defines the Daemonic as a category of "numinous experience" which is accompanied by a sense of the profane and the dreadful.⁸²

The last decade has seen a resurgence of interest in the Daemonic among scholars, particularly in the United States, working on areas of intersection between literature and philosophy. In *Our Ladies of Darkness: Feminine Daemonology in Male Gothic Fiction* (1993), Joseph Andriano follows both Jung and Camille Paglia by seeing the feminine daemon as an ambivalent mixture of two traditional archetypes: the woman as *femme fatale* and the woman as muse. Andriano sees such archetypes as masculine projections superimposed upon the feminine, rather than as actual or inherent female qualities.⁸³ In *The Orphic Moment* (1994), Robert McGahey defines the Daemonic within a Neo-Platonic context. The "daimonic", he says, "has to do with the ability to move between modes", and, more specifically, with the capacity of humans to border upon the divine.⁸⁴ McGahey locates the force of the Daemonic in the early work of Nietzsche and the poetry of Mallarmé.

Ned Lukacher, in his book *Daemonic Figures: Shakespeare and the Question of Conscience* (1994), considers the presence of the Daemonic in the works of Shakespeare through the shifting theoretical lenses of Heidegger and Freud. Interpreting the Daemonic in terms of its relation to Socrates's divine

⁸⁰ Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991) 3-4.

⁸¹ Stock, *The Flutes of Dionysus* xiii.

⁸² Robert Stock, *The Holy and the Daemonic from Sir Thomas Browne to William Blake* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982) 18.

⁸³ Joseph Andriano, *Our Ladies of Darkness: Feminine Daemonology in Male Gothic Fiction* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).

⁸⁴ Robert McGahey, *The Orphic Moment: Shaman to Poet-thinker in Plato, Nietzsche and Mallarmé* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994) 24-26.

voice or *daimonion*, Lukacher associates the daemon with the "irreducible question of conscience", a force which is located simultaneously within and outside of the subject, and which consequently represents a kind of mediation between immanence and transcendence or "otherness".⁸⁵

Another American, Bruce Clarke, in his book *Allegories of Writing: The Subject of Metamorphosis* (1995), follows Angus Fletcher by defining the Daemonic as a mode or sensibility which engenders a metamorphosis of the subject, a metamorphosis which has its linguistic counterpart in allegory: "The mythopoetic realm of the daemonic", says Clarke, "depicts intermediation and transformation....The daemonic status of writing is personified through messenger figures who may either act as the herald...or assert independent agency."⁸⁶ Clarke's highly idiosyncratic definition of the Daemonic is applied to texts as various as Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Kafka's *Die Verwandlung*. Likewise, in *Modernist Alchemy: Poetry and the Occult* (1995), Timothy Materer makes a relatively loose connection between the Daemonic and the use of occult images and ideas in the poetry of W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound.⁸⁷

Since the middle of the twentieth century, the Daemonic has also been a popular theme in studies of key figures in the history of British Romanticism. In his classic study *Coleridge the Visionary* (1959), J.B. Beer argues that Coleridge traced "the same daemonic power" in the "working of creative genius and in love".⁸⁸ According to Beer, "Coleridge's conception of the daemonic probably derives ultimately from his early reading of [Jacob] Boehme, which would have set his mind working on the idea of the devil as a twisted angelic nature, still possessing all of the materials of the true angelic but in distorted form."⁸⁹ Charles I. Patterson Jr., in his book *The Daemonic in the Poetry of John Keats* (1970), seeks to trace the Platonic understanding of the Daemonic within the work of Keats, while also suggesting a connection between the Daemonic and Keats's celebrated doctrine of 'Negative Capability'. Patterson observes that both "Negative Capability and daemonic knowing entail...[a] near loss of self-identity and [a] sense of being united with and possessed by the object that is being

⁸⁵ Ned Lukacher, *Daemonic Figures: Shakespeare and the Question of Conscience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

⁸⁶ Bruce Clarke, *Allegories of Writing: The Subject of Metamorphosis* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995) 10.

⁸⁷ See, in particular, Chapter One: 'Daemonic Images: From W.B. Yeats to Ezra Pound'. Timothy Materer, *Modernist Alchemy: Poetry and the Occult* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1995).

⁸⁸ Beer, *Coleridge the Visionary* 131.

⁸⁹ Beer, *Coleridge the Visionary* 105. Brackets added.

known"⁹⁰, while also arguing that Keats was influenced by the conception of the Daemonic outlined by Goethe in Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.⁹¹ Most recently, in *Literary Power and the Criteria of Truth* (1995) Laura Quinney argues that Percy Bysshe Shelley's poetry contains what she calls a 'Daemonic Splendour': 'daemonic' referring, in this context, to both a sense of "impersonal, malevolent necessity"⁹² like that found in the works of Aeschylus, and to a sense of aesthetic *gravitas* also derived from Classical tragedy. Thus, Quinney observes that in Shelley, "the identification of poetry with the daemonic found a willing but not unconflicted imitator, for it promoted stylistic aspirations that committed him in advance to the lofty, intimidating, and austere."⁹³

This study seeks to add to the small number of English language works which address the notion of the Daemonic within philosophical and psychological contexts. To the best of my knowledge, only three prior English language studies exist within this field. In his article 'Psychotherapy and the Daemonic' (1970), Rollo May defines the term 'daemonic' as referring to "any natural function in the individual that has the power of taking over the whole person".⁹⁴ May sees the notion of "daimon possession" as comprising "the traditional term through history for psychosis".⁹⁵ James Hillmann's *The Dream and the Underworld* (1979) makes mention of *daimones* as psychic beings or archetypes which are "invisible by nature" because they have been "forgotten and repressed". According to Hillmann, such *daimones* remain invisible to the subject outside of dream-states, "unless we develop intuitive instruments for seizing impalpables that slip through our fingers or burn at the touch".⁹⁶

In a far more comprehensive study, David Farrell Krell argues, in his book *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (1992), for an understanding of the Daemonic based on the philosophical approaches of both Plato and Heidegger. Krell begins with a discussion of the Platonic 'daimon' of Eros, as it appears at 202e-203a of the *Symposium*, and then turns to Heidegger's lectures on the subject of the Daemonic: firstly in his *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe*

⁹⁰ Charles I. Patterson, *The Daemonic in the Poetry of John Keats* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1970) 11. Brackets added.

⁹¹ Patterson, *The Daemonic in the Poetry of John Keats* 8-10.

⁹² Laura Quinney, *Literary Power and the Criteria of Truth* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995) 22.

⁹³ Quinney, *Literary Power and the Criteria of Truth* 109.

⁹⁴ Rollo May, 'Psychotherapy and the Daemonic', *Myths, Dreams and Religion* ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: Dutton, 1970) 196-210, 196-197.

⁹⁵ May, 'Psychotherapy and the Daemonic' 197.

⁹⁶ James Hillmann, *The Dream and the Underworld* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) 40.

der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz (the Marburg lecture course of Summer Semester 1929)⁹⁷ and subsequently in the series of lectures on Parmenides given in 1942-1943.⁹⁸ Ultimately, Krell makes the ambitious claim that the “realm of the daimonic” serves as “a figure that integrates an entire range of themes and subjects that persist in his [Heidegger’s] thought: the finite transcendence of Dasein or human existence, temporality, freedom, anxiety, the overpowering, language and the holy.”⁹⁹ More specifically, Krell speculates as to whether the realm of “daimon life” may serve as a “life-essence” which unites humans and animals upon the same existential ground. Accordingly, Krell asks: “What if the clearing and granting of being had to do with neither “man” nor “Dasein” but with all the life that lives and dies on Earth, from dogs through gods, from tadpoles through peoples?”¹⁰⁰ Krell’s in-depth discussion of the notion of the Daemonic in Heidegger extends beyond the scope of the present study. We will, however turn briefly to Heidegger’s speculations on the Daemonic (found in his Parmenides lecture series) in Part Seven of our discussion.

⁹⁷ See Martin Heidegger, Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz Gesamtausgabe Klaus Held Hg. Band XXVI (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1978).

⁹⁸ See Heidegger, Parmenides Gesamtausgabe Manfred S. Frings Hg. Band LIV (Frankfurt am Main, V. Klostermann, 1982).

⁹⁹ Krell, Daimon Life xi. Brackets added.

¹⁰⁰ Krell, Daimon Life 17.

1.5.3. Works Addressing the Notion of the Daemonic in the Writings of Goethe.

Following Johann Peter Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe* (1835), a period of comparative silence prevailed in relation to Goethe's conception of the Daemonic, until a kind of critical Renaissance occurred in the field, beginning with Friedrich Gundolf's *Goethe* (1916), and then quickly followed by Paul Fischer's study of Goethe – *Goethes Altersweisheit* (1921) – Walter Kaufmann's¹⁰¹ dissertation *Über das Dämonische bei Goethe* (1922), Walter Benjamin's famous essay 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften' (1924), and Dietrich Mahnke's philosophical study, *Leibniz und Goethe: die Harmonie ihrer Weltansichten* (1924).

In the introduction to his study, Gundolf describes the Daemonic as a principle or force which presides over Goethe's fate (*Schicksal*):

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.¹⁰²

Over Goethe's fate there prevails that which he himself has called the Daemonic...it is perhaps the same secret formative power that is seen or understood to come from God as that which is seen to emerge from humans, that creative force which produces a certain figure or character, along with its space, its law; this space and law of the figure or character is, in the case of the greatest humans, nothing other than their fate.

Gundolf's analysis of the Daemonic is essentially concomitant with a kind of Romantic individualism, and with the mythicisation of Goethe's life which 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" ("The greater the human... the more he stands under the influence of the daemons").¹⁰³ Gundolf, is, however, reluctant to associate these *Dämonen* (daemons) with external forces, and accordingly he contends that:

¹⁰¹ 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.

¹⁰² Gundolf, *Goethe* 3.

¹⁰³ Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens* H.H. Houben Hg. (1835; Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1959) 252.

Das Dämonische ist nicht eine von außen eingreifende Macht, es ist mit dem Charakter des Menschen untrennbar verknüpft, ähnlich wie der verwandte Begriff Genie.¹⁰⁴

The Daemonic is not a power which intervenes from outside, it is inseparably linked with the character of the human, in a similar way to the related concept of genius.

The connection made by Gundolf between the Daemonic and the various understandings of genius which appear in the mid to late eighteenth century, will be addressed in Part Four of our analysis. The chief effect of Gundolf's *Goethe* was to put the notion of the Daemonic back on the critical agenda for early twentieth century Germanists, an effect which gave rise to four further studies written in the early 1920's: those of Fischer, Kaufmann, Benjamin and Mahnke.

Fischer begins his short but impressive analysis of the Daemonic in Goethe with the following comments:

Je vollständiger wir uns die Erläuterungen Goethes über das Dämonische vor Augen stellen, desto deutlicher erkennen wir, daß es unmöglich ist, eine einheitliche, alles umfassende Definition oder eine kurze, in sich übereinstimmende Beschreibung von dem zu geben, was er mit diesem Wort bezeichnet.¹⁰⁵

The more completely we bring Goethe's explanations of the Daemonic before our eyes, the more clearly we realise that it is impossible to give a unified, all-encompassing definition, or a short, internally coherent description, of what he means by this word.

Of interest for the purposes of this study is the way in which Fischer attempts to account for the phenomenon of the Daemonic in terms of its spatial or topological origin. In this connection, he poses three questions which will be central to parts Five, Six and Seven of this study. Firstly, is the Daemonic a force located *internally* within the subject? Secondly, is the Daemonic a force located *externally* in God or Nature? And thirdly, is the Daemonic located *both* within the subject (as a psychological phenomenon) and outside of the subject (in God or Nature)?

Following in the wake of the efforts of Gundolf and Fischer is Walter Kaufmann's doctoral dissertation: *Über das Dämonische bei Goethe*, accepted by the Faculty of Philosophy at Göttingen University in 1922. Apart from Benjamin's essay 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften', Kaufmann's dissertation is the most interesting and well developed *philosophical* discussion of the Daemonic to

¹⁰⁴ Gundolf, *Goethe* 3.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Fischer, *Goethes Altersweisheit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921) 26.

have been written in the early twentieth century, a discussion which represents a considerable conceptual advance beyond the uncritical Goethe hero-worship found in texts like Gundolf's *Goethe*.

Kaufmann takes his definition of Goethe's notion of the Daemonic from the following line which appears in the poem 'Urworte. Orphisch': "Geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt" ("The minted form that lives and living grows").¹⁰⁶ In this context, Kaufmann sees the Daemonic as the "Bildungsgesetz des Individuums" ("the formative or developmental law of the individual").¹⁰⁷ Here Kaufmann seems to follow the suggestion, made by Gundolf, that the Daemonic is exclusively connected with the fate of the individual. But Kaufmann subsequently goes on to argue that there is an essential duality in Goethe's conception of the Daemonic. On the one hand, he contends that it is connected with an indwelling energy, a vital creative force located within the individual, while at the same time being associated with a formative principle, perhaps even a hindering factor, which brings the creative energy of the individual within limits and boundaries. Thus, Kaufmann suggests: "Die erste Fassung stellt die dämonische Energie Goethes als vitalistisch, als werdend dar, die zweite Fassung als formalistisch..." ("The first version portrays the daemonic energy of Goethe as vital, as emergent, the second version as formalistic...").¹⁰⁸ By the conclusion of Kaufmann's study, the Daemonic in Goethe seems to approximate something like a Hegelian dialectic:

Der Mensch wird aber erst ganz Mensch, wenn das vitalistisch-daemonische Element, mit Hegel gesprochen, in sein Gegenteil, das formalistisch-daemonische, umgeschlagen ist, um sich so dann zu neuer Einheit zusammenzuschliessen.¹⁰⁹

The human is for the first time a complete human, when the vitalistic-daemonic element, with Hegel's terms in mind, is transformed into its opposite, into the formalistic-daemonic, in order to combine itself into a new unity.

Despite the fact that Kaufmann is the first twentieth century writer to place Goethe's notion of the Daemonic within a philosophical context, it remains unclear as to how the dialectical process alluded to in the above passage takes place. In his discussion of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Kaufmann suggests that Goethe's novel presents us with a dialectical relationship between the 'daemonic'

¹⁰⁶ Goethe, 'Urworte. Orphisch', HA Band I 359. Translated by Christopher Middleton. Goethe. *Selected Poems* 231.

¹⁰⁷ Walter Kaufmann, 'Über das Dämonische bei Goethe', diss. University of Göttingen, 1922, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Kaufmann, 'Über das Dämonische bei Goethe' 1.

¹⁰⁹ Kaufmann, 'Über das Dämonische bei Goethe' 37-38.

individual, and the broader social context – the *Gesellschaft* or society – in which he lives. But this suggestion reads Hegel's dialectic back into Goethe's philosophical development during the late eighteenth century (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* was completed by Goethe in 1796), while at the same time neglecting to account for the philosophical sources with which Goethe *actually* grappled in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: namely the respective philosophical systems of Kant and Schelling.

Likewise, Kaufmann's study does not consider Goethe's later presentation of daemonic phenomena in texts like 'Mächtiges Überraschen' (1807-8) or *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. In short, Kaufmann's analysis fails to take into account the fact that for the later Goethe, the Daemonic also came to be associated with elemental forces located *outside* of the subject, not just in his society or *Gesellschaft*, but also in God/Nature. In this connection, the origins of his later theorisation of the Daemonic can be seen to take place in neo-Kantian 'scientific' essays like 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt' – an essay to which we will turn in Part Six of our analysis.

As we shall also discover in parts Six and Seven of this study, it is Walter Benjamin's essay 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften' which defines Goethe's notion of the Daemonic in relation to external forces – forces which Benjamin sees as constituting an "unfaßbare Naturzweideutigkeit" ("incomprehensible ambivalence in nature").¹¹⁰ Benjamin argues that Goethe's experience of the Daemonic can be related to his notion of the *Urphänomen* or 'Primal Phenomenon': a neo-Kantian concept which we will examine in some depth in parts Six and Seven of this study. Published in the same year as Benjamin's essay, Dietrich Mahnke's study *Leibniz und Goethe: die Harmonie ihrer Weltansichten* engages in a discussion of Goethe's conception of the daemon in connection with the Leibnizian notion of the monad as an indwelling soul.¹¹¹ Mahnke's analysis will be discussed in Part Five of this study, in connection with the influence of Leibniz's cosmology upon the theory of the subject presented by Goethe in *Werther*.

Goethe's notion of the Daemonic is systematically analysed, perhaps for the first time in English-language literary criticism, by E.M. Butler in her study *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany* (1935). Butler contends that for Goethe, the daemon represents:

¹¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften', *Gesammelte Schriften* Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser Hg. Band I.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974) 150. Translated by Stanley Corngold, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 1 1913-1926* ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996) 316.

¹¹¹ Dietrich Mahnke, *Leibniz und Goethe: die Harmonie ihrer Weltansichten* (Erfurt: Verlag Kurt Stenger, 1924).

...personality or individuality, the element which makes each man what he is, which cannot change or be changed, the element of fate in his character.¹¹²

Butler goes on to argue that Goethe's conception of the daemon "owed something undoubtedly to the daimon of Socrates as interpreted by Hamann."¹¹³ This particular genealogy of the term – that is to say, the line followed by Butler from Plato's Socrates into Hamann – will be discussed in Part Four of this study.

Published in Germany during the era of National Socialism, August Raabe's *Das Erlebnis des Dämonischen in Goethes Denken und Schaffen* (1942) takes the mythicisation of Goethe's life to new heights, or depths, as the case may be. For Raabe, Goethe's notion of the Daemonic touches upon (*berühren*) :

...ein abgründtiefes Welt und 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.¹¹⁴

...a profoundly deep world- and life-mystery...the consideration of which brings into a bright light not only countless appearances in nature and in human existence in general, but also teaches us to understand, as it were, the fate and development of our German people from the point of view of eternity.

In this context, the 'daemonic' striving which characterised the life of Goethe is seen by Raabe to represent the general "Lebenstrieb" (life-drive) of the German nation towards the 'true', the 'beautiful' and the 'good'.¹¹⁵ Here Raabe echoes Thomas Mann's earlier remarks, made within an essay written at the beginning of World War I, regarding the military 'heroism' and 'daemonism' of the German soul.¹¹⁶

¹¹² E.M. Butler, The Tyranny of Greece over Germany (1935; Boston: Beacon Press, 1958) 151.

¹¹³ Butler, The Tyranny of Greece over Germany 151.

¹¹⁴ August Raabe, Das Erlebnis des Dämonischen in Goethes Denken und Schaffen (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1942) 374.

¹¹⁵ Raabe, Das Erlebnis des Dämonischen in Goethes Denken und Schaffen 375.

¹¹⁶ 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". ("It is its 'militarism', its ethical conservatism, its soldier-like morality – an element of the Daemonic and the heroic, that hesitates to acknowledge the civilian spirit as the most human ideal"). Thomas Mann 'Gedanken im Kriege', (1914) Werke Das essayistische Werk Taschenbuchausgabe in acht Bänden Hans Bürgin Hg. Band II (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1968) 19

In his 1947 study *Spiel der Mächte: Ein Kapitel aus Goethes Leben und Goethes Welt*, Paul Hankamer sees the Daemonic as an incalculable “kosmische Widerkraft” (“cosmic contrary power”) which manifests itself in Goethe’s late attraction to Minchen Herzlieb, an attraction which Hankamer subsequently sees as being poetically represented in the sonnet ‘Mächtiges Überraschen’.¹¹⁷ Benno von Wiese takes a less autobiographical approach to Goethe’s notion of the Daemonic in his study *Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel* (1948). In the chapter ‘Das Dämonische und seine Gegenkräfte in der Tragödie Goethes’, Wiese observes that the Daemonic “wird für Goethe zu einer Kategorie, die sein persönliches Verhältnis zum Übersinnlichen umschreibt” (“became for Goethe a category which circumscribed his personal relationship with the supersensuous”).¹¹⁸ Wiese makes the important point that although Goethe experienced events or phenomena in his youth which might be described as ‘daemonic’ – meaning, in Wiese’s formulation, that they were suggestive of a divine or supersensuous influence – the *term* daemonic belongs to the older Goethe: the author of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and other late works.¹¹⁹

In the following year (1949) Wiese returns to the subject of the Daemonic in his lecture *Das Dämonische in Goethes Weltbild und Schaffen*. This lecture argues that the theme of the Daemonic preoccupies Goethe for the whole of his literary career, from *Werther* up until the poem ‘Urworte. Orphisch’.¹²⁰ After a wide-ranging general discussion of Goethe’s notion of the Daemonic – in which Wiese once again argues that it is always connected with an experience of the supersensuous – he confines his specific analysis of the Daemonic to three fields and texts: “das Dämonische in der Sendung des dichterischen Genius, Torquato Tasso, das Dämonische als unbegrenzte Tätigkeit, der alte Faust, das Dämonische in der Liebe, Ottilie [Die Wahlverwandschaften]” (“the Daemonic in the mission of the poetic genius, Torquato Tasso, the Daemonic as unlimited activity, the elderly Faust, the Daemonic in love, Ottilie [The Elective Affinities]”).¹²¹ Wiese’s essay is perhaps the most detailed and impressive extant discussion of Goethe’s conception of the Daemonic. His central contention that

¹¹⁷ Paul Hankamer, *Spiel der Mächte: Ein Kapitel aus Goethes Leben und Welt* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1947) 53-55. See also Hankamer’s discussion of Goethe’s description of Napoleon as ‘daemonic’ on pages 112-116.

¹¹⁸ Wiese, *Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel* 79-80.

¹¹⁹ Wiese, *Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel* 81.

¹²⁰ Wiese, *Das Dämonische in Goethes Weltbild und Dichtung* 13.

¹²¹ Wiese, *Das Dämonische in Goethes Weltbild und Dichtung* 13. Brackets added.

the Daemonic in Goethe can be seen as a “Grenzsituation” (“limit or boundary situation”) will be investigated in parts Five and Seven of this study.¹²²

Hans Joachim Schrimpf’s discussion of the Daemonic in his book *Das Weltbild des späten Goethe* (1956) continues in directions suggested by the work of Benno von Wiese. Schrimpf sees the Daemonic as manifesting itself in three different guises throughout Goethe’s works: “das Dämonische als Daimon (1), als ‘grenzenloses Zutrauen zu sich selbst’ (2) und als ‘Mächtiges Überraschen’ (3)” (“the Daemonic as the Daimon (1), as ‘limitless belief in oneself’ (2) and as ‘Powerful Astonishment’ (3)”).¹²³ The first of these manifestations of the Daemonic refers to the *daimonion* of Socrates discussed by Goethe in relation to ‘Urworte. Orphisch’, the second to the Daemonic as the limitless striving undertaken by extraordinary individuals like those referred to by Goethe in Eckermann’s *Gespräche mit Goethe*, and the third to the Daemonic as an ‘objektive Gegenmacht’ (‘objektive contrary power’) like that experienced by the subject-stream in the sonnet ‘Mächtiges Überraschen’.¹²⁴ Schrimpf then turns to a detailed discussion of the notion of *Makarie* in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, arguing that it corresponds with the Daemonic as “das lebendige Wirken der unerforschlichen Gottheit” (“the living workings of the unfathomable divinity”).¹²⁵

In his journal article ‘Goethes Glaube an das Dämonische’ (1958), Walter Muschg follows Friedrich Gundolf by interpreting Goethe’s notion of the Daemonic in an autobiographical context.¹²⁶ The central premise of Muschg’s analysis is that Goethe undergoes a historical transformation from ‘daemonic poet’ (the youthful genius of the *Sturm und Drang* period) into a ‘poet of the Daemonic’: the reflective, Classical Goethe of poems like ‘Mächtiges Überraschen’.¹²⁷ Like Gundolf, Muschg fails to consider the role played by Goethe’s exposure to key philosophical figures of his day (namely, Kant and Schelling) in this process of transformation.

¹²² Wiese, Das Dämonische in Goethes Weltbild und Dichtung 5. Brackets added.

¹²³ Hans Joachim Schrimpf Das Weltbild des späten Goethe (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1956) 307.

¹²⁴ Schrimpf, Das Weltbild des späten Goethe 312.

¹²⁵ Schrimpf, Das Weltbild des späten Goethe 318.

¹²⁶ Walter Muschg, ‘Goethes Glaube an das Dämonische’, Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte 32 (1958): 321-344.

¹²⁷ Muschg, ‘Goethes Glaube an das Dämonische’, 331.

A more specific examination of the Daemonic is offered by Ernst Loeb in his book *Die Symbolik des Wasserzyklus bei Goethe* (1967). In an analysis of late texts like Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe*, Loeb makes two key points regarding the Daemonic: firstly, he contends that Goethe refused to equate the Daemonic with any divine or god-like influence, and secondly he argues that the Daemonic is more akin to what Schelling describes as a "contrahierende Urkraft" ("contracting primal power") located in the operations of nature.¹²⁸ The latter of these contentions will be investigated in Part Seven of this study.

Eduard Spranger's discussion of the Daemonic in his book *Goethe: seine geistige Welt* (1967) is even more specific than that offered by Loeb. Focusing almost exclusively on the saying 'Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse', which appears in the second passage on the notion of the Daemonic to be found in Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*,¹²⁹ Spranger argues for a traditional Neo-Platonic understanding of the Daemonic as "die Vorstellung eines Zwischenreiches zwischen der höchsten Macht des Universums und dem schwankenden Wesen Mensch" ("the concept of an intermediate realm between the highest power of the universe and the wavering existence of the human.")¹³⁰

The first expansive discussion of Goethe's notion of the Daemonic to appear in English can be found in H.B. Nisbet's journal article 'Das Dämonische. On the Logic of Goethe's Demonology' (1971).¹³¹ Nisbet defines his aim as that of 'exorcising'... "at least a few of the misconceptions which daemons and the daemonic have visited upon Goethe scholarship."¹³² On this basis, Nisbet claims 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."¹³³ Such a view prevents Nisbet from understanding Goethe's notion of the Daemonic in relation to its Classical origins in pre-Socratic philosophy and in the writings of Plato. At the same time, however, Nisbet makes the crucial connection, also made by

¹²⁸ Ernst Loeb, 'Das Dämonische', *Die Symbolik des Wasserzyklus bei Goethe* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1967) 70, 76.

¹²⁹ See section 7.5 of this study ('*Dichtung und Wahrheit* II: *Nemo Contra Deum nisi deus ipse*') for my analysis of this passage.

¹³⁰ Eduard Spranger, *Goethe: seine geistige Welt* (Tübingen: Verlag Hermann Leins, 1967) 432.

¹³¹ H.B. Nisbet, 'Das Dämonische. On the Logic of Goethe's Demonology', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 7 (1971): 259-281.

¹³² Nisbet, 'Das Dämonische. On the Logic of Goethe's Demonology' 259.

¹³³ Nisbet, 'Das Dämonische. On the Logic of Goethe's Demonology' 260. Brackets added.

Walter Benjamin, between Goethe's notion of the Daemonic and his concept of the *Urphänomen* or 'Primal Phenomenon'.¹³⁴ Nisbet's contention that both Goethe's notion of the Daemonic and his conception of the *Urphänomen* refer to the philosophically irreducible aspects of nature will be addressed in parts Six and Seven of this study, in connection with Walter Benjamin's essay 'Goethes *Wahlverwandschaften*'.

A much needed rhetorical analysis of Goethe's deployment of the terms 'daemon' and 'daemonic' can be found in Hans Blumenberg's study *Arbeit am Mythos* (1979). Beginning with the proposition that one of the central functions of myth is "die numinose Unbestimmtheit in die nominale Bestimmtheit zu überführen und das Unheimliche vertraut und ansprechbar zu machen" ("to convert numinous indefiniteness into nominal definiteness and to make what is uncanny familiar and addressable")¹³⁵, Blumenberg sees Goethe's notion of the Daemonic as existing within the scope of this particular role of the mythic. Speaking of Goethe's notion of the Daemonic, Blumenberg writes:

Was er [Goethe]...dämonisch nennen wird...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.¹³⁶

What he [Goethe] will call daemonic ...belongs to the category of the mythical. By this I mean that it only circumscribes – does not explain, perhaps only gives a name to – a potency that has not been fully resolved historically.

Blumenberg's theorisation of Goethe's notion of the Daemonic – particularly as it appears in Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* – will be of central importance to Part Seven of this study, in which I will endeavour to contextualise Goethe's use of the term in relation to his philosophical development during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

In her essay 'Sinnliche Übermacht – übersinnliche Gegenmacht: die dämonische Verwandlung des klassischen Eros in der Epoche der *Wahlverwandschaften*' (1988), Gabrielle Bersier discusses Goethe's notion of the Daemonic during the years immediately following the death of Schiller in 1805

¹³⁴ Nisbet, 'Das Dämonische. On the Logic of Goethe's Demonology' 270-271.

¹³⁵ Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 32. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 25.

¹³⁶ Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 559. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 515. Brackets added.

and Napoleon's invasion of the German states.¹³⁷ Bersier argues that the personal and political upheavals experienced by Goethe during this period bring about a dissolution (*Auflösung*) of his "klassische Harmonie-Vision" ("Classical vision of harmony").¹³⁸ A particular effect of this dissolution is detected by Bersier in what she terms Goethe's "Dämonisierung der Sexualität" ("Daemonisation of sexuality").¹³⁹ No longer, argues Bersier, do we encounter sexuality as the "wohltuend" ("beneficent") and "heilsam" ("beneficial") inclination of Goethe's earlier 'Römische Elegien' (written between 1788 and 1790).¹⁴⁰ Rather, in *Die Wahlverwandschaften* (1809) we find a sexuality which has become a 'narcissistic', 'inhuman' and 'fateful' force which the character of Otilie likens to a "feindseligen Dämon" ("hostile daemon").¹⁴¹ Bersier's analysis endeavours to critique Paul Hankamer's earlier understanding of the Daemonic as an external cosmic force, by arguing that the Goethean *Dämonen* are more akin to internal sexual "Instinkte" ("instincts") and "Triebe" ("drives").¹⁴²

Goethe's notion of the Daemonic receives a decidedly novel treatment in Arjan van Dijk's essay 'Das Dämonische als moderne Rezeptionskategorie, dargestellt an Goethe's *Egmont* und *Torquato Tasso*' (1999).¹⁴³ Van Dijk argues that the theme of the Daemonic manifests itself most clearly in Goethe's *Egmont*,¹⁴⁴ and less obviously but no less forcefully in the drama *Torquato Tasso*. The Daemonic is then seen by van Dijk as a 'Rezeptionskategorie' ('category of reception') through which he discusses modern productions of both *Egmont* and *Torquato Tasso*. Van Dijk argues that modern productions of these dramas tend either to ignore the notion of the Daemonic altogether, or to see it in a distinctly negative light. Working against such modern interpretations of Goethe's dramas, van Dijk argues that the Daemonic in Goethe is both a negative and positive force. Of particular interest for the purposes of

¹³⁷ Gabrielle Bersier, 'Sinnliche Übermacht – übersinnliche Gegenmacht. Die dämonische Verwandlung des klassischen Eros in der Epoche der Wahlverwandschaften', Wolfgang Wittkowski Hg. *Verantwortung und Utopie: zur Literatur der Goethezeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1988) 404-418.

¹³⁸ Bersier, 'Sinnliche Übermacht' 409.

¹³⁹ Bersier, 'Sinnliche Übermacht' 406.

¹⁴⁰ Bersier, 'Sinnliche Übermacht' 404.

¹⁴¹ Bersier, 'Sinnliche Übermacht' 413. Otilie's reference to the 'feindseligen Dämon' can be found in Goethe's novel *Die Wahlverwandschaften* (*Elective Affinities*) HA Band VI 476.

¹⁴² Bersier, 'Sinnliche Übermacht' 413.

¹⁴³ Arjan van Dijk, 'Das Dämonische als moderne Rezeptionskategorie. Dargestellt an Goethe's *Egmont* und *Torquato Tasso*', *Neophilologus* 83 (3) (1999): 427-443.

¹⁴⁴ In this regard, van Dijk's essay draws on earlier essays on the notion of the Daemonic in *Egmont*. See, in particular: Konrad Schaum, 'Dämonie und Schicksal in Goethes *Egmont*', *Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift* 10 (1960): 139-157, and George A. Wells, 'Egmont and *Das Dämonische*', *German Life and Letters* 24 (1970-1971): 53-67.

this study is van Dijk's reading of 'Mächtiges Überraschen', in which he suggests that the Daemonic functions positively as a force which leads the subject to a state of "Stabilität, Selbsterkenntnis und Individualität" ("stability, self-knowledge and individuality").¹⁴⁵

In *Goethe zum Beispiel* (1999), Hans Blumenberg turns once again to the theme of the Daemonic in Goethe's works. The final section of Blumenberg's fragmentary study asks the following question of Goethe's life: namely, "ob Leben und Sinn aufeinander beziehbare Begriffe überhaupt sein können" ("if life and meaning can be seen as concepts that can be related to one another").¹⁴⁶ It is within the context of this question that Blumenberg describes Goethe's conception of the Daemonic as his "Erfahrung des Unerklärlichen" ("experience of the inexplicable"). We will turn to Blumenberg's discussion of the Daemonic in *Goethe zum Beispiel* in the final stages of Part Eight of our analysis, this time in connection with Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe*.

1.6. Summary of the Aims of this Study.

The foregoing analysis demonstrates the extent to which the notion of the Daemonic has been exposed to a vast array of critical approaches, particularly in the fields German philosophy and literary criticism. When placed within the context of this interpretative history, this study has two main aims.

The first of these aims is to compare Goethe's use of the related terms 'daemon' and 'daemonic' with the context in which these terms receive their first extensive treatment in the history of Western thought: that is to say, in the philosophy of Plato. No previous study of the Daemonic in Goethe has undertaken such a comparison.

The second of these aims proceeds directly from the first. After defining the philosophical context in which Plato uses the terms 'daemon' and 'daemonic', this study will examine the philosophical implications of Goethe's use of these selfsame terms. In order to achieve this aim, this study will avoid the tendency to see Goethe's notion of the Daemonic, in a narrowly autobiographical context, as a kind of indwelling fate or existential force that mysteriously determines the trajectory of his life. Rather, it

¹⁴⁵ Arjan van Dijk, 'Das Dämonische als moderne Rezeptionskategorie' 428.

¹⁴⁶ Hans Blumenberg, *Goethe zum Beispiel* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999) 224.

will seek, in contradistinction to works like Gundolf's *Goethe* and August Raabe's *Das Erlebnis des Dämonischen in Goethes Denken und Schaffen*, to examine both the historical background to, and the philosophical context of, Goethe's use of the terms 'daemon' and 'daemonic', by reading Goethe's works in relation to both the history of ideas, and the philosophical issues of his day. These issues are addressed most notably by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854). Thus, the underlying assumption of this study is that Goethe's notion of the Daemonic – one of the most interpreted and overdetermined of Goethean notions – can only be clarified, explained and rendered intelligible through philosophical, textual and historical analysis, and not through exclusively autobiographical readings of Goethe's works.

2. The Daemonic in Plato.

This chapter will outline the notion of the Daemonic as a mode or conduit which responds to the gap between the sensible world and the supersensible forms (*eide*) in Plato's philosophy. There will be two central themes in Plato's thought which will operate as touchstones for this discussion. The first of these is the catastrophic split between the secular and divine, between the temporal world and the realm of the forms or *eide*. Although this idea can be found in thought systems which pre-date Plato – in pre-Socratic thinkers like Empedocles, for example – Plato will be seen to have canonised and institutionalised this split within the Western philosophical tradition. In this regard, he will be viewed as having set the agenda for whole philosophical epochs which follow him, and in particular, for those German thinkers – Hamann and Herder in particular – who exerted an influence upon Goethe's understanding of the Daemonic or *das Dämonische*.

The second theme with which this chapter is concerned is an anthropological state that follows directly from the Platonic split between the *eide* and the material world: the state of longing. In Platonism, longing operates as a human expression of, and response to, the absolute inaccessibility of the forms. Platonism is a philosophy of longing in the sense that its entire system operates as a refutation of human philosophical consummation: the capacity of humans to possess absolute truth. Platonic 'truth' or 'truths' (the *eide*) comprise a destination towards which humans can only travel: there is never any arrival for humans in Plato's philosophy. We will examine this particularly modern, anthropological interpretation of Plato's philosophy later in this chapter with the help of two sources: Søren Kierkegaard's book *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates* (1841) and Georg Lukács's early essay on Plato and Socrates entitled 'Longing and Form' (1910) which appears in the volume *Soul and Form* (1910).

The concept of Platonic anthropological longing will be seen to express itself in several different modes of thinking, modes which will be categorised as 'mantic', meaning 'of divination'. In focusing upon the mantic elements in Plato's thought, this chapter will endeavor to show that the popular image of Plato as the cold, rational philosopher of *The Republic* – the philosopher of *logos*, at the expense of all other faculties – is inaccurate and one-sided. Rather, I will demonstrate that Plato also valued what might be called extra-rational, intuitive, or mythic modes of thinking. This is not to suggest that Plato's thought, or Plato's character of Socrates, can be seen as 'irrational'. What I do intend to suggest is that there is a *non-rational*, mythic or mantic element in Plato's philosophy and what might be called

Plato's 'anthropology', an element which operates as the 'other' or dialectical opposite of reason (*logos*) and inductive logic. In other words, for Plato non-rational or mantic states may represent another way of viewing the world which may in fact assist the operations of *logos*: the activity of rational or logical inquiry.

These mantic states fall under two general categories. The first of these is the Platonic notion of love or Eros. 'Platonic love' is popularly understood to involve a complete sublimation of physical desire which operates as the triumph of intellect over instinct. In its discussion of the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, this chapter will examine the extent to which Plato saw the non-rational, sensuous and instinctive aspects of Eros as assisting, rather than hampering, the philosopher in his efforts to gain wisdom or knowledge of the forms.

The second 'mantic' or non-rational mode to be discussed at length will be the art of poetry or 'possession by the Muses.' In considering Plato's views on the subject of poetry, I will confront a controversial issue within his thought, and an issue which we examined in Part One of this study: namely, the relationship between *mythos* and *logos*; and, more specifically, the relationship between poetry and philosophy. Plato tended to associate poets with the mantic state of possession by divine forces. For Plato, poets were not rational beings – their mantic art was seen by him as the non-rational other of Socratic logic. The oft-noted split or 'war' between poetry and philosophy, which is seen by many to have originated in Plato, is less clear-cut than it appears to be in *The Republic*. It is common knowledge that Plato criticises poetry and myth on the one hand while using their effects on the other. It is, however, less well known that while Plato famously condemns poetry in *The Republic*, he also approves of it as a 'mantic', 'holy' or 'divinatory' art in two of his dialogues: *Phaedrus* and *Ion*.

The central premise, then, of this chapter is that Plato's philosophy comprises, in addition to the logic of Socratic dialectic, an erotics and a poetics. The erotic and poetic elements in Plato's philosophy help us to understand the relationship between 'rational' knowledge (philosophical or dialectical knowledge, the knowledge of *logos*) and 'non-rational' knowledge (erotic, poetic, or mantic knowledge, the knowledge of *mythos*). It is, moreover, precisely this relationship which informs the subject of the Daemonic as a conduit which mediates between the secular and the divine, as both Plato's erotics and his poetics will be seen as sensibilities or modes that operate in response to, and in the gap between, the material world and the *eide*.

2.1. 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, 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*:

Plato encountered the daemonic dimension when he encountered Socrates. For this man, who, more than any other, proposed to clarify by the power of his intellect what was unclear and ambiguous, recognized mysterious forces, which he obeyed without examining their claim. He liked to talk – and often did – about his 'daimonion', a peculiarity that was so well known that the authorities used it as a basis for the indictment against him.¹

Keeping Friedländer's remarks in mind, we need 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?

One of the most recent and authoritative works on the relationship between Plato and Socrates is Gregory Vlastos's *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (1991). Vlastos points out that there are internal contradictions in Plato's version of Socrates. He divides Plato's dialogues into three periods: Plato's early or 'elenctic' phase; a middle or 'ontological' period; and a late stage.² The elenctic Socrates of the early dialogues is, according to Vlastos, 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 Plato's key texts on the Daemonic: the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and the 'Myth of Er' in *The Republic*. Vlastos argues that 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

¹ Friedländer, *Plato* Volume I 32-33.

² Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991). For Vlastos's discussion of the chronology of Plato's works, see pages 47-49. A similar chronology has also been proposed more recently by Alexander Nehamas in *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 196, 212-213.

souls. It is within the scope of these particular topics, all of which relate to the split between the realm of the *eide* and the material world, that the Daemonic receives its strongest treatment in Plato. Outside of this middle period this study will also deal with Plato's creation story in the *Timaeus* (from the late period), Socrates's 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 thorough-going distinction between the views of Plato and Socrates, except where such a distinction is explicitly specified.

More recently, Alexander Nehamas has argued, in his book *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (1998), that "the real authority of Plato as the true source for the historical Socrates is the product of Romanticism."³ Such a proposition is of particular interest to this study, in that it intimates that Plato's Socrates had a special appeal for the Romantics, an appeal not found in the Socrates of Xenophon or Aristophanes. I will speculate on the reasons for this phenomenon later in this chapter. For now, the importance of Nehamas's point lies in the fact that, insofar as the Romantics were concerned, it did not matter *whose* representation of Socrates was the historically correct one. Rather, Nehamas argues that Plato's version of Socrates gained its 'authority' by virtue of its thematic emphasis on individuality and irony, and not due to its putative historical rigour. Given that one of the broader concerns of this study is the influence of Platonism upon Goethe and his philosophical contemporaries, my concern here is not really with which representation of Socrates is historically accurate. I am, however, concerned with the following question: which version of Socrates has had the most far-reaching effects upon the Western mind? There is, of course, only one answer to this question: Plato's Socrates.

³ Nehamas, *The Art of Living* 94.

2.2. The Platonic Split and the Idea of Necessity.

The origin of the split between the *eide* 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 what will be the two central problems which relate to the Daemonic in his philosophy. Firstly, why is there a cleavage between the *eide* and the material world? Secondly, 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*. We will turn to these dialogues later in this chapter.

The *Timaeus* begins with an account of how the corporeal world came into existence. The creator, also referred to by Timaeus as the 'father', is presented with the task of creating a world from the antecedent 'chaos' or 'receptacle of Becoming' which is a formless mixture of Plato's four elements: earth, air, fire and water. The creator is preceded by the Platonic realm of Being: the transcendent *eide* or forms, which exist independently of time and space as immutable and incorruptible Ideas. The creator in *Timaeus* is a kind of craftsman, and as such he works to a plan. His task is to fashion a universe as a likeness or reflection of the eternal realm of Being which precedes him. Being transcendent, the *eide* are beyond replication, and so the creator is forced to mould corruptible or corporeal 'moving' images based upon them. Timaeus explains the creator's task as follows:

The nature of the Living Being was eternal, and it was not possible to bestow this attribute fully on the created universe; but he determined to make a moving image of eternity, and so when he ordered the heavens he made in that which we call time an eternal moving image of the eternity which remains forever at one. (37d).⁴

The creator in *Timaeus* is thus responsible for time as a linear concept, which constitutes the basis of Platonic Becoming: the notion of a world which exists as a corrupted copy of the *eide* and which is consequently never absolutely 'real' in the Platonic sense, because it is subject to time, decay and dissolution. Plato is at pains, in *Timaeus*, to demonstrate that the creation of the universe constitutes a kind of primal scene of division between the forms and the corporeal world, and therefore between Being and Becoming. The creation of the universe is, for Plato, a kind of fall from a transcendent 'first stage' or Paradise characterised by a sense of absolute unity, into a second stage of disunity,

⁴ Plato, *Timaeus* trans. H.D.P. Lee *Plato: Timaeus and Critias* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) 50.

temporality and corporeal decay and suffering. The Platonic philosopher then looks for redemption in the hope of a third stage: the promise of a return to the remembered 'Golden Age' of unity with the divine. It is this third stage, a stage in which the possession of divine truth has been lost and can only be partially recovered, that characterises the mode or conduit of the Daemonic.

In Ancient Greek thought, daemons (also written as 'daimons') (*δαίμων*), were seen as intermediaries between the world of the divine and the fallen material world. This was a common feature shared by mythological figures like Hermes, Oedipus, Tiresias and Pythia, among others. 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's 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.⁵

In stating that he 'too is one of these' Empedocles explicitly identifies the task of the philosopher with the lot of the expelled daemon. The philosopher, like the daemon, is presented with the task of reunifying himself with the Gods of transcendence, as this will represent his redemption. On one level, 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.⁶ The daemon becomes subject to *miasma*: a kind of infection of the soul which separates him from his divine counterparts and begins the cycle of his existence on earth in different incarnations of mortal life.

The importance of this passage exists in its contribution to the poetic creation or 'invention' of the notion of Necessity. The daemon's fate is produced by a Necessity which can only be described as an indeterminate or unknowable cause. In this way, Empedocles gives a name to that which is

⁵ Empedocles, *The Extant Fragments* ed. and trans. M.R. Wright (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981) 270.

⁶ Empedocles, *The Extant Fragments* 272, 273.

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. Rather, he has come under the sway of the Necessity which produces his lot in life. This is an important point with regard to the idea of the daemon and its relationship to character in the thought of antiquity. 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's daemon, one's character is not really a matter of choice or subjective will. Psychology is reduced to being an expression of an external and indeterminate cause: the Necessity or *Ananké* which so often governs the events in Homeric tragedy. In other words, one's character and fate are ultimately subject to the decrees of the Gods.

Accordingly, when Heraclitus states in Fragment 119 that "a person's character is his fate" (fate being a translation of *δαίμων*, daemon), he is making something like an absolute identity statement.⁷ For Heraclitus, the *δαίμων* (daemon) referred to in Fragment 119 is one's divinely allotted fate or one's 'divinity': the divine portion of the soul. Fate is character and character is fate. But this is not to suggest that there is no element of moral responsibility in the respective depictions of the daemon in Heraclitus and Empedocles. There is responsibility in a cosmic sense, in that one must one day render an account of one's actions to the Gods. Even though one's character is in some way 'fated' and therefore beyond one's subjective volition, one must nevertheless pay the cosmic price for one's deeds.

Similarly, the catastrophic split between the *eide* and the secular 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 *eide* into existence without making them temporal and corporeal.⁸ The temporal world is 'fallen', but not in any moral or psychological way: rather, its fallenness 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 receives a stronger treatment in Plato than is the case in

⁷ Heraclitus, *Fragments* 69.

⁸ Ronna Burger, 'The Daemonic Speech of Socrates', *Plato's Phaedrus* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1980) 49.

Empedocles. In the 'Myth of Er' section of *The Republic* (614-620) Plato, through the character of 'Er', gives an account of the transmigration of souls similar to that found in Empedocles's '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 which take place there. He refers to this 'other world' as a *δαιμόνιος τόπος* (daemonic place), 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 a kind of 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.⁹ 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 which 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 of the 'Spindle of Necessity' which revolves upon a "straight light like a pillar...extended from above throughout the heaven and the earth ..." (616b-616c).¹⁰ Here we see the extent to which Plato's version of the Daemonic is literally a kind of conduit or tube which transports divine or numinous information to the secular realm. Although based in an 'other' world, the 'daemonic place' described by Er is also strangely close to everyday existence – it is something like the shadow of the material world. Speaking within the Heideggerean context of the relationship between

⁹ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* 365-366.

¹⁰ Plato, *The Republic* (Shorey) 840.

beings and Being, between the ontic and the ontological, Catherine Zuckert describes Er's 'daemonic place' in the following way:

Er calls this place daimonic, but he does not mean that it is inhabited by demons or ghosts. Derived from *daio*, *daimonic* means that which shows. It refers, more particularly, to the *ungeheure* (literally, the e-normous) – that which shows itself only in and through the normal; that which makes the normal, normal; that which is not abnormal, monstrous or gigantic, but rather all encompassing and natural. *Daimonic* refers, in sum, to the showing of the Being in the beings.¹¹

Although Zuckert runs ahead of our current discussion by superimposing a Heideggerean interpretation upon the 'Myth of Er', she makes an important point about the Daemonic in Plato: namely, that despite the fact that daemonic phenomena issue from an 'other' world, they are also ineluctably close to us, in fact so close that they may be overlooked, forgotten or 'passed over'. The view that daemonic phenomena are forgotten, or even repressed, will be seen again, in Part Nine of this study, where we will briefly turn to the understandings of the Daemonic adopted by Freud in the essay 'Das Unheimliche' and the book *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. For now, having established that the Platonic split between the material world and the *eide* is intimately connected with the ideas of creation and Necessity, and having also seen the sense in which for Heraclitus and Empedocles, as for Plato, the *δαίμων* (daemon) itself is a kind of personal necessity or fate, it is important to outline the different 'mantic' or divinatory modes in Plato's ontology, the first of which is *anamnesis*.

2.3. *Anamnesis: the Recollection of Divine Memory.*

The idea of *anamnesis* is given its fullest treatment in the *Phaedrus*. The *Phaedrus* gives a similar account of the soul to that found in both Empedocles and in the 'Myth of Er'. All souls, says Socrates, were originally 'winged' and beheld true Being before descending to the material world. This is yet another version of the split or 'fall' which takes place in Plato's ontology. 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 be generally 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 *eide* (246e). To complicate matters further still, Socrates also

¹¹ Catherine H. Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 59.

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 re-growing its wings and returning to its former divine status. Soul itself is, for Plato, immortal in the sense that it constitutes a 'prime origin' which cannot come into being or pass away. In this respect, the soul constitutes the individual's *eidōs* or form.

The capacity to recollect the soul's previous divine existence is, according to Socrates, most often found in philosophers. The philosopher is gifted in this particular area because he is able to:

...collect out of the multiplicity of sense-impressions a unity arrived at by a process of reason. Such a process is simply the recollection of the things which our soul once perceived when it took its journey with a god, looking down from above on the things to which we now ascribe reality and gazing upwards towards what is truly real. That is why it is right that the soul of the philosopher alone should regain its wings; for it is always dwelling in memory as best it may upon those things which a god owes his divinity to be dwelling upon. It is only by the right use of such aids to recollection, which form a continual initiation into the perfect mystic vision that a man can become perfect in the true sense of the word. (249b-249c).¹²

On one level, *anamnesis* is associated with reason or *logos*. Plato sees the dialectical mode of the Socratic dialogue, in its slow and inductive process, as a kind of path which leads from particular instances back to the universal laws or *eide* which dwell eternally in the divine origin. In another sense, however, *anamnesis* can be fundamentally non-rational. Socrates argues that in some cases, the process of *anamnesis* takes place as a result of the subject contemplating those aspects of the material world which, 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 occurs when:

... a man, reminded by the sight of beauty on earth of the true beauty, grows his wings and endeavours to fly upwards, but in vain, exposing himself to the reproach of insanity because like a bird he fixes his gaze on the heights to the neglect of things below; and the conclusion to which our whole discussion points is that in itself and in its origin this is the best of all forms of divine possession, both for the subject himself and for his associate, and it is when he is touched with this madness that the man whose love is aroused by beauty in others is called a lover. (249d-249e).¹³

¹² Plato, *Phaedrus* (Hamilton) 55.

¹³ Plato, *Phaedrus* (Hamilton) 56.

In the discussions of *anamnesis* in the *Phaedrus*, we begin to see the sense in which, although Plato is traditionally viewed as having carefully distinguished non-rational or mantic states from the rational, dialectical modes of the philosopher symbolised 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 induction, 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 which arise from the discussion of *anamnesis* in the *Phaedrus*. Firstly, it is important to note the circular and tripartite structure of Plato's ontology. The Platonic 'cycle' runs as follows: a unified, divine and eternal origin experienced by the soul in its 'winged' state, followed by a fall into temporal life which often serves to obscure the *eide*. 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 *eide*. Thus, as Paul Friedländer observes, "without the realm of the 'daemonic' heaven and earth would break asunder".¹⁴

Implicitly, therefore, Plato argues that we can only move forward by going back: that is to say, back to our origin, the realm of the *eide*. One suspects, however, that at least for human or anthropological purposes, this origin may be fundamentally *mythic* and *absent*, in the sense that the *eide* exist outside of human temporality in a past that never was. We 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 (*logos*) or philosophical argumentation, and the unreason or 'possession' associated with love. The proceeding discussion will explore how the Daemonic can be seen as a kind of fusion of rational and non-rational knowledge. But before we reach this 'fusion' it is necessary to look more closely at Plato's discussions of love and Eros in the *Symposium*.

¹⁴ Friedländer, *Plato* Volume I 43.

2.4. Eros and Love.

The *Symposium* is one of Plato's most enigmatic dialogues, and as such it points to some questions which surround many of his writings. How seriously are we to 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 dialogues is obvious: they are the 'straw men' created by Plato which allow Socrates to display his skills of refutation. But apart from this obvious structural purpose, many of these speeches are so detailed and fully realised 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 or historical narratives in order to convince an audience.

We have already seen the detail with which Plato relates the 'Myth of Er' in *The Republic*. Although we know, from our reading of the section of Plato's *Phaedo* (61b) discussed in the Introduction to this study, that the activity of *mythos* does not directly correspond with Plato's conception of 'truth' as *logos* or essence (*ousia*), we would nevertheless acknowledge that myths or narratives can, in a less rigorous sense, be 'true' or at least convincing.¹⁵ The mode of *mythos* can tell a kind of truth without laying any claims to philosophical 'correctness' or 'rigour'. The myths or historical narratives in Plato's writings are not bound by Socrates's usual inductive logic, and it is for precisely this reason that they are able to point to possible 'truths' that exceed or escape logical argumentation. In the words of Paul Friedländer, Plato's myths:

...presuppose conceptual analysis and carry it beyond the limits set for human existence and human knowledge...mythology makes sense only if it can be shown that the myth carries forward the lines of argument set by the *Logos*.¹⁶

Ultimately, the 'lines of argument' which 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 *logos*. Thus, according to Hans Blumenberg, the philosopher – for our purposes, Plato – may “[have] etwas für den Mythos übrig” (“care much for myth”) precisely because myth or *mythoi* (stories) are

¹⁵ This is the view of Josef Pieper in his book Über die platonischen Mythen (1965). Pieper argues that the myths of Plato contain things which are true (“es ist zwar Wahres daran”) while at the same time not be actually true (“eigentlich wahr”). Josef Pieper, Über die platonischen Mythen (München: Kösel Verlag, 1965) 19.

¹⁶ Friedländer, Plato Volume I 189.

one of the modes through which the mysteries of existence can be approached by way of their conversion into a narrative form.¹⁷

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 *Ēros* (ἔρως) which involves sexual desire, and not love as *Philia* (φιλία): affectionate regard, familial love, or friendship. In the *Symposium*, Aristophanes argues that all humans were originally 'double' and could be categorised into three different sexes: men, women and hermaphrodites. The 'primeval man' was, says Aristophanes:

...round, his back and sides forming a circle; and he had four hands and four feet, one head with two faces, looking opposite ways, set on a round neck and precisely alike; also four ears, two privy members, and the remainder to correspond. He could walk upright as men do now, backwards or forwards as he pleased, and he could also roll over and over at a great pace, turning on his four hands and four feet, eight in all, like tumblers going over and over with their legs in the air; this was when he wanted to run fast. (189e-190b).¹⁸

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. Aristophanes then uses this division as an explanation for love and the different manifestations of sexual desire. Those beings which 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:

...each desiring his other half, came together, and throwing their arms around one another, entwined in mutual embraces, longing to grow into one...so ancient is the desire of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, making one of two, and healing the state of man. (191a-191d).¹⁹

Aristophanes is, of course, known by his audience as a comedian, and his tale is perhaps an ironic example of Platonic myth making. Despite its apparent irony, the story does accord thematically with

¹⁷ Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 33. Brackets added. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 26-27.

¹⁸ Plato, *Symposium* trans. Benjamin Jowett *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* ed. and trans. Benjamin Jowett Volume I (1871; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953) 521.

¹⁹ Plato, *Symposium* (Jowett I) 522-523.

the Platonic 'cycle' of creation: an original, primeval unity, followed by an act of creation that also constitutes a division of the original unity, which then produces the hope of a third redeeming and unifying stage. This third stage is, according to Aristophanes, occupied by love, as "the pursuit of the whole is called love"(192e).²⁰

What significance does this story hold for the subject of the Daemonic and its supposedly 'mantic' role in mediating between the *eide* 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-188c) that "all sacrifices and the activities that are the province of divination, which constitute the communion between gods and men"²¹ are connected with love, but this connection is made clearer by Socrates's account of Diotima's theories. Diotima's speech operates on a different level to the speech of Aristophanes. While Aristophanes's discourse on the origin of love functions as a kind of comic interlude in the *Symposium* – albeit a comic interlude which 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. Prior to Diotima's speech, at 199c-201c, 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 of 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's 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, is:

...neither mortal nor immortal, but in a mean between the two...He is a great spirit [in the original Greek, daimon, *δαίμων*], and like all spirits he is intermediate between the divine and the mortal... He interprets...between gods and men, conveying and taking across to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods; he is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them, and therefore in him all is bound together, and through him the arts of the prophet and the priest, their sacrifices and mysteries and charms, and all prophecy and incantation, find their way. For God mingles not with man; but

²⁰ Plato, *Symposium* (Jowett I) 524.

²¹ Plato, *Symposium* (Jowett I) 519.

through love all the intercourse and converse of god with man, whether awake or asleep, is carried on. The wisdom which understands this is daimonic; all other wisdom, such as that of arts and handicrafts, is mean and vulgar. Now these daimons or intermediate powers are many and diverse, and one of them is love. (202e-203a).²²

Diotima's contention is that the daemon corresponds with a state of lack or non-consummation. The daemon – embodied in this case in the concepts of love and 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 love's mother is, according to Diotima, Penia: the goddess of Poverty. But what does this notion of love as daimonic 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 says to Socrates:

'No god is a philosopher or seeker after wisdom, for he is wise already; nor does any man who is wise seek after wisdom. For herein is the evil of ignorance, that he who is neither good nor wise is nevertheless satisfied with himself: he has no desire for that of which he feels no want.' 'But who then Diotima' [asks Socrates] 'are the lovers of wisdom, if they are neither wise nor foolish?' ...
'they are those who are in a mean between the two; love is one of them. For wisdom is a most beautiful thing, and Love is of the beautiful; and therefore Love is also a philosopher or lover of wisdom, and being a lover of wisdom is in a mean between the wise and the ignorant.'
(204a-204b).²³

For Plato, the philosopher is only a philosopher insofar as he is filled with the desire for wisdom, and all desire corresponds with a lack: a sense of incompleteness. The philosopher who thinks he has arrived at the truth falls into a state of ignorance, and as such he is no longer a philosopher because he has lost his desire for wisdom. In other words, philosophers, as intermediaries or daemons with a desire to know the *eide*, can only ever be 'on the way'. Any sense of arrival must be false, as the *eide* themselves are, at least for human purposes, like a horizon which withdraws when approached: a destination without location which always spurs the philosopher on to greater heights.

²² Plato, Symposium (Jowett I) 534-535. Brackets added.

²³ Plato, Symposium (Jowett I) 535-536. Brackets added.

2.5. 'The Mantic Art': Types of Divine Madness.

It is here where we begin to see that for Plato, as for Empedocles, the whole notion of the Daemonic is intimately connected with the task of the philosopher. Diotima teaches us that all love is ultimately love of the possession of the good, which is to say, the love of beauty as *eidos*: "divine beauty... pure and clear and unalloyed" (211e).²⁴ In the *Symposium* the process of contemplating love and beauty is presented as an eminently rational procedure which corresponds with the activity of *logos*. 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 *eide* or universal Ideas. But in the *Phaedrus* love and Eros often appear to be less than rational (perhaps even non-rational) forces or cosmic principles which *impose* themselves upon human lives. The dialogue 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 freely and reasonably. Socrates's 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-242c) Socrates is suddenly restrained from leaving the scene by his *daimonion* (*δαίμωνιον*) -- a kind of divine-sign or supernatural voice which comes to him at certain times, and a phenomenon which we will examine in depth later in this chapter. 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 which 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 to describe a kind of madness which is a "divine gift, and the source of the chiefest blessings granted to men" (244a).²⁵ Later in the dialogue, Socrates defines this positive madness more specifically:

²⁴ Plato, *Symposium* (Jowett I) 543.

²⁵ Plato, *Phaedrus* trans. Benjamin Jowett *The Dialogues of Plato* ed. and trans. Benjamin Jowett Volume III (1871; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953) 150.

...of madness there are two kinds; one produced by human infirmity, the other was a divine release of the soul from the yoke of custom and convention.... The divine madness was subdivided into four kinds, prophetic, initiatory, poetic and erotic, having four gods presiding over them; the first was Apollo, the second that of Dionysus, the third that of the Muses, the fourth that of Aphrodite and Eros. (265a-265b).²⁶

What exactly does Socrates mean by using the term 'madness' in this context? Presumably, it has little to do with modern ideas of madness which come under the term 'psychosis', meaning the subject's loss of contact with reality. The Greek term which Plato uses is *mania*, meaning 'madness' or 'frenzy'. While in a modern context, madness as 'psychosis' may refer to the subject's loss of reality, when Plato uses 'mania' in a positive sense, it refers to a heightened sense of reality which comes upon the subject from outside, and which makes possible a kind of contact with the divine, absolutely 'real' and transcendent Being. It is this kind of madness which possesses or 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 abstract 'Idea' or *eidos* of beauty and goodness, and this process prepares his soul for a communion with the forms. Thus, Plato implies that sexual desire may lead to a transcendent and therefore asexual realm: the seat of the *eide*. Plato's discussion of madness or *mania* is important because it suggests that either non-rational cosmic forces, or non-rational states of mind, may help us to come in contact with divine knowledge. Plato sees this kind of non-rationality or 'possession' as comprising a 'method' or 'art' which he describes as 'mantic', meaning 'of divination':

But this at least is worth pointing out, that the men of old who gave things their names saw no disgrace or reproach in madness; otherwise they would not have connected with it the name of the noblest of all arts, the art of discerning the future, and called it the manic art. The fact that they did so shows that they looked upon madness as a fine thing, when it comes upon a man by divine dispensation, but their successors have bungled matters by the introduction of a T, and produced the word mantic....So, according to the evidence provided by our ancestors, madness is a nobler thing than sober sense, in proportion as the name of the mantic art and the act that it signifies are more perfect and held in higher esteem than the name and act of augury; madness comes from God, whereas sober sense is merely human. (244b-244d).²⁷

Socrates draws our 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 wrongly

²⁶ Plato, *Phaedrus* (Jowett III) 173.

²⁷ Plato, *Phaedrus* (Hamilton) 47.

and unjustly introduced into the word 'manic' in order to remove or at least efface the sense of irrationality or 'frenzy' which it carries. It appears, therefore, that Socrates is attempting to give 'madness' or 'mania' a positive inflection. But how are we to reconcile these statements about the value of desire, possession and madness with Plato's valorisation of reason and inductive logic? One possible answer to this question may be that Socrates is employing the art of rhetoric: that is, he is countering the argument expounded by Lysias that lovers are untrustworthy and irrational by polemically praising 'manic' or 'mantic' states of mind. At certain points in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates often suggests that he himself is subject to a divine inspiration or possession by 'Nymphs' while discoursing on the subject of love. Are we to view such references as being ironic? If the answer to this question is yes, then we can treat all of Plato's references to the non-rationality associated with love and poetry as being of little importance to his thought. If the answer to this question is no, as I suspect it is, then we must take the things which Plato has to say about 'manic' or 'mantic' states seriously and try to discern what they mean within the context of his philosophy as a whole.

The view taken in this study is that there is a non-rational, mythological or 'mantic' element in Plato's philosophy which operates as the 'other' or dialectical opposite of reason (*logos*) and inductive logic.²⁸ At this point it is worth restating the key argument of this chapter: namely, that *Plato's philosophy constitutes an erotics and a poetics*. Plato's 'erotics' are seen firstly 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 of desire which is fundamentally non-rational, and which is foregrounded 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 literary devices and narratives or myths (*mythoi*) while at the same time comprising a kind of poetics: a way of reading and understanding poems and stories.²⁹

²⁸ 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: Ignatius Press, 1995). Originally published in German as: *'Göttlicher Wahnsinn': Eine Platon-Interpretation* (Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag, 1989). Pieper argues that academic literature has neglected to read section 244b-244d 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.

²⁹ See, in this connection, Anthony J. Cascardi's essay 'The Place of Language in Philosophy', (1983). 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. Anthony J. Cascardi, 'The Place of Language in Philosophy', *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 16.14 (1983): 217-227. See in particular, pages 223-225. In her essay 'The Rhetorical Technique of Plato's *Phaedrus*', Jane V. Curran concurs with the view of Cascardi when she writes that in the *Phaedrus*: "the dominant tone of Socrates's two speeches is a poetic one – not a good exercise in the dialectical rigour

Both Plato's erotics and poetics are related to his conceptions of the daemon and the Daemonic. In terms of Eros, the Daemonic constitutes an attempt by Plato to understand the forces which drive us, and how they shape our fate. How does Eros affect our character, and what are its implications for the philosopher? Socrates hits upon these questions directly when he states at the beginning of the *Phaedrus*:

I must first know about myself as the Delphian inscription says; to be curious about that which is not my concern, while I am still in ignorance of my own self, would be ridiculous ... am I a monster more complicated and swollen with passion than the serpent Typho, or a creature of a gentler and simpler sort, possessing, by divine grace, a nature devoid of pride? (229e-230a).³⁰

In Plato Eros also takes on an intermediary or mediating aspect which is daemonic in the following sense: the philosopher is like a daemon who wishes to mediate between the material world and the *eide*, 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 and mantic practice in *Ion* and the *Phaedrus*. Poetry is not simply the mantic and 'irrational' opposite of Socrates's inductive 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 *eide*, 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. We will turn to the problematic relationships between poetry and philosophy, and between *mythos* and *logos*, later in this chapter. For now, we will look more closely at Plato's philosophy as an erotics, and as the source of metaphysical longing.

he himself demands of ideal oratory." Jane V. Curran, 'The Rhetorical Technique of Plato's *Phaedrus*', *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 19.1 (1986): 66-72. See, in particular, page 68.

³⁰ Plato, *Phaedrus* (Jowett III) 136.

2.6. Platonic and Socratic Eroticism.

As I have already suggested, Plato's notion of love as Eros is a key element in his philosophy. This is because Eros, while ostensibly carrying a purely corporeal and sexual meaning, also takes on an ontological role in Platonism. Eros is a kind of desire, and this desire translates itself into a kind of 'erotics of knowledge', as the forms become objects of a philosophical desire which is a kind of distillation 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 *eide*. Eros is also central to the 'Mantic Art' of divination in all its different manifestations: while its connection to the 'madness' or 'possession' of love is clear, it likewise plays a role in both *anamnesis* and in poetry or 'possession by the Muses'. As we saw in the *Phaedrus*, Eros assists *anamnesis* by virtue of the fact that the beauty inherent in objects of desire helps us to remember the 'original' beauty which our soul once encountered in its life with the gods. Its connection with poetry will 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.

But the issue of Eros in Plato becomes more complex when one seeks, as Vlastos does, to maintain a distinction between Platonic and Socratic eroticism. Vlastos argues that Socratic eroticism is effectively immanent, and therefore completely separate from Plato's metaphysics, having nothing at all to do with the transcendent *eide*.³¹ At this point, it is necessary to show the limitations of Vlastos's view by focusing upon the closing stages of the *Symposium*, in which we will encounter Socratic Eros and explore its connections with the theme of the Daemonic.

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 that Alcibiades has a great passion for him, and that Socrates is "in bodily fear of his mad and passionate attempts." (213d).³² Although Socrates's assertion is probably ironic, Alcibiades proceeds to give an ambivalent speech which praises Socrates, while at the same time depicting him as a kind of dialectical tyrant "who in his eloquence is the conqueror of all mankind" (213e).³³ After promising to speak the "truth", Alcibiades describes Socrates's external

³¹ Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* 38-40.

³² Plato, *Symposium* (Jowett I) 545.

³³ Plato, *Symposium* (Jowett I) 545.

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 that Socrates's beastly appearance is merely a kind of outer shell, which, when penetrated or "opened", reveals "divine and golden images of ... fascinating beauty" (216e-217a),³⁴ images which produce a kind of longing in Alcibiades:

For I have been bitten by a more than viper's tooth; I have known in my soul, or in my heart, or in some other part, that worst of pangs, more violent in ingenuous youth than any serpent's tooth, the pang of philosophy, which will make a man say or do anything...all of you, and I need not say Socrates himself, have had experience of the same madness and passion in your longing after wisdom. (218a-218b).³⁵

We immediately have a strange paradox here. Alcibiades tells us that philosophy is akin to madness and passion, and that this madness is inspired in him by none other than the absolute paradigm of reason, inductive logic and restraint: Socrates. Having been bitten by philosophy, Alcibiades conceives of a plan which will help him to gain access to Socrates's beautiful wisdom and satisfy his longing – a plan which is in keeping with the traditions of ancient Greek homosexuality. Earlier in the *Symposium*, we learn from Pausanias of the custom which approves of young men granting sexual favours to their elders in return for philosophical tuition. It is this custom which Alcibiades intends to continue with Socrates, as he is convinced that Socrates is enamoured of his beauty. But all of Alcibiades's attempts to seduce Socrates fail, and his humiliation is complete when, after having convinced Socrates to stay the night in his apartment, Socrates simply lies like a 'wonderful monster' 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, a man renowned for his physical ugliness, becomes the object of a strange kind of Eros which transcends bodily desire. We see this firstly in Alcibiades's depiction of Socrates as a satyr, an outwardly grotesque, lustful and beastly figure who conceals an internal divine nature. This contradiction within Socrates brings us back to 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 lusty beast he symbolises the power of bodily desire, and Alcibiades believes that he can seduce

³⁴ Plato, *Symposium* (Jowett I) 549.

³⁵ Plato, *Symposium* (Jowett I) 550.

Socrates by offering to satiate his physical needs. 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's longing and makes him a kind of slave to the wisdom of Socrates: "I was at my wit's end; no one was ever more hopelessly enslaved by another" (219e).³⁶ As a result of Socrates's 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 which 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 love, says Kierkegaard:

...is taken back to its most abstract definitions, wherein it appears not as love of this or that or for this or that, but as love of something it does not have, that is, as desire, longing....The desire and the longing are the negative in love, that is, the immanent negativity... This definition is also the most abstract, or rather it is the abstract itself, not in the ontological sense but in the sense of what lacks content... His abstract is a totally empty designation. He starts with the concrete and arrives at the most abstract and there, where the investigation should begin, he stops.³⁷

Why, as Kierkegaard points out, does Plato stop at the most abstract, with love as a kind of immanent negativity? For Plato, love represents immanent negativity because it presents us 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 guide to the Idea" in that it points from bodily beauty to Beauty as *eidos*.³⁸ For human purposes, the *eidos* 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 recognises the absurd irony of his attempts to seduce the elderly and ugly Socrates "just as if he were a fair youth" (217c).³⁹ Socrates brings the gap between physical and metaphysical beauty to its highest pitch: his ugliness masks, and heightens, his inner beauty, his affinity with the divine. Now we can respond to the question of whether there is a distinction between Platonic and Socratic eroticism by saying that, at least in the *Symposium*, Socrates is the exponent of Platonic Eros *par*

³⁶ Plato, *Symposium* (Jowett I) 551.

³⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates* trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna N. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989) 45-46.

³⁸ Friedländer, *Plato* Volume I 50.

³⁹ Plato, *Symposium* (Jowett I) 549.

excellence. His external satyr-like ugliness is merely an ironic symbol of that which lies beyond bodily Eros: *philosophical Eros*, the desire for the *eide*.

The significance of Platonic/Socratic 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. 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 realised only through its artful transformation."⁴⁰ Our desires indicate to us something about ourselves and the world which we inhabit. The drunken and intoxicated Alcibiades, a man suffused with desire, tells us more about philosophical Eros than do any of the other speakers in the *Symposium* outside of Socrates and Diotima. His is a philosophy of instinct, a philosophy in which non-rational desire always runs ahead of reason or *logos*, while at the same time allowing itself to be re-appropriated by reason in retrospective reflection and analysis. Alcibiades shows us that the quickest way 'home', the shortest way to the 'Idea', is often given to us by desire and intoxication, provided that desire and intoxication can be retrospectively, and – to use Burger's terminology – 'artfully' embraced and analysed by reason. As Kierkegaard observes, sometimes passion and intoxication are just as useful as Socrates's dialectical reason:

...in the *Symposium* a complement is sought to what is lacking in the dialectical view [of love] by having love exemplified in the person of Socrates, and thus the eulogies on love end in a eulogy on Socrates. Now even if the exemplification of the idea in a personality is a mere element of the idea itself, it nevertheless does as such still have importance in the exposition. Precisely because the dialectical movement in Plato is not the idea's own dialectic, it remains alien to the idea, no matter in what ingenious *pas* [steps] it proceeds. Thus while the other speakers, like blindman's buffs, groped for the idea, the drunken Alcibiades grasps it with immediate certainty. Furthermore, it must be noted that Alcibiades's being intoxicated seems to suggest that only in an intensified immediacy is he secure in the love-relation that must have caused him in a sober state all the alarming and yet so sweet suspense of uncertainty.⁴¹

Kierkegaard's message is this: desire is the flesh which covers and adorns the bones of dialectical reason or *logos*, and as such it exemplifies and 'fills out', substantialises, the abstract notion of Eros outlined by Socrates and Diotima. The essence of Alcibiades's speech is the theme of reflection upon desire, upon longing. The deepest desire buried in Platonic Eros, in Platonic longing, is the desire to

⁴⁰ Ronna Burger, 'The Daemonic Speech of Socrates', *Plato's Phaedrus* 50.

⁴¹ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony* 47.

move from the immanent into the transcendent, from the finite into the infinite. 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:

...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...⁴²

...there is an essential aspiration of the soul which is concerned only with the essential, no matter where it comes from or from where it leads; there is a nostalgia of the soul when the longing for home is so violent that the soul must, with blind impetuosity, take the first path that seems to lead there...

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 which 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" ("the remoteness, the absence of an effective God").⁴³ In this way, Lukács's definition of the Daemonic is intimately connected with metaphysical longing, a longing which is directed towards an abstract, metaphysical 'home' or 'origin', not unlike Plato's forms or *eide*. It is this idea which comes through even more forcefully in an earlier work by Lukács – *Soul and Form* (1910) – in which he defines Socratic longing as a kind of Eros which is beyond consummation precisely because its goal is metaphysical and not physical:

But what was hidden behind his [Socrates's] words? Was it the recognition of the ultimate hopelessness of all longing? There is much to support this – but Socrates never said it. No word, no gesture ever betrayed where, in his humanity, lay the source of his philosophy of longing. He had become a teacher and a prophet of longing, analysing its nature with wise words, arousing longing everywhere he went with the ironically tempting pathos of his discourse, and always and everywhere denying himself any fulfilment... Love always leads somewhere beyond itself: 'its object' says Socrates, 'is to procreate and bring forth in beauty'. It was towards this high point that he had forced his life, and towards this that he seduced and deceived the youths of Athens. Through him, they ceased to be objects of love and became

⁴² Georg Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans* (1920; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1971) 86-87. Translated by Anna Bostock in *The Theory of the Novel* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971) 87.

⁴³ Georg Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans* 89. Trans. Bostock, *The Theory of the Novel* 90.

lovers; and the lover is more divine than the beloved, because his love, being a way towards self-perfection, must always remain unrequited.⁴⁴

Why, according to Lukács, is all longing 'ultimately hopeless', and why must it remain 'unrequited'? This question returns us to the relationship between the *eide* and the origin in Plato, a relationship which 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 *eide*, which we can only hope to revisit through philosophical contemplation. For Plato, the soul's vocation is to reunify itself with the *eide* through philosophical contemplation, just as for the young Lukács, 'soul' means the "maximum development, the highest possible intensification, of the powers of an individual's will."⁴⁵ But what are the *eide*? In terms of human or anthropological experience, the experience of immanence, the *eide* 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. Thus the origin, the realm of the *eide*, is for human purposes a kind of past that never was, as it is an origin which existed before – which is to say completely outside of – time and space. The significance of this for Platonic Eros is as follows: if the *eide* exist beyond the bounds of human experience, then there can be no consummation, no contact, in Platonic Eros. There can only ever be longing, a longing which, by virtue of the immutability of its goal – the *eide* – gives birth to insubstantial offspring: philosophical works, and poems. Plato's theory is that desire which engenders no physical offspring must therefore produce metaphysical progeny. It is this feature of Platonic Eros which Walter Benjamin describes in his fragment 'Sokrates' (1916):

Sokrates preist im Symposion die Liebe zwischen Männern und Jünglingen und rühmt sie als das Medium des schöpferischen Geistes. Nach seiner Lehre geht der Wissende mit dem Wissen schwanger, und das Geistige kennt Sokrates überhaupt nur als Wissen und als Tugend. Der Geistige aber ist – vielleicht nicht der Zeugende – sicherlich aber der ohne schwanger zu werden empfängt. Wie für das Weib unbefleckte Empfängnis die überschwengliche Idee von Reinheit ist, so ist Empfängnis ohne Schwangerschaft am tiefsten das Geisteszeichen des männlichen Genius.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Georg Lukács, 'Longing and Form', *Soul and Form* trans. Anna Bostock (London: Merlin Press, 1974) 93. Brackets added. Originally published in Hungarian in 1910. Translated into German in 1911 as *Die Seele und die Formen* (Berlin: Egon Fleischl, 1911). The German version of this essay is titled 'Sehnsucht und Form'.

⁴⁵ György Márkus, 'Life and the Soul: the Young Lukács and the Problem of Culture', *Lukács Revalued* ed. Agnes Heller (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) 8.

⁴⁶ Walter Benjamin, 'Sokrates', *Gesammelte Schriften* Band II.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977) 131. Translated by Thomas Levin in *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings Volume I 1913-1926* 53.

In the *Symposium*, Socrates praises the love between men and youths and lauds it as the medium of creative spirit. According to his teaching, the knower is pregnant with knowledge, and in general Socrates interprets the spiritual only as knowledge and virtue. The spiritual one, however, while perhaps not the procreator, is certainly the one who conceives without becoming pregnant. Just as immaculate conception is, for the woman, the rapturous notion of purity, so conception without pregnancy is most profoundly the spiritual mark of the male genius.

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, 'genius' had taken on a whole series of associations which were attached to it during the eighteenth century. As we shall see in Part Four of our analysis, it was during this period, through figures like Hamann, Herder and Goethe, among others, that 'genius' became inextricably linked with both the Daemonic and with the subjective imagination. Despite the fact that Plato helped to inspire eighteenth century *Genie-Kult* figures like Hamann, Herder and Goethe, his notion of genius has very little to do with the imagination or subjectivity. It is, however, linked to a particular kind of Eros to which Benjamin draws our attention: Eros which produces incorporeal offspring. Diotima discusses this kind of sublimated Eros in the *Symposium*:

...souls which are pregnant – for there certainly are men who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies, creative of that which is proper for the soul to conceive or bring forth: and if you ask me what are these conceptions, I answer, wisdom, and virtue in general – among such souls are all creative poets and all artists who are deserving of the name inventor... Who, when he thinks of Homer and Hesiod and other great poets, would not rather have their children than ordinary human ones? Who would not emulate them in the creation of children such as theirs, which have preserved their memory and given them everlasting glory? (209a-209d).⁴⁷

Unlike Benjamin, Plato does not believe that poets *themselves* are geniuses. Rather, they are visited from outside by their genius, which is to say, they are possessed by their daemon. The daemon is Plato's closest approximation of what we understand the term 'genius' to mean. As we saw in the 'Myth of Er', the genius or daemon is a kind of guardian divinity which is allotted to each soul and which influences one's talents and inclinations: one's fate. Plato sees the poet as being a daemonic – meaning 'divinatory' or 'mantic' – figure who is inspired or possessed by a divine source which exists outside of himself. For Plato the poet is effectively a kind of medium or oracle which gives voice to divine information. Consequently, the poet is always cast in an ambivalent light by Plato: unlike the

⁴⁷ Plato, *Symposium* (Jowett I) 540-541.

philosopher, he does not possess dialectical skill or *technē*, and his art is more unconscious and instinctive than conscious. In order to further investigate the status of the poet in Plato's philosophy, we will now turn to his discussions of poets in *The Republic*, *Phaedrus* and *Ion*.

2.7. The Other of *Technē*: The Mantic Art of Poetry.

The Republic is arguably Plato's most famous dialogue, and the work for which he is chiefly remembered. Accordingly, the popular version of Plato is one in which he is seen as the rational philosopher who casts aspersions upon the mimetic arts and wishes to expel poetry and *mythos* from his carefully ordered *polis*. But this expulsion is not as clear as it appears to be on the surface. Plato's well known 'official' argument regarding poetry runs as follows:

...the tragic poet is an imitator; and... like all other imitators, he is thrice removed from the king and from the truth... (597c).⁴⁸

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-588e, Socrates sketches for us 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 (symbolising appetite, aggression and hubris); and on the third, a man (the embodiment of reason or *logos*). Speaking on the subjects of justice and reason, Socrates puts forward the view that the right-minded citizen should:

...act as to give the just man within him in some way or other the most complete mastery over the entire human creature. He should watch over the many-headed monster like a good husbandman, fostering and cultivating the gentle qualities, and preventing the wild ones from growing; he should be making the lion-heart his ally, and in common care of them all should be uniting the several parts with one another and himself. (589b).⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Plato, *The Republic* trans. Benjamin Jowett *The Dialogues of Plato* ed. and trans. Benjamin Jowett Volume II (1871; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953) 470.

⁴⁹ Plato, *Republic* (Jowett II) 464.

According to Plato, poetry, story-telling (*mythos*) and the other imitative arts encourage the less rational elements of the soul, elements which the just and reasonable man should guard himself against. Thus, says Plato:

...we shall be right in refusing to admit [the imitative poet] into the well-ordered State, because he awakens and nourishes and strengthens the feelings and impairs the reason. As in a city when the evil are permitted to have authority and the good are put out of the way, so in the soul of man, as we maintain, the imitative poet plants an evil constitution, for he indulges the irrational nature... (605b).⁵⁰

How do we reconcile these ideas with the Plato of the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, the Plato who tells us that the intoxication involved in love and Eros can assist us in achieving knowledge of the *eide*? 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 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' which is to be received as a divine gift, and which is not to be confused with the conscious deployment of skill, art or *technē*. Rather, poets compose in a state of possession of unconsciousness, a state which is a kind of 'madness':

The third kind is the madness of those who are possessed by the Muses; which taking hold of a delicate and virgin soul, and there inspiring frenzy, awakens lyrical and all other numbers; with these adorning the myriad actions of ancient heroes for the instruction of posterity. But he who, having no touch of the Muses' madness, comes to the door and thinks that he will get into the temple by the help of art [*technē*] – he, I say, and his poetry are not admitted; the sane man disappears and is nowhere when he enters into rivalry with the madman. (245a).⁵¹

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).⁵² Clearly, Plato sees poetry as a kind of instinctive or 'mantic' gift. This means that it is not seen as a skill or practice involving the use of *logos* and dialectic, and for this reason it ranks 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?'

⁵⁰ Plato, *Republic* (Jowett II) 481. Brackets added.

⁵¹ Plato, *Phaedrus* (Jowett III) 151. Brackets added.

⁵² F.E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms* (New York: New York University Press, 1967) 190.

The answer to this question is no. According to Socrates, poets write in a state of madness or possession.⁵³ *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 so, 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 is more complex. Socrates explains it to him as follows:

This fine speaking of yours about Homer, as I was saying a moment ago, is not a skill at all. What moves you is a divine power, like the power in the stone which Euripides dubbed the 'Magnesian', but which most people call Heracleian. This stone, you see, not only attracts iron rings on their own, but also confers on them a power by which they can in turn reproduce exactly the effect which the stone has, so as to attract other rings. The result is sometimes quite a long chain of rings and scraps of iron suspended from one another, all of them depending on that stone for their power. Similarly the Muse herself makes some men inspired, from whom a chain of other men is strung out who catch their inspiration from theirs. For all good epic poets recite all that splendid poetry not by virtue of skill, but in a state of inspiration and possession. (533d-534a).⁵⁴

Socrates argues that the process of poetic inspiration involves a kind of chain which extends from the divine, through the Muses, to poets and to interpreters of poets (rhapsodes, like Ion), ending in the audiences who witness poetic performances. Within this chain, the poet is given a special status as a 'mantic' and daemonic figure who mediates between the secular and the divine:

A poet, you see, is a light thing, and winged and holy, and cannot compose before he gets inspiration and loses control of his senses and his reason has deserted him...the god relieves them of their reason, and uses them as his ministers, just as he uses soothsayers and divine prophets... it is the god himself who speaks, and addresses us through them...the poets are nothing but the gods' interpreters, each possessed by his own possessing god. (534b-534d).⁵⁵

⁵³ Because of the connection made by Socrates between poetry and madness or 'possession', *Ion* is often interpreted as an explicit attack upon poetry. Julius A. Elias, for example, claims that Plato's aim in *Ion* is to demonstrate the "ignorance, incoherence, irresponsibility, and madness of the poets." Julius 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 University Press, 1996) 107-108.

⁵⁴ Plato, *Ion* trans. Trevor J. Saunders *Plato: Early Socratic Dialogues* ed. Trevor J. Saunders (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) 54-55.

⁵⁵ Plato, *Ion* (Saunders) 55-56.

This view is evidently at odds with Plato's statements about poetry in *The Republic*. The poet who exists in a direct chain from God cannot be said to be 'imitative' or 'mimetic', as is suggested in *The Republic*. The mimetic artist in *The Republic* makes 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 'holy'.

What are we to make of this apparent contradiction in Plato's characterisation of poets?

Chronologically, *Ion* precedes *The Republic*, so Plato either completely changed his mind about poetry in *The Republic*, or at least changed his characterisation of poets to suit the context of his discussion. *The Republic* is, first and foremost, a work of political theory which 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, we still get a hint of uncertainty in Plato's condemnation of poetry in *The Republic*, as Socrates tells us at 595b, when he condemns poetry, that his words 'falter' on his lips, because he has always had an abiding love for Homer's works. Socrates's hesitation can perhaps be seen to spring from his – or indeed Plato's – awareness that poetic inspiration and the art of narrative (*mythos*) is one of the chief means through which dialectical philosophy or *logos* 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."⁵⁶

Our question is perhaps better answered when we look at Plato's works generally, and the way in which they function. We have already seen in this chapter the way in which Plato often deploys *mythos* (the 'Myth of Er', Aristophanes's account of love) to communicate his ideas, and we have likewise encountered his predilection for metaphor (the 'wings' of the soul in *Phaedrus*, or the 'chain' of poetic inspiration in *Ion*). Such uses of *mythos* and metaphor cannot be called 'dialectical' in the traditional Platonic sense. Neither the 'Myth of Er' nor Aristophanes's discourse on love could be said to be logically argued, but we nevertheless feel that these stories have philosophical importance for Plato. Plato's use of *mythos* and metaphor points us to a subject which Socrates addresses towards the end of *Ion*: namely, the nexus between poetry or poetic expression and philosophical thought.

⁵⁶ Elias, *Plato's Defense 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 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." Elias, *Plato's Defence of Poetry* 212.

In the closing stages of the dialogue, Ion is presented with a choice: whether to be skilled or inspired. Socrates has maintained that poets and rhapsodes are divinely inspired and not skilled. Ion counters Socrates's proposition by arguing that he is indeed skilled: from reading Homer's works on warfare, he contends that he has acquired the skills of a general. In response to this, Socrates states:

So, if you do have skill, and as I remarked just now, your promise of an exhibition is just a trick on me, you're not playing fair. However, if you do not possess skill, but it is because of divine dispensation and because you are possessed by Homer that you say a lot of fine things about that poet, in a state of ignorance, as I said was your condition, then you are not unfair. So, choose which alternative you prefer: to have us think of you as an unfair fellow, or as a divine one?

ION: There's a lot of difference, Socrates: it's a much finer thing to be thought divine.

SOCRATES: Well then, let's grant you this finer status in our eyes, Ion: as a eulogist of Homer you are not skilled, but divine. (542a-542b).⁵⁷

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's dialectical ability is, for example, a kind of skill – while divine inspiration is associated with *mythos*, unconsciousness, instinct and ignorance. Can one be both skilled and divinely inspired? Can one simultaneously deploy 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, we saw that intoxication and desire can complement Socratic dialectics, so too it seems that the mantic 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 'mantic' states of possession – like poetic inspiration – which 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 therefore be subsequently analysed in a rational framework if we are to understand their meaning. It is precisely this task which Socrates undertakes when speaking of his *daimonion*.

⁵⁷ Plato, *Ion* (Saunders) 65.

2.8. The Meaning of Socrates's *Daimonion*.

The term *daimonion* (*δαίμόνιον*) is a contraction of the phenomenon which Socrates refers to as *τὸ δαίμόνιον σημεῖον* (the 'divine sign') at 496c in Book Six of *The Republic*, and at 272e in *Euthydemus*.⁵⁸ The *daimonion* appears to be a singular instance or effect of what I have referred to in this chapter as the general sensibility or conduit of the Daemonic, a sensibility which mediates between the secular and the divine. The *daimonion* is not, in itself, a 'daemon' in the same sense that love or 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 *τὸ δαίμόνιον* is "neither simply adjectival...nor is it substantive in the sense that it designates a special or unique being"⁵⁹, while Vlastos views it as being "an adjective flanked by a semantic hole where a substantive has to be understood."⁶⁰ The *daimonion* is thus a kind of sign which exists on the boundary between adjectival and substantive signification, and as such it can only be elliptically 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 recognise the gods of the state but instead believes in divinities of his own making. Socrates defines his 'divinity' in the following way:

You have heard me speak at sundry times and in diverse places of a superhuman oracle or sign which comes to me, and is the divinity which Meletus ridicules in the indictment. This sign, which is a kind of voice, first began to come to me as a child; from time to time it forbids me to do something which I am going to do, but never commands anything. (31c-31d).⁶¹

We will return to the specific 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 which dissuades Socrates from particular courses of action is peculiar to Plato's representation of Socrates. Xenophon refers to

⁵⁸ Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* 280. Vlastos gives a comprehensive discussion of the *daimonion* at 280-287.

⁵⁹ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony* 158.

⁶⁰ Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* 280.

⁶¹ Plato, *The Apology* trans. Benjamin Jowett *The Dialogues of Plato* ed. Benjamin Jowett Volume I (1871; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953) 356.

Socrates's *daimonion* as something which prescribes definitive courses of action, and which also gives advice, via Socrates, to third parties in a role similar to that of the oracle at Delphi.⁶² 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) may help us to advance our understanding of the *daimonion*. In this chapter we first encountered the *daimonion* in the *Phaedrus*, following Socrates's first speech on the subject of love. After having agreed with Lysias's proposition that non-lovers are preferable to lovers, Socrates is restrained or 'dissuaded' from leaving the matter to rest by:

...the usual sign...that sign which always forbids, but never bids, me to do anything which I am going to do; and I thought that I had been guilty of an impiety, and that I must not go away until I had made an atonement. Now I am a diviner, though not a very good one, but I have enough religion for my own use, as you might say of a bad speller – his spelling is good enough for him; and I now clearly perceive my error. O my friend, how prophetic is the human soul! (242b-242c).⁶³

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* or 'divine sign' actually do in this instance? Firstly, we should note that it is associated with a kind of divination or prophecy which Socrates suggests is 'bad', even amateurish, but which 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 which he must subsequently interpret on his own terms by exposing it to rational investigation. In this case, Socrates is induced by the *daimonion* to recognise the limitations of his first speech on love, but the recognition itself is performed by Socrates, and not the *daimonion*. As G.R.F. Ferrari observes in his study of Plato's *Phaedrus*, *Listening to the Cicadas* (1987), Socrates's *daimonion*:

...in obedience to which he stays to make his palinode...acts only to restrain him from an improper course of action, but does not tell him what he must do. Unlike the Pythia, who acts purely as a medium for the god's voice, and issues positive commands or messages in his name, Socrates's daemonic sign remains in the background – maps out, indeed, the

⁶² See, for example, Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (1.1.4-5) and his *Apology of Socrates* 13.

⁶³ Plato, *Phaedrus* (Jowett III) 148.

background limits to his life, what he cannot find it in himself to do, and therefore, what he can...⁶⁴

The *daimonion* is thus, in this context, a kind of supernatural or divine 'hint' which 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 a sub-rational, 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, the sphere of *logos*.⁶⁵ On the contrary, it comes in to assist him precisely when his conscious, rational resources have run dry or led him into error. In fact, according to Paul Friedländer:

...the daemonic in Socrates determines primarily his [Socrates's] educational mission. It is not merely a remarkable peculiarity of a single individual, but an integral part of the nature of a great teacher. As an extralogical influence, it protects education from becoming a purely rational pursuit...⁶⁶

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, as we know from Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, a great daemon who assists us to know the forms.

In the *Phaedrus*, we can see that the *daimonion* is a kind of mantic inspiration or possession which functions as the opposite pole of dialectical reasoning, and as such it can only be of use when it is retrospectively analysed in a rational framework. Burger alludes to this fact by arguing that:

Socrates in fact admits that the gift of the gods, handed down through the madness of the inspired prophet, must be contrasted with all forms of human reason; since the artfulness of

⁶⁴ G.R.F. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 116. Ferrari's view of the *daimonion* is supported by an earlier study by Edward G. Ballard entitled *Socratic Ignorance: An Essay on Platonic Self-Knowledge* (1965). Ballard writes that "like Socrates's daemon, who told him only what not to do, the soul pursues self-knowledge along its *via negativa*, by distinguishing itself from the things which it is not. By recognizing its limitations, the soul defines itself." Edward G. Ballard, *Socratic Ignorance: An Essay on Platonic Self-Knowledge* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965) 164.

⁶⁵ 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's daimon serves to restrain him within the limits appropriate to a man who seeks to mediate between god and man." John Sallis, *Being and Logos: The Way of Platonic Dialogue* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1975) 241.

⁶⁶ Friedländer, *Plato* Volume I 36. Brackets added.

human interpretation stands outside of the gift of prophetic madness, the fulfillment of the potential benefit of that madness must depend upon what is wholly other than itself.⁶⁷

Madness can only be a 'gift' if it is appropriated by its other: rationality or *logos*. The potential benefit of madness or mantic inspiration lies precisely in its status as the other of 'artfulness' or *technē*. The *technē* of dialectical argumentation can only be extended by something which exists beyond the boundary of *technē*, thereby providing a level of insight which is not readily available to rational, conscious thought. At this point it is pertinent to return to the question which 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 or 'mantically' inspired? The answer is yes, if you are Socrates. The distinction between the divine inspiration or mantic frenzy 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 which prevents them from having any rational insight into their works even after they have been created, Socrates is able to retrospectively analyse his *daimonion* and 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 Burger calls the "tragic flaw of possession", as a result of which he who is possessed has little or no understanding of the products which flow from his possession.⁶⁸ Socrates's *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' which can be used as an aid to dialectical argumentation becomes clearer still when we return to its appearance in *The Apology*. Prior to Socrates's discussion of the *daimonion* at 31c-32a, we are told of how he came to be a philosopher. On visiting Delphi, Socrates's friend Chaerephon is told by the oracle which resides there that Socrates is the wisest of all men. Socrates then informs us that his 'wisdom' consists in his acknowledgement that he does not know anything, which he sees as being superior to, and therefore slightly more 'wise' than,

⁶⁷ Ronna Burger, *Plato's Phaedrus* 49.

⁶⁸ Ronna Burger, *Plato's Phaedrus* 49.

the mistaken belief that one has positive or 'complete' knowledge. The decree of the Delphic oracle pertaining to Socrates, combined with Socrates's own understanding of his 'wisdom' as a purely negative phenomenon – that is, as the recognition of his ignorance – enable him to discover his fate or role in life, which is to:

...go about the world, obedient to the god, and search and make inquiry into the wisdom of anyone, whether citizen or stranger, who appears to be wise; and if he is not wise, then in vindication of the oracle I show him that he is not wise... (23b).⁶⁹

The inherent negativity of Socrates's elenctic method resonates with our earlier discussion of Platonic anthropological 'longing'. The human philosopher – who is, according to Socrates, a lover of wisdom – can never possess that which he longs for, as Socrates informs us that 'God only is wise'. Given that Socrates is not a god, and given that, by his own admission, his knowledge is human and not superhuman (20d), his role is simply to refute the misplaced presumption of wisdom in those who claim to be wise. It is at this point that we need to investigate exactly what Socrates means when he criticises the putative 'wisdom' of others. According to Vlastos, the misapprehension of wisdom which Socrates always seeks to refute is a wisdom which 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.⁷⁰

Although *The Apology* belongs to the earliest phase of Plato's dialogues, a period in which, Vlastos argues, there is no evidence to suggest that the views of 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's refutation of all wisdom can be seen to accord with the theory of the forms. As we saw earlier in our discussion of the forms within the context of Plato's notion of *anamnesis*, the forms or *eide* are – in terms of human experience – like a distant, almost mythological 'beyond' towards which the philosopher can only travel. While 'travelling' 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 which requires the kind of dialectical refutation which Socrates performs so relentlessly. Existing outside of time and space, and therefore beyond the boundary of human experience, the forms comprise a kind of

⁶⁹ Plato, *Apology* (Jowett I) 347.

⁷⁰ This is an argument which Vlastos outlines in 'The Paradox of Socrates', *The Philosophy of Socrates* (New York: Anchor Books, 1971) 6-9 and then develops further in *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* 3-4.

consummate negativity. This central tenet of Plato's metaphysics yields two direct consequences for the definition of human 'knowledge'. Firstly, 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 *eide* – and these absolutes can only be known negatively, which is to say, 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 wilful ignorance: a 'dark side' which remains veiled in order to maintain the illusion of absolute 'wisdom'. Another way of stating this is that any belief of absolute epistemological closure necessarily produces a shadow: a shadow which shields us from the bright light of infinity, a light which burns up or exposes all human claims to complete knowledge.

We can, at this juncture, reintroduce Socrates's *daimonion* by investigating its epistemological function in *The Apology*. At 31c, Socrates describes how the *daimonion* opposes his involvement in politics:

Some may wonder why I go about in private giving advice and busying myself with the concerns of others, but do not venture to come forward in public and advise the state.... [the *daimonion*]...deters me from being a politician. And rightly, as I think. For I am certain, O men of Athens, that if I engaged in politics, I should have perished long ago, and done no good either to you or to myself. (31c-31e).⁷¹

Firstly, we should 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 'thinks' – that is, he 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. As Vlastos observes:

...what the voice [*daimonion*] brings him is a message. For the true interpretation of that message he must rely on his own, highly fallible, human resources.⁷²

⁷¹ Plato, *Apology* (Jowett I) 356. Brackets added.

⁷² Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher*: 283. Brackets added. Vlastos's view is supported, more recently, by Mark L. McPherran in his book *The Religion of Socrates* (1996). McPherran argues that Socrates is "no run-of-the-mill diviner" in that he "takes it to be obligatory to subject the occurrences of the *daimonion* or other such signs to rational conformation (and perhaps interpretation) wherever possible". Mark L. McPherran, *The Religion of Socrates* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996) 187.

Having established that the *daimonion* is a sign which must be subsequently interpreted through the deployment of Socrates's dialectical *technē*, we must firstly ask the question as to why the *daimonion* opposes his involvement in politics, and secondly, the question as to why the *daimonion* is only a sign of opposition or dissuasion *per se*. One possible answer to these questions is suggested by Kierkegaard, and is worth quoting at length:

...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's and at most his friends' completely private and particular affairs...⁷³

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 politics precisely because of his view that human 'knowledge' or 'wisdom' 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'. Seen in this way, the *daimonion* is the voice which demands of Socrates that he extend his vision, his philosophical inquiry, beyond the realm of human reason or *logos*, into the superhuman and extra-

⁷³ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony* 160.

rational realm of the *archē*: the basic 'stuff', the underlying substance or ground from which all things and concepts are ultimately derived.⁷⁴

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 (*logoi*) must undergo a process of compromise, or even death, when they are subjected to the transition from abstraction into concrete actuality.

Kierkegaard's discussion of the *daimonion* may thus be seen to resonate with Socrates's views, expressed in *The Apology*, on the relationship between knowledge and death. Beginning with the premise that it is logically impossible to experience one's own death, Socrates argues, at 29a, that it is erroneous to categorise death in terms of good or evil, as human 'wisdom' cannot extend beyond the boundary of death. Consequently, he informs us that "the fear of death is the pretence of wisdom"(29a).⁷⁵ Socrates supplements these thoughts on knowledge and death by arguing, in the *Phaedo* (67e), that "true philosophers...are always occupied by dying".⁷⁶ At one level, Socrates merely means that death is the consummation of philosophy, in that it enacts the separation of the soul from the prison of the body. But this comment also resonates with Kierkegaard's characterisation of the *daimonion* as something which dissuades the philosopher from translating his abstract human knowledge into concrete political action. In effect, the *daimonion* tells Socrates that all knowledge must incorporate its own death: that is, it must recognise that it is human and not superhuman knowledge, which is to say, it should avoid the hubris of believing itself to be eternally true. In other words, no human is absolutely right, as human knowledge is at best partial, incomplete and mortal. Unlike the *eide*, it is always subject to change and contradiction. Philosophers should therefore follow the example of Socrates by taking account of their own ignorance, and this acknowledgement should discourage them from taking direct or positive political action. This is not to suggest that the

⁷⁴ For a definition of *archē* see F.E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms* 23-24.

⁷⁵ Plato, *Apology* (Jowett I) 354.

⁷⁶ Plato, *Phaedo* trans. Benjamin Jowett *The Dialogues of Plato* ed. Benjamin Jowett Volume I (1871; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953) 418.

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.

2.9. The *Daimonion* and Subjectivity.

Putting the question of politics aside, Kierkegaard's comments on Socrates's *daimonion* have an even greater importance with respect to the general theme of the Daemonic as a conduit which mediates between the secular individual or subject and the divine. This is because his critique of Socrates's *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' which follows from Socrates's *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 in our 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. This is seen clearly in ancient Greek tragedy, in which characters – like, for example, Oedipus – would be viewed as puppets who dance to the tune of divine forces or Necessity, rather than as autonomous individuals endowed with subjective volition.

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. In the ancient Greek *polis*, moreover, 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. 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 be going much too far. Although the *daimonion* visits Socrates alone, it still appears to come from a

divine source *outside* of 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 we can say, however, is that Socrates's *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 we will see in Part Four of our analysis, Kierkegaard – who wrote *The Concept of Irony* between 1838 and 1840 – merely represents the tail-end of a phenomenon which began in Germany in the work of figures like Hamann, Herder and of course, Goethe.

At this point it is necessary to give a provisional response to a question which will be explored in greater depth in Part Four of this study: why does the Socratic *daimonion* become a subject of special interest during the Romantic period? A plausible answer is suggested by Alexander Nehamas in *The Art of Living*. Nehamas argues that Plato's version of Socrates – as opposed to the Socrates of Xenophon – appealed to Romantics like Friedrich Schlegel because of its inherent irony. This distinction becomes clearer when we confine our focus to the subject of the *daimonion*. As we saw earlier, Xenophon depicts the *daimonion* as a voice which gives positive instructions to characters other than Socrates, while the Platonic *daimonion* is a purely negative 'sign' confined to the subjective perceptions of Socrates alone. Taking into account these traits of the Platonic *daimonion*, it is likely that it appealed to the Romantics for two reasons. Firstly, in speaking only to Socrates, it places an emphasis on the individual and his presentiments, emotions or intuitions, an emphasis which accords with the Romantic valorisation of subjectivity. Secondly, in being a purely negative and dissuasive voice or sign, the *daimonion* could be easily conscripted into the Romantics' wars against Rationalism and the Enlightenment. This is the case, for example, in Hamann's use of the term, which we will investigate in Part Four of this study. In effect, therefore, the *daimonion* became, for the Romantics, a symbol of irony: a sensibility which attested to the impossibility of completely 'knowing' anything, including the secrets of the self.

Thus, when Goethe speaks, in his explanation of the poem 'Urworte. Orphisch' (1817), of Socrates's *daimonion* as: "a necessarily created individuality" ("eine notwendig aufgestellte Individualität") which is ascribed ("zugeschrieben") to every human being, and which "occasionally whispers into his ear, what really has to be done" ("gelegentlich ins Ohr raunt, was denn eigentlich zu tun sei"), he is talking about a voice which seemingly has nothing at all to do with public affairs, and everything to do with the invisible forces which shape the fate of the individual.⁷⁷ In telling the individual 'was denn eigentlich zu tun sei' we should take note of the word 'eigentlich', which means both 'actually' or

⁷⁷ Goethe 'Urworte. Orphisch', HA Band I 405.

'really', while at the same time carrying within its root – 'eigen' (meaning *selbstgehörend*, belonging to the self) – a sense of individuality or specificity. As we shall see in Part Seven of this study, where we will examine the context of Goethe's comments on 'Urworte. Orphisch' more closely, the *Dämon* helps the human being to decide what should be done in his particular case, with reference to his individual circumstances and subjective state of mind. In short, the voice of the *Dämon* constitutes, for Goethe, a kind of dialogue between the individual and his fate. Accordingly, Goethe goes on to argue that Socrates chooses to die because his *Dämon* has told him to do so: "...und so wählte Sokrates den Giftbecher, weil ihm ziemte zu sterben" ("and so Socrates chose the poison cup, because for him to die was fitting").⁷⁸ The line to which Goethe refers is uttered by Socrates in the *Phaedo*:

Me already, as a tragic poet would say, the voice of fate calls. Soon I must drink the poison...
(115a).⁷⁹

Does the voice of fate – the *daimonion* – 'visit' Socrates from outside and above, or is it an internal voice, a kind of subjective presentiment of his own destiny? This question is by no means simple, and, as we shall see in Part Three of our analysis, the answers to it change according to the philosophical *Zeitgeist* in which they appear. One such answer is offered by Hegel in his *Geschichte der Philosophie* (*History of Philosophy*):

...Das Daimonion steht demnach in der Mitte zwischen dem Aeuszerlichen der Orakel und dem rein Innerlichen des Geistes; es ist etwas Innerliches, aber so, dasz es als ein eigener Genius, als vom menschlichen Willen unterschieden vorgestellt wird, – nicht als seine Klugheit, Willkür...⁸⁰

...the Genius [daimonion] of Socrates stands midway between the externality of the oracle and the pure inwardness of mind; it is inward, but it is also presented as a personal genius, separate from human will, and not yet as the wisdom and free will of Socrates himself.

Hegel's comments are significant in that they see the *daimonion* as announcing a problematic of topology, or space. Is the *daimonion* located within, or outside of, the subject? Hegel's view seems to be that the *daimonion* represents the first faltering steps of subjectivity or 'inwardness': the beginnings

⁷⁸ Goethe, 'Urworte. Orphisch', HA Band I 405.

⁷⁹ Plato, Phaedo (Jowett I) 474.

⁸⁰ G.W.F. Hegel, Geschichte der Philosophie II, Werke XIV 99. Quoted in Kierkegaard, The Concept of Irony 164. Translated by E.S. Haldane in G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume I (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1892) 425. Brackets added to English translation.

of the self's regarding of itself. Such an answer might indicate that Hegel sees the *daimonion* as being something that resides within Socrates. But just as this explanation appears to be sufficient, Hegel goes on to suggest that the *daimonion* is not a purely immanent phenomenon. In fact, he is at pains to point out that it still retains an oracular element of externality. The matter becomes more complex still when Hegel elaborates on the *daimonion* as a spatial problem in the following lines:

Das Innere des Subjects weisz, entscheidet aus sich; diesz Innere hat bei Socrates noch eine eigenthümliche Form gehabt. Der Genius ist noch das Bewusstlose, Aeuszerliche, das entscheidet; und doch ist es ein Subjectives. Der Genius ist nicht Socrates selbst, nicht seine Meinung, Ueberzeugung, sondern ein Bewusstloses; Socrates ist getrieben.⁸¹

The inwardness of the subject knows and decides by itself, but in Socrates this inwardness had a unique form. The daimon/genius is still the unconscious, the external, that decides; yet it is also something subjective. The daimon is not Socrates himself, nor his opinion, nor his conviction, but it is something unconscious; Socrates is impelled.

To our post-Nietzschean, post-Freudian ears, a phenomenon which is both 'unconscious' and 'external' sounds like a contradiction in terms. For Hegel, the term unconscious (*das Bewusstlose*, perhaps more accurately translated as the conscious-less) does not necessarily imply something buried within the subject. In fact, it may even suggest a divine, oracular influence upon the soul which has an external, divine or 'spiritual' origin. Oscillating between inwardness and the external, between 'freedom' and 'compulsion', and between the secular and the numinous, Hegel's representation of the *daimonion* displays to us the tensions between two different, and often fundamentally opposed, ways or traditions of regarding the soul: the Platonic and the Aristotelean. It is toward these tensions that we will turn in Part Three of our discussion.

⁸¹ Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie II Werke XIV* 96. Quoted in Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony* 164. Trans. Haldane, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume I* 422-423.

2.10. Summary.

For now it is necessary to review the many different ways in which the general sensibility or mode of the Daemonic permeates Plato's philosophy. In Plato, the Daemonic is a mode or conduit which announces the possibility of there being a 'crossing' or 'bridging' of the split between the material world and the world of the forms. The reasons for this split – a split which implies that 'truth' or 'divine knowledge' has been lost or forgotten – is unclear in Plato, and as such it is seen as an effect of the mysterious workings of Necessity. Necessity then becomes a general concept that is associated with the first sense or resonance of the daemon in antiquity: that is, the idea of the daemon as the indwelling fate or destiny found in all individuals. This sense of the term occurs in Heraclitus, and also resembles the 'lot' or 'fate' ascribed to each individual soul in Plato's 'Myth of Er'.

Although the idea of the philosopher as a daemonic intermediary charged with the task of returning to or re-approximating divine truth is a pre-Platonic notion – found, as we saw, in the thought of Empedocles – the connection between the Daemonic and the so-called 'mantic' arts of prophecy or divination is developed in Plato's philosophy alone: namely, in *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. In these dialogues the Daemonic is presented as a fusion between non-rational, intuitive, mantic knowledge (knowledge which corresponds with the realm of *mythos*) and reasonable, inductive logic (dialectical *logos* or *technē*). In both dialogues the non-rational or instinctual element of the Daemonic is also connected with the Platonic notion of Eros. Plato presents Eros as an eminently human desire to know the forms – a desire which is a sublimated form of corporeal, sexual desire. This metaphysical desire is then associated with a kind of anthropological longing which has as its impossible (because formal and abstract) goal of a union or consummation between the philosopher's soul and the Platonic *eide*. Along with Plato's *erotics*, the Daemonic is also connected with his *poetics*, which are outlined in *Ion*, *Phaedrus* and *The Republic*. In contradistinction to the wholly negative view of poets presented in *The Republic*, in *Ion* and in *Phaedrus*, Plato argues that poets are 'mantic' intermediaries who are subject to divine inspiration and who compose in a state unconscious possession. In this respect, the art of the poet (that of *mythos*) is seen by Plato as the opposite or 'other' of the philosopher's dialectical skill (*logos*).

But perhaps the most important development of the Daemonic in Plato's philosophy occurs in his discussions of Socrates's 'divine sign' or *daimonion*. The *daimonion* is a specific instance or effect of the general mode of the Daemonic. Its role is purely negative, as it warns or dissuades Socrates against certain courses of action: most notably, against his direct involvement in politics. In a broader sense, the significance of the *daimonion* for the remainder of this study lies in the extent to which it operates

as a kind of reduction or contraction of the general, universal sensibility of the Daemonic to the level of the personal, subjective and particular interests of Socrates alone. Although it would be incorrect to view Socrates's *daimonion* or 'divine sign' as a purely subjective form of intuition, or as a coming to light of unconscious contents, the fact that it is peculiar to the experience of Socrates alone suggests, at the very least, that it is connected with the fate of the individual, however different Plato's conception of the individual may be to Hamann's or Goethe's. Beyond this, Socrates's *daimonion* is also important because it suggests that non-rational or mantic states may be susceptible of rational, retrospective analysis – an analysis which may lead to a deeper understanding of the self. It is this theme – the theme of retrospectively analysing the non-rational, impulsive or 'unconscious' elements within the self – that will be central to our discussion of the Daemonic in Goethe and his contemporaries in parts Four, Five, Six and Seven of this study.

3. The Daemonic in Aristotle, in Stoicism, and in Early Neo-Platonism.

In Part Two of this study we examined the way in which Plato's discussions regarding the Daemonic serve to problematise the commonly held assumption that he is first and foremost a philosopher who valorises the notion of *logos* (rational thought or reason) over and above the realm of *mythos*: the non-rational realm in which ideas are approached or invented in *mythoi* (narratives or images). Following the suggestions of Paul Friedländer, we concluded that the Daemonic is not simply an idiosyncratic notion which emanates, from time to time, from the lips of Socrates. Rather, it is a notion which is central to Socrates's – and by extension Plato's – 'educational mission', in that it serves to prevent philosophy from becoming a purely rational pursuit, while at the same time helping philosophy or 'theory' to avoid the hubristic belief that all of life's mysteries can be resolved through the deployment of reason or *logos*.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the 'rational' and 'secular' way in which Aristotle influences the conceptual history of the term 'daemon'. Within this chapter, Aristotle will be seen as the central figure in the post-Platonic development of the notion 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 subsequent formulations of the term, and particularly his influence upon Leibniz's conception of the monad – perhaps the single most important philosophical concept for the young Goethe, and a concept which we will shortly encounter in Part Four of our analysis – cannot be overestimated.¹ As will become apparent in the forthcoming analysis, Aristotle attempted completely to reformulate the Platonic relationship between the body and soul, and between material phenomena or organisms and their essences. This reformulation will be spoken of as an *immanentisation* – an attempt to re-situate the Platonic forms or *eide* immanently in the following related concepts: the notion of substance or essence (*ousia*), and the conception of the indwelling form or *entelechy*. The consequences of this reformulation are widespread, and will be detected, throughout this chapter, in some of the early Neo-Platonic and Stoic interpreters of the daemon. In this connection, the key Neo-Platonic figures are Plutarch and Plotinus, while the most important discussions of the daemon in Stoicism occur in Posidonius and Marcus Aurelius.

¹ In this connection, Leibniz makes the following observation: "All simple substances, or created monads may be called Entelechies, because they have in themselves a certain perfection". Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Monadology §18 Discourse on Metaphysics, Correspondence with Arnauld, Monadology trans. George Montgomery (1902; La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Co., 1993) 254. For an analysis of how Aristotle's concept of the *entelechy* influences the Leibnizian notion of the monad, and Goethe's conception of the soul, see W. Franzen, K. Georgulis and H.M. Nobis, 'Entelechie', Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie Band II 508.

3.1. Aristotle: The Daemon as Substance (*Ousia*).

Searching for the word daemon within the Aristotelean corpus proves to be an unfruitful exercise. Aristotle's thorough-going empiricism, his insistence upon substance or 'essence' (*ousia, οὐσία*) as the ground of all Being, makes him reluctant to speculate on apparently 'numinous' and 'invisible' phenomena like daemons. This reluctance may be put down to the fact that Aristotle entered the Academy at a time (approximately 368 B.C.) during which Plato's philosophy was heading in a decidedly metaphysical, if not religious, direction.² The young Aristotle appears to have reacted against his master's influence by making empiricism, visibility and substance (*ousia*) the three central tenets of his philosophy – a philosophy which appears, at least on the surface, to be in complete contradiction with Plato's doctrine of the forms.

The majority of the references made by Aristotle to the daemon 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's 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.³ The point made by Aristotle in this case relates to Socrates's rhetorical technique. It is not a speculation on the 'truth' or ontological status of the *daimonion* itself. Or, perhaps more to the point, the 'truth' of the Socratic *daimonion* exists for Aristotle only in terms of its argumentative efficacy. In this sense the *daimonion* corresponds with poetic, inventive or *rhetorical* truth, rather than with any notion of *metaphysical* truth akin to that found in Plato's conception of the *eide*.

But Aristotle does engage in a degree of speculation about the ontology of the Daemonic at the beginning of the *Eudemian Ethics*, when he ruminates on the causes of happiness:

But first we must consider in what the happy life consists and how it is to be acquired, whether all who receive the epithet 'happy' become so by nature (as we become tall, short, or of different complexions), or by teaching (happiness being a sort of science), or by some sort of discipline... Or do men become happy in none of these ways, but either – like those possessed

² This is Frederick Copleston's view in his *History of Philosophy* Volume I (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1946) 266.

³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* trans. W. Rhys Roberts *The Works of Aristotle* ed. W.D. Ross Volume XI (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946). Ross's edition of Aristotle's works has no page numbers. References are by line number only.

by nymphs or deities – through a sort of divine influence [*epipnoiai daimoniou*] being as it were inspired, or through chance? (1214a 15-30).⁴

The fact that Aristotle devotes a whole volume to the systematic analysis of happiness suggests that he believes its causes to be logically demonstrable, and not attributable to 'mysterious', mythological or numinous phenomena. He further belittles the notion that happiness can be achieved via divine inspiration at 1225a 25-30, when he suggests, in accordance with Plato's views on poetic inspiration outlined in *Ion*, that:

...those who are inspired and prophesy, though their act is one of thought...have it not in their own power either to say what they said, or do what they did.⁵

For Aristotle, divine inspiration is a paradoxical kind of unconsciousness – an unconsciousness within the realms of 'thought' – and as such it is not susceptible of, nor even worthy of, logical investigation. Although Aristotle concedes, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* at 1141b 5-10, that divinely inspired men may be wise, his view is that such men are definitely not useful or prudent, because their knowledge is not of any practical use:

This is why we say Anaxagoras, Thales, and men like them have philosophic but not practical wisdom...and why we say that they know things that are remarkable, admirable, difficult, and divine [*daimonia*] but useless...because it is not human goods that they seek.⁶

So it appears that Aristotle's attitude toward 'mantic' phenomena is similar to his view of Plato's forms:

To say that the forms are patterns, and that other things participate in them, is to use empty phrases and poetical metaphors...it would seem impossible that the substance [*ousia*] and the thing of which it is the substance exist in separation; hence how can the Ideas, if they are the substances of things, exist in separation from them? (*Metaphysics*, 991a 12-15).⁷

⁴ Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics Books I, II and VIII* ed. and trans. Michael Wood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 1. Brackets added.

⁵ Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* (Wood) 27.

⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* trans. W.D. Ross *The Works of Aristotle Volume IX* (1915; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954). Brackets added.

⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics I–IX* trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956) 69. Brackets added.

Aristotle's starting point is always what he calls 'Substance' (*ousia*). Given that Plato's forms or Ideas, and Plato's notion of 'mantic' or 'divinatory' phenomena both stem from sources which are not directly available to human cognition, Aristotle sees them as being of little use to his philosophy. This is not to suggest that Aristotle wishes to renounce the Platonic quest for 'universals' or 'essences'. Rather, his objection is that it is incorrect to suggest that the essence or form of a thing can be located outside of its substance, in a metaphysical realm of Being. Aristotle does see himself as a metaphysician, but his metaphysics are of a completely different tenor to those of Plato. For Aristotle, metaphysics is the study of being as essence (*ousia*), and this means that he looks for essences within, rather than beyond, objects of sense. As Michael Frede observes: "Aristotle wants to hold on to the metaphysical primacy of objects, natural objects, living objects, human beings".⁸

But what does Aristotle mean when he uses the term essence (*ousia*)? Aristotle's argument runs to the effect that in order for being to exist, it must emerge out of an underlying substrate or ground which is not susceptible to further reduction or division. Accordingly, *ousia* is seen by Aristotle as the underlying cause of all being and motion which, in itself, remains unmoved and unchangeable. Thus, he writes that:

"Substance" [*Ousia*, *Ousia*, essence] means (a) simple bodies, e.g. earth, fire, water and the like; and in general bodies, and the things, animal or divine [*δαίμόνια daimonia*, daimonic], including their parts, which are composed of bodies. All these are called substances because they are not predicated of any substrate, but other things are predicated of them. (*Metaphysics*, 1017b 10-15).⁹

Unlike the material world of Plato, the Aristotelean world is not 'fallen' and secondary. As we saw in Part Two when looking at Plato's *Timaeus*, the material world is, for Plato, a kind of inadequate reproduction of the realm of the forms. Aristotle attempts to circumvent this 'fall' by situating the origin of being *in* being, thereby apparently overcoming the Platonic chasm or split between the material world and the realm of the forms.

What are the implications of this re-positioning of the ground of being within being – that is, within Substance or *ousia* – for the subject of the Daemonic? Firstly, unlike its Empedoclean and Platonic counterparts, the Aristotelean philosopher is not daemonic in the sense of mediating between the

⁸ Michael Frede, 'On Aristotle's Conception of the Soul', *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima* ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 99.

⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Tredennick) 239. Brackets added.

secular and the divine, because there is no split between material objects and their Ideas or essences to be overcome. Thus, Aristotle's philosophy becomes a kind of thorough-going empiricism, a philosophy of *logos* which concerns itself with the sensible world, and not, as in Plato, with insensible forms. Secondly, when we look more closely at Aristotle's definition of *ousia*, we should note that *ousia* or 'substance' refers to things animal and divine (*daimonia*). That is, for Aristotle divine (daemonic) things are not insubstantial or metaphysical by virtue of their divinity, since divinity itself is concomitant with *ousia* as substance or essence. This means that the daemon as essence or *ousia* is an immanent phenomenon which can be uncovered by a kind of empirical examination, and not through mystical speculation or Socratic dialectics. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, when we further investigate Aristotle's notion of essence (*ousia*) as indwelling and immanent, it becomes clear that he attempts to account for the character and development of living objects in a profoundly naturalistic way. This is apparent in his second and third definitions of *ousia*, as for Aristotle, *ousia* is also:

...whatever, being immanent in such things as are not predicated of a substrate, is the cause of their being; as, e.g., the soul is the cause of being for the animal...[and]...All parts immanent in things which define and indicate their individuality, and whose destruction causes the destruction of the whole. (*Metaphysics*, 1017b 15-20).¹⁰

In this passage, Aristotle begins to associate the notions of *ousia* or essence with the soul. The soul (*anima, psychē*) is seen by Aristotle as being both the cause and essence of the living being, and the driving force of its development and unfolding.¹¹ Thus, argues Aristotle, when the soul is destroyed, the whole organism is destroyed, and this assertion implies that the Aristotelean soul is, in contradistinction to its Platonic counterpart, not separable from the body. Aristotle elaborates upon this matter in *De Anima (On the Soul)*:

If then we must say something in general about all types of soul, it would be the first actuality [*ἐντελέχεια, entelechia, entelechy*] of a natural body with organs. We should not then inquire whether the soul and body are one thing, any more than whether the wax and its imprint are, or in general whether the matter of each thing is one with that of which it is the matter. For although unity and being are spoken of in a number of ways, it is of the actuality that they are most properly said. (II.1 412b).¹²

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Tredennick) 239-241. Brackets added.

¹¹ Frede, 'On Aristotle's Conception of the Soul' 96.

¹² Aristotle *De Anima (On the Soul)* trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) 157. Brackets added.

Here Aristotle contradicts the Homeric conception of the soul as 'breath', or 'breath of life' – a notion which sees the soul as being a kind of airy metaphysical essence which departs the physical body after death, and is capable of inhabiting other bodies.¹³ This is likewise a more or less complete refutation of Plato's doctrine of the transmigration of souls, a doctrine entirely dependent upon a conception of the soul as an entity which is separable from the body.¹⁴ Aristotle also introduces a crucial term in this passage: *ἐντελέχεια*, *entelecheia*, (*entelechy* in English, and *Entelechie* in German). Arising out of a combination of three words – *ἐν* (meaning 'in'), *τέλος* or *telos* (meaning 'end', 'target' or 'goal') and *ἔχειν* (meaning 'to have') – *entelecheia* refers to an indwelling form or essence which determines the organism's activity and development, while at the same time containing within itself the organism's complete potential, and its fulfillment or completion.¹⁵ The metaphor which perhaps best approximates the *entelechy* is the seed of a plant, which is the cause of the plant's existence, growth and characteristics, and which also holds the biological prototype or imprint of its full development. As we shall see in Part Seven of our analysis, Aristotle's notion of the *entelechy* is crucial for Goethe's understanding of the daemon as it manifests itself in the poem 'Urworte. Orphisch'.

¹³ See, in this connection, B. Mojsisch, U.R. Jeck and O. Pluta, 'Seele', Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie Band IX 1. The authors comment that, for Homer, *Seele* (soul) constitutes the "Lebensodem, der durch dem Mund oder Wunde den Sterbenden verläßt" ("life-breath, which leaves the dead person through the mouth or through a wound").

¹⁴ With regard to the separability of the soul, Michael Frede observes that "Aristotle rejects the notion of the soul as a distinct entity". Frede, 'On Aristotle's Conception of the Soul' 103.

¹⁵ This etymology is offered by W. Franzen, K. Georgulis and H.M. Nobis in: 'Entelechie', Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie Band II 506-509.

3.2. Daemon and *Entelechy*.

The *entelechy* is perhaps the closest thing in the Aristotelean corpus to the Platonic daemon. In contradistinction to Plato's notion of the daemon, the *entelechy* is immanent and substantial, rather than transcendent and insubstantial. Common to both terms, however, is an element of fate or predestination. Like the Platonic daemon, which on one level functions as the soul's 'lot' in life, and which Heraclitus also specifically associates with the individual's fate or destiny, the *entelechy* is a kind of essence which determines the future development of the organism, in what amounts to a kind of biological determinism. Connected with this notion of the soul or *entelechy* as a kind of indwelling destiny is the sense in which it functions as a preordained form, boundary or limit of the organism's development. Aristotle tells us that:

... of all those things that are put together in nature there is a limit and formula of their size and growth...and these things come from the soul. (*De Anima* II.4 416).¹⁶

As was mentioned earlier, the *entelechy* is like a seed or kernel of fate immanent within the organism. But is it, like a seed, visible or empirically verifiable? Aristotle agreed with Plato's emphasis on essences or 'universals' which could logically be abstracted or inferred from material objects. But his objection to Plato comes to the fore in the character or method of the essence's abstraction. For Aristotle it was nonsensical and effectively futile to posit essences which were not located within the object. His alternative to Plato's *eidos*, and to Plato's notion of a separable and transcendent soul, is the *entelechy*. The *entelechy* is, in reality, a kind of *inference* or *argument* drawn from observing the functional aspects of living organisms. By virtue of his observations of particular organisms, Aristotle is led to posit or infer an *a priori* 'first actuality' which explains and determines their features and activities. But this 'first actuality' is not demonstrable in itself: rather, it is deduced in a secondary fashion, by virtue of its effects.¹⁷ Seen in this way, Aristotle's *entelechy* is something akin to a rhetorical metaphor to which he resorts when empirical evidence can no longer be produced in order to substantiate his claims.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *De Anima* (Lawson-Tancred) 166-167.

¹⁷ In his essay 'Aristotle's Definition of the Soul' William Charlton observes that when Aristotle uses the term *entelecheia*, he means "actuality in the first [i.e. original] way". *Aristotle's De Anima in Focus* ed. Michael Durrant (London: Routledge, 1993) 202. Brackets added.

The *entelechy* can only ever be inferred. It is a kind of logical deduction based on empirical data, and a deduction which is not susceptible of perception on its own terms – that is to say, in isolation from the organisms of which it is said to be the condition and ‘first actuality’. In this respect the *entelechy* is just as invisible and abstract as the Platonic *eidos*, regardless of how often Aristotle insists that it is immanent and indwelling. And this criticism can be applied in exactly the same way to the Aristotelean notion of *ousia* or substance. Although Aristotle quite rightly observes that we can know objects which are predicated of substance – humans, plants and animals, for example – can we know substance or *ousia* in its purely formal, anterior and originary aspect? Can we know (see, feel, touch) *ousia* in itself as the essential character of all Being? The answer to this question must also, at least in Aristotle’s time, have been no, and he acknowledges this by telling us at 1036a 5-10 of the *Metaphysics* that all things are:

...always spoken of and apprehended by the universal formula. But the matter is in itself unknowable.¹⁸

Seen in this light, the Aristotelean notion of *ousia* – a notion which operates as one of the foundations of his metaphysics – appears to withdraw itself into the realms of abstraction. In this way it marks limits beyond which rational investigation, the powers and capacities of *logos*, cannot pass.

At this point we can draw two conclusions. Firstly, it appears that the closest Aristotelean approximation of the Platonic daemon is his concept of an immanent *entelechy* which drives each organism, and which also functions as a kind of indwelling destiny or fate. Secondly, it appears that the existence of the *entelechy* cannot be supported on a purely logical or empirical basis. In fact, the notion of the *entelechy* is, at least in part, *rhetorical* in its function. It is that ground, ‘substrate’, ‘first actuality’ or origin to which the philosopher turns when the limits of empirical observation, the limits of *logos*, have been reached. This is simply because the concept of *ousia* or substance, a concept upon which the whole theory of the *entelechy* depends, is a theoretical inference and not an empirically verifiable fact.¹⁹

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Tredennick) 363.

¹⁹ For an account of the interdependence of the terms *ousia* and *entelechy*, see Kenneth Rankin, *The Recovery of the Soul: An Aristotelean Essay on Self-Fulfilment* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991) 3, 20.

So what implications does the Aristotelean *entelechy* have for our investigation of the notion of the daemon? In Part Two of our analysis, we saw how the daemon as 'fate' or 'destiny', and as an intermediary between the material world and realm of the forms, is a thoroughly Platonic concept. In this connection, Aristotle's attempt to speak of an indwelling essence peculiar to all organisms may be seen as the continuation of Plato's legacy within his work, a legacy which expresses itself as the drive to uncover and locate first causes and 'universals'.

The Aristotelean notion of the *entelechy* is of central importance within the context of the historical development of the ideas of the daemon and the Daemonic. As will become clear later in this chapter and in subsequent chapters, the secular notion of the daemon as indwelling, immanent, and most importantly, 'natural' or 'biological', will become crucial to its development in Goethe's thought, particularly in relation to Goethe's notions of the *Urpflanze* (primal plant) and the *Urphänomen* (primal phenomenon). If, as I intend to show in the later stages of this study, we can speak of the historical development of the daemon as a gradual process of immanentisation and secularisation, a movement from something which has its seat in the divine to an entity which resides in the human as a 'natural' or 'biological' subject, then Aristotle may in fact be seen as the key figure who begins this process, a process which – as we shall see in Part Nine of this study – eventually led Freud to speculate as to whether the daemon might become a "fassbares Objekt der Wissenschaft" ("apprehensible or comprehensible object of science").²⁰

²⁰ Sigmund Freud, 'An Stefan Zweig'. Wien 14. April, 1925 Stefan Zweig. Briefwechsel mit Hermann Bahr, Sigmund Freud, Rainer Maria Rilke und Arthur Schnitzler Jeffrey B. Berlin, Hans-Ulrich Lindken und Donald A. Prater Hg. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1987) 172. Here I have translated 'fassbar' as both 'apprehensible' and 'comprehensible'. A literal translation of this term would give us 'apprehensible' as the German verb 'fassen' corresponds most directly with apprehend, meaning 'to take hold of'. Nevertheless, the underlying contention of my translation is that for Freud, to 'apprehend' in a scientific context is also to 'comprehend': that is to say, to understand or 'grasp' ('comprehend', QED) something by way of scientific analysis. See Part Nine for my discussion of Freud's letter to Zweig.

3.3. Aristotelean *Nous* and its Connections with the Platonic Daemon.

There is, however, another less empirical direction in which Aristotle may be seen to develop the Platonic daemon. This can be seen in his notion of the intellect or reason ($\nu\omicron\upsilon\delta\varsigma$, *nous*), which he describes as a divine or god-like faculty immanent in man. In contrast to his highly substantial and physical account of the soul in *De Anima*, Aristotle also defines the soul as something which displays perceptive and intellectual faculties. He then asks the question as to whether the intellectual or contemplative faculties of the soul can, in a similar way to the *entelechy*, be located within the substance of the organism. He answers this question at II.2 413b of *De Anima*:

But nothing is yet clear on the subject of the intellect and the contemplative faculty. However, it seems to be another kind of soul, and this alone admits of being separated, as that which is eternal from that which is perishable, while it is clear from these remarks that the other parts of the soul are not separable, as some assert them to be...²¹

These sentiments are echoed in *De Generatione Animalium*, in which Aristotle suggests that *nous* (intellect or reason) emanates from a metaphysical source outside of the soul which is completely separate from the soul's bodily faculties or *energeia*:

Plainly those principles whose activity is bodily cannot exist without a body, e.g. walking cannot exist without feet. For the same reason they cannot enter from the outside... It remains, then, for the reason alone so to enter and alone to be divine, for no bodily activity has any connection with the activity of reason. (736b 20-30).²²

In both of these passages we see a more Platonic Aristotle: *nous* is seen by Aristotle as eternal, metaphysical, and separable from the bodily or physical faculties of the soul.²³ In this respect Aristotle is still under the influence of Plato's tripartite structure of the soul, outlined at 588c-588e of *The Republic* and elsewhere,²⁴ in which the intellect or reason stands at the top of the soul's structure, and

²¹ Aristotle, *De Anima* (Lawson-Tancred) 160.

²² Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium* (*The Generation of Animals*) trans. A. Platt *The Complete Works of Aristotle* ed. Jonathan Barnes Volume I (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984) 1143.

²³ F.E. Peters concurs with this view when he states that Aristotle sees *nous* as a "transcendent principle". 'Nous', *Greek Philosophical Terms* 134. See also J. Bohm and E. Würthwein's discussion of 'nous' in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* ed. Gerhard Kittel trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley Volume IV (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 1967) Bohm and Würthwein observe that in Aristotle, "nous is immortal and comes into the body from outside". See pages 948-960.

²⁴ See, for example, *The Republic* IV 435e-444e, and *Phaedrus* 246a-b, 253c-255b.

is required to regulate the baser human faculties. *Nous* is apparently not swayed by bodily requirements, and is nourished metaphysically by an external, divine source. While the contents of *nous* appear, in some way, to emanate from a divine power outside of the soul, the faculty of *nous* is still, according to Plato, located within the soul. This is made clear at 30b in the *Timaeus*, where we are told of how God:

...in fashioning the universe...implanted reason [*nous*] in soul and soul in body, and so ensured that his work should be by nature highest and best.²⁵

How close is Aristotle's concept of *nous* to the Platonic daemon? In order to answer this question we need to look back to another section of the *Timaeus* – section 90a-90d – 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 think of the most authoritative part of our soul, as a guardian spirit [*daimon*, *δαίμων*] given by god, living in the summit of the body, which can properly be said to lift us from the earth towards our home in heaven; for we are creatures not of earth but of heaven, where the soul was first born, and our divine part attaches us by the head to heaven, like a plant by its roots, and keeps our body upright. If therefore a man's attention and effort is centred on appetite and ambition, all his thoughts are bound to be mortal, and he can hardly fail, in so far as it is possible, to become entirely mortal, as it is his mortal part that he has increased. But a man who has given his heart to learning and true wisdom and exercised that part of himself is surely bound if he attains to truth, to have immortal and divine thoughts, and cannot fail to achieve immortality as fully as is permitted to human nature; and because he has always looked after the divine element in himself and kept his guardian spirit [*daimon*] in good order he must be happy above all men.²⁶

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 'true thoughts'. Another feature of this daemon, and a feature which it has in common with Aristotelean *nous*, is its disconnection or separation from the bodily aspects of the soul, from corporeal lusts, and from mortal 'opinion'. But the crucial characteristic shared by both Aristotelean *nous*, and the Platonic daemon of *Timaeus* 90a – 90d, is that of immanence. Although the source of *nous* and of the Platonic daemon is divine and external, both are nevertheless contained *within* the human soul, and are susceptible of some kind of conscious control, improvement, or cultivation by that

²⁵ Plato, *Timaeus* (Lee) 42. Brackets added.

²⁶ Plato, *Timaeus* (Lee) 119. Brackets added.

soul. In fact, both *nous* and this particular instance of the Platonic daemon seem to be very far indeed from the unconscious, non-rational or 'mantic' states of intoxication which we saw in our discussions of the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus* and *Ion* in Part Two of this study, and a long way too from the daemonic or divine but 'useless' knowledge which Aristotle ascribes to Anaxagoras and Thales in the *Nichomachean Ethics*. In short, this Platonic daemon of *Timaeus* 90a-90d, and Aristotle's notion of *nous* outlined in *De Anima* and *De Generatione Animalium*, appear to correspond with the human faculties of reason and rationality, faculties which originate from, and help us to know, the divine, while at the same time remaining immanent in the human soul.²⁷ It is, moreover, arguably these features of the daemon which carry over into the Stoic and Neo-Platonic interpretations of the term, which seem to be a synthesis of Platonic and Aristotelean perspectives. It is to these interpretations that we will presently turn.

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

Plato's discussion of the daemon at 90a-90d 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* (and, by extension, with *logos*) in *Timaeus* 90a-90d, 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 some of the dialogues which we saw in Part Two, chief among them being the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus* and *Ion*. A possible reason for this privileging of *Timaeus* 90a-90d 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 on empiricism and logic. In this connection, the purpose of looking at Stoic and Neo-Platonic interpretations of the daemon is to determine to what extent Aristotle's emphasis on the local, immanent, and empirical aspects of the soul served to alter and secularise the pre-Socratic and Platonic conceptions of the daemon.

²⁷ Here I am paraphrasing the view of Stephen R.L. Clark in his essay, 'Reason as *Daimōn*' in: *The Person and the Human Mind* ed. Christopher Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 187-206. See, in particular, page 193.

One of the earliest and most prominent Stoic treatments of *Timaeus* 90a-90d occurs in the works of Posidonius (c. 130-50 B.C.). Posidonius describes the daemon as an indwelling fragment or portion of the transcendent 'One'. The 'One' is essentially concomitant with God: it is the underlying principle from which all phenomena emanate, while also being a kind of force which 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. This, he says in Fragment 187, is because the:

... cause of the emotions, that is of inconsistency and of the unhappy life is 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, but at times to deviate and be swept along with what is worse and beastlike.²⁸

In his analysis of Fragment 187, I.G. Kidd suggests that Posidonius views the daemon as being an internal, congenital and immanent faculty which, when followed, places the soul in tune with the order and rationality of the universe. This characterisation of the daemon shares some common features with the Aristotelean *entelechy*, which is likewise indwelling and present at the organism's birth, and which also leads the organism to its highest 'actuality' – an actuality which is a microcosmic manifestation of the universe's inherent rationality. Kidd also observes that it "seems highly probable" that Posidonius had *Timaeus* 90a-90d in mind during the composition of Fragment 187.²⁹ Posidonius places the daemon in direct opposition with 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.

By contrast, the discussion of the Socratic *daimonion* undertaken by the Neo-Platonic thinker Plutarch (c.46-120 A.D.) in his essay 'On Socrates's Personal Deity' is far more ambivalent. In sections eight to twelve of the essay, the *daimonion* is discussed in terms of the verity or otherwise of deities and acts of divination. Early in the essay, Glaxidorus, one of the interlocutors, has the following to say on this subject:

²⁸ Posidonius, *Posidonius. Volume II. The Commentary (ii) Fragments 150-293* ed. and trans. I.G. Kidd. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 675.

²⁹ Posidonius, *Posidonius. Volume II. The Commentary (ii) Fragments 150-293* 676-677.

God, it's so hard to find anyone untarnished by affectation and superstition. Some people are accidentally caught by these emotions because of inexperience or weakness; others want to give the impression of being highly favoured by the gods or of being special people, so they claim that the gods sanction their actions, and they gloss any stray thoughts as dreams, visions and all that pretentious rubbish... a façade of this kind seems not only inappropriate for philosophy, but also contradictory to its promise, in the sense that it promises to use reason and to touch everything that is good and beneficial for people, and then falls back on the gods to explain how actions are initiated, which is to belittle reason... (579f-580b).³⁰

Glaxidorus's comments highlight the extent to which the invocation of daemons was seen to be a dubious practice common among charlatans and sophists. Philosophy, he argues, is the application of reason (*logos*) to phenomena, and accordingly there is no place within its bounds for non-rational, mythological or 'mantic' inspiration. An exception is made, however, in the case of Socrates's *daimonion*, as Socrates is viewed as having toned down the mysticism of Pythagoras and Empedocles. Glaxidorus continues:

...whereas he [Socrates] had inherited from Pythagoras and his disciples a philosophy that had become filled with apparitions and fiction and superstition, and Empedocles bequeathed him an absolutely intoxicated version, Socrates accustomed philosophy to face facts in full possession of its senses, so to speak, and to make truth a goal to be pursued with sober reason. (580c).³¹

The Socratic *daimonion* is accordingly seen within the context of reason, as Theocritus tells us that it:

...afforded him the kind of perceptiveness which, all by itself, 'leads the way and sheds light' – to have given him this guide as a companion whenever he was in situations which were opaque and unfathomable by human intelligence, in the course of which his personal deity invariably communicated with him and made his decisions inspired. (580c-580d).³²

As against this positive presentation, the *daimonion* is then briefly discussed, and ridiculed, through a story reportedly told by Terpsion, who holds that "Socrates's personal deity was a sneeze." (581a).³³

Although this account is patently a humorous aside, it is worth noting because it associates the

³⁰ Plutarch, 'On Socrates's Personal Deity', *Essays* trans. Robin Waterfield (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992) 318.

³¹ Plutarch, *Essays* 319. Brackets added.

³² Plutarch, *Essays* 319-320.

³³ Plutarch, *Essays* 321.

daimonion with a physical, organic and immanent cause, an association which foreshadows later accounts – especially those of Nietzsche and Freud – both of whom view the daemon within the context of illness.³⁴ At this point Glaxidorus returns to the discussion by stating (at 582a) that although the sneeze itself may appear insignificant, the art of divination is more concerned with the skill of interpreting the sign than with the actual sign itself.³⁵ In this regard, Socrates is viewed as having been an exceptional interpreter of signs – an explanation which brings the ideas of reason (*logos*) and dialectical skill (*technē*) back into focus, and which also implies that the *daimonion* is a combination of the external or numinous (the sign) and the internal or rational (the sign's interpretation). Later in the essay (589b-589c) we are once again presented with what appears to be a standard reading of *Timaeus* 90a-90d,³⁶ 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.³⁷

Plutarch's discussion of the *daimonion* is noteworthy because of the physical, almost organic, imagery which it employs. He variously likens the *daimonion* to a "weight" which pushes "a weighty mind towards action" (581a),³⁸ to "rudders which make huge ships change direction" (588f),³⁹ and to a "vibration in the intellective faculty" (589a).⁴⁰ All of these explanations involve a physicality and substantiality which is absent in Plato's treatment of the *daimonion*, and which therefore gives us the impression of a phenomenon which is perhaps more immanent than transcendent.

This apparent progression of the daemon in the direction of immanence continues further still in the *Meditations* of another Stoic: Marcus Aurelius (c. 121-180 A.D.). In book V, 27 of the *Meditations*, the daemon is characterised in a fashion which is reminiscent both of *Timaeus* 90a-90d and of Posidonius:

³⁴ See Part Nine of this study for a discussion of these figures.

³⁵ Plutarch, Essays 323.

³⁶ 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." Plutarch, Essays, 305.

³⁷ Plutarch, Essays 338. Brackets added.

³⁸ Plutarch, Essays 321.

³⁹ Plutarch, Essays 337.

⁴⁰ Plutarch, Essays 337.

'Live with the gods.' But he is living with the gods who continuously exhibits his soul to them, as satisfied with its dispensation and doing what the deity [*δαίμων*, daimon], the portion of himself which Zeus has given to each man to guard and guide him, wills. And this deity is each man's mind and reason.⁴¹

Here the daemon is once again a fragment of divinity which has been planted – in this case by Zeus – in man. It is, says Marcus Aurelius, the duty of men to follow the dictates of one's daemon, and to do it 'service':

Now that service is to keep him [the daimon] unsullied by passion, trifling, and discontent with what comes from god or men. (II, 13).⁴²

As is the case in Posidonius's treatment, the daemon is the principle of reason (*nous*) which enables men to master their passions and leads them to happiness or *eudaimonia*. The development of the daemon which 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.⁴³

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 upon them as a gift.

⁴¹ Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus* trans. A.S.L. Farquarson introd. R.B. Rutherford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) 41. Brackets added.

⁴² Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (Farquarson/Rutherford) 13. Brackets added.

⁴³ Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus* ed. and trans. A.S.L. Farquarson Volume II (Commentary) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944) 529. Brackets added.

There is, however, one exception to this rule, and it is arguably this exception which influences Marcus Aurelius's interpretation of the daemon: Socrates.

In Part Two we saw how Socrates's *daimonion*, despite its inherent negativity in Plato's presentation, 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's own power in the sense that he alone can understand it and relate its dissuasions to concrete events in his life. In Socrates's *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. We will shortly turn to the latter of these modern understandings of genius in Part Four of our discussion. Like the *daimonion* of Socrates, Marcus Aurelius's daemon is also both immanent (as the 'higher self') and transcendent (as 'divine grace'). But the overall impression which it leaves upon the reader is that of a rational faculty which is immanent in man, and which can be subjected to some kind of conscious control.

It is exactly this topic which the Neo-Platonist Plotinus (204-269 A.D.) addresses, less than a century after Marcus Aurelius, in the Fourth Tractate of *The Enneads*. Writing specifically on *Timaeus* 90a-90d, he says the following:

The *Timaeus* indicates the relation of this guiding spirit to ourselves: it is not entirely outside of ourselves; is not bound up with our nature; 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 [90a-90d] 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. (III.4).⁴⁴

In this case Plotinus is also referring to the 'Myth of Er' in *The Republic*,⁴⁵ in which the choice of 'lots' or 'lives' is presented. The soul chooses its 'lot' or 'guiding spirit' (daemon) and this spirit relates in some way to its 'fate' or 'destiny'. To this extent Plotinus is in agreement with standard Platonism. Beyond this, however, his comments are noteworthy for two reasons. Firstly, he states that the daemon or 'guiding spirit' is not completely external to us, and in fact 'belongs' to us in some way. In this case,

⁴⁴ Plotinus, *The Enneads* trans. Stephen MacKenna (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991) 170. Brackets added.

⁴⁵ See *The Republic*, Book X 614-620.

ownership implies a degree of consciousness of, and control over, the daemon. Secondly, Plotinus cryptically mentions a 'direct agent' within us, an agent which in some way corresponds with and resides 'under' the daemon, and an agent which he explicitly links with 'Man'.

In saying that 'Man cannot cease to be characteristically Man', Plotinus seems to assert that men cannot be Gods, nor even demi-gods. Rather, his view is that the daemon is the consummation of man's relationship with divinity or God, and that this relationship plays itself out in a realm of immanence, in concrete human action. Men are 'daemonic' in the sense that they are orientated to, or 'inclined' towards, a principle which is 'higher than' them, and which, in being higher, determines their form. But men are never, argues Plotinus, simply fated or predestined in such a way as to release them from moral responsibility. The relationship with one's daemon or higher self must be cultivated, controlled, and cared for, and this once again implies that the 'daemonic faculty' is perhaps more immanent and conscious, than transcendent (in the sense of descending from above) and unconscious. Plotinus sums this sense of responsibility up by likening the human character to a vessel, and life to a voyage:

With this spirit it [the soul] embarks in the skiff of the universe: the 'spindle of Necessity' then takes control and appoints the seat for the voyage, the seat of the lot in life. The Universal circuit is like a breeze, and the voyager, still or stirring, is carried forward by it. He has a hundred varied experiences, fresh sights, changing circumstances, all sorts of events. The vessel itself furnishes incident, tossing as it drives on. And the voyager also acts of himself in virtue of the individuality which he retains because he is on the vessel in his own person and character. Under identical circumstances individuals answer very differently in their movements and desires and acts: hence it comes about that, be the occurrences and conditions of life similar or dissimilar, the result may differ from man to man, as on the other hand a similar result may be produced by dissimilar conditions: this (force of circumstance) it is that constitutes destiny. (III.4).⁴⁶

Life is a voyage in which the seas – the forces of 'fate' – may be fierce and unpredictable, but the vessel is nevertheless susceptible of some conscious control and direction. The force of circumstance or 'destiny' is thus a combination of the transcendent (the dictates of the Gods, symbolised by the breeze and the sea) and the immanent (the vessel: independent human action). Man is not seen by Plotinus as being simply in thrall to, or at the mercy of, divine forces of which he has no knowledge. In fact he can, through his natural endowments and his character, influence the trajectory of his own life by cultivating a positive relationship with his daemon or 'higher self'.

⁴⁶ Plotinus, The Enneads 172,173. Brackets added.

There are two general tendencies to be found in the presentations of the daemon in the Stoics (Posidonius and Marcus Aurelius), and the early Neo-Platonists (Plutarch and Plotinus). The first is the valorisation of Plato's rational daemon – the daemon as a divine intellect or *nous*, seen in *Timaeus* 90a-90d – over the non-rational daemonic modes found in dialogues like the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. This valorisation also manifests itself, particularly in the Stoics, along the lines of a dualism between mind and body, as for both Posidonius and Marcus Aurelius, the daemon is that part of the self which is best able to resist the irrational appetites and desires of the body. The second tendency is that of a general development of the daemon in the direction of immanence, a development which Part Four will continue to trace in its analysis of the conception of genius in the eighteenth century. This turn toward immanence is, at least in its initial Stoic and Neo-Platonic phases, largely attributable to Aristotle's reconfiguration of the relationship between the organism and its soul or essence (*entelechy* or *ousia*).

Following Aristotle's insistence that the soul of an organism exists as an 'essence' (*ousia*) within the organism, it became popular to posit a rational daemon or intellectual faculty (*nous*) within the self, a faculty which, because of its very rationality, assists the self to know the divine. This tendency also accords with a general theme which can be traced back to Plutarch's discussion of Socrates's *daimonion*: that is, the emphasis which Plutarch places upon Socrates's skill of interpreting divine signs, rather than on the signs themselves. Again, this implies that the daemon is more internal and rational than external and numinous.

It is here where we need take note of a tension which exists in the conceptual history of the daemon: a tension which exists in the philosophy of Plato itself, as well as in the transition of the daemon from the philosophy of Plato into the thought of Aristotle, Stoicism and early Neo-Platonism. On the one hand, we saw in Part Two the extent to which 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' which is the Socratic *daimonion*. On the other hand, however, we have also discovered in this chapter, that the predominant tendency in Aristotle, Stoicism and early Neo-Platonism is to associate the daemon with the soul's indwelling rationality or *nous* as it is outlined by Plato in *Timaeus* 90a-90d. This tension, between the rational soul and the non-rational soul, the rational genius and the non-rational genius, will continue to manifest itself in our discussion of the Daemonic and its philosophical background during the period of the European Enlightenment.

The gradual process of internalisation and secularisation to which the daemon is subjected in the thought of Neo-Platonism, Stoicism and early Christianity is summed up by Jane Chance Nitzsche in the following remarks:

The regions in between the gods and men were...believed to be inhabited – by cosmic messengers or *daemones*...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.⁴⁷

Nitzsche's comments anticipate one of the central concerns of Part Four of this study: 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 which 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. In the following passage, Penelope Murray discusses the emergence of the modern notion of genius from the ancient example of the 'daemonic' Socrates:

Later ages saw in Socrates an example of the daimonic man, an extraordinary being who embodies in himself that mysterious power which is traditionally attributed to divinity. The irrationality of his experience combined with its uniqueness provided...the starting point from which to develop a new concept of genius which would challenge the rationality of the Enlightenment.⁴⁸

We will turn to this eminently aesthetic conception of genius – in particular, to the seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophical positions which underlie it (namely, those of Spinoza and Leibniz), and to the philosophical context in which the young Goethe began to deploy it – in the next stage of our analysis.

⁴⁷ Jane Chance Nitzsche, The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975) 4-5.

⁴⁸ Penelope Murray, 'Poetic Genius and its Classical Origins', Genius: The History of an Idea ed. Penelope Murray (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) 27-28.

4. The Daemon and the Genius: The Resurgence of the Daemonic in the Philosophy of the *Sturm und Drang*.

The daemon is a concept that diffuses itself sporadically throughout the history of Western thought, and it is not inappropriate to track its development in terms of peaks and troughs. In Part Two of this study, we saw one of the daemon's earliest peaks: its centrality in Plato's philosophy and its apotheosis in the Socratic *daimonion*. The central concern of this chapter will be another of these peaks: namely, the resurgence of the daemon, and the general sensibility of the Daemonic (*Das Dämonische*), in the *Sturm und Drang* period of German literature and philosophy. The key figure in this resurgence is Johann Georg Hamann, the German religious mystic who brought the Socratic daemon back to life in his early book *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* (*Socratic Memorabilia*), published in 1759. It was through the influence of Hamann that Goethe was exposed to a highly contentious and idiosyncratic portrait of Socrates – a Socrates who belongs more to the sphere of *mythos* than to the realm of *logos* – and to the subject of the Daemonic. Hamann's influence upon the young Goethe also exerted itself through his (Hamann's) chief disciple – Johann Gottfried Herder – a key figure in Goethe's philosophical development, and in the emergence of the *Sturm und Drang* movement.

In Part Three of this study, we observed the influence of Aristotle's thought upon the concept of the daemon. From the analysis undertaken in Part Three it was concluded that Aristotle's immanentisation of the Platonic *eidos* in his concept of *ousia* (substance or essence), and his secularisation of the Platonic soul in his concept of the *entelechy*, both led to a new philosophical *Weltanschauung* in which those human activities traditionally associated with mythological and divine forces in Plato's philosophy – like, for example, poetic creativity, or philosophical inspiration – were increasingly inclined to be understood in secular terms, as relating to immanent human capacities.

In this way, the Socratic *daimonion* or 'divine voice' came to be associated with two notions: the first of these being *nous* or reason, the second, the concept of the genius. In the thought of post-Aristotelean figures like Posidonius, Plutarch, Marcus Aurelius, and Plotinus, these two notions were often seen to be eminently *human* capacities, albeit human capacities originally implanted in humans by the divine. It is particularly the second of these capacities – that of 'genius' – which is crucial to an understanding of the Daemonic in late eighteenth century German literature and philosophy.

But before we engage in an analysis of the way in which Goethe's key philosophical precursors – Hamann and Herder – use the related terms of the 'daemon' and the 'Genius', this chapter will initially investigate the chief philosophical forefathers to the *Sturm und Drang* period: namely, Spinoza and Leibniz.

4.1. The Philosophical Background of the *Sturm und Drang*: Spinoza and Leibniz.

Not unlike Aristotle, both Spinoza and Leibniz ground their respective discussions of existence in the concept of substance (for Aristotle, *ousia*), a concept which refers to the underlying substrate and cause of all phenomena, and which, by virtue of its very status as the *a priori* cause of all things, approximates God for both philosophers.¹ We must, however, carefully distinguish the ways in which Spinoza and Leibniz use the notion of substance. Both thinkers adapt this term to suit their own philosophical ends, ends which are often fundamentally different from those pursued by Aristotle when he speaks of substance as *ousia*. My purpose here is not to engage in an exhaustive account of the notion of substance in the respective philosophies of Spinoza and Leibniz, but rather to investigate the way in which both thinkers use the term in connection with two further philosophical principles which are central to this chapter: 'nature' (or the world of objects) and the 'self' (the perceiving subject). As we shall also see in parts Five, Six and Seven of this study, the relationship between the self or subject, and the world of objects or nature, is central to Goethe's conception of the Daemonic.

The thought of Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677) turns upon one all-encompassing term which is related to the notion of substance: 'Nature'. For Spinoza, God and substance are effectively unified in 'Nature': an infinite body of laws, principles and interrelations which arises out of substance, and which is rationally ordered by God. As Richard Mason observes:

Spinoza takes orthodox scholastic terminology – the latinised vocabulary of Aristotle – and packs it together into a dense core. At the centre, God, substance, and nature are brought into complete equivalence...Spinoza's...arguments knit together an unlimited, infinite God with

¹ See, in this connection, H. W. Arndt, 'Substanz', *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Band X 523-526. Arndt sees the notion of substance as playing a central role in the respective philosophical systems of both Spinoza and Leibniz.

two characteristics of substance... 'that which is in itself and is conceived through itself' and 'that which is self-caused', 'whose nature can be conceived only as existing'.²

Spinoza's fundamental definition of substance is derived from Descartes: "that which so exists that it needs no other thing in order to exist."³ This notion of substance is divided by Descartes into two forms of substance: corporeal substance (*res extensa*) and thinking substance (*res cogitans*). This basic division between mind and matter, and the question as to how it can be overcome, is central to the philosophical systems which we will discuss in parts Five, Six and Seven of our analysis: those of Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, and Schelling.

For now, it is necessary to observe that the definition of substance used by Spinoza refers to that which functions as its own condition, that which has no prior cause or origin, and that which extends infinitely: in effect, that which approximates God. This definition of substance was also referred to by Spinoza (*Ethics* I P29) as *Natura naturans* (nature naturing, nature as *cause*): nature which conceives itself only through itself. A second conception of nature – *Natura naturata* (nature natured, nature as *effect*) – is then coupled with the first. This latter conception of nature refers to those natural objects which are seen as the 'modes' or attributes of God, and which are therefore conditioned by God.⁴ The relationship between the self or subject, and 'Nature' or substance, is played out for Spinoza in the realm of rational philosophy. Henry E. Allison describes this relationship in the following way:

Spinoza [sees] human existence as culminating in a knowledge of God...the entire argument of the *Ethics* culminates in the 'intellectual love of God' (*amor intellectualis Dei*) through which the human mind is allegedly able to transcend its finitude and unite with the eternal. This conception constitutes Spinoza's purely philosophical alternative to the Beatific Vision...The ground of this conception...must be placed in Spinoza's thoroughgoing rationalism rather than in religious sensitivity...this rationalism involves the belief in the total intelligibility of the real. Given Spinoza's mathematically oriented conception of knowledge, this in turn means that all reality can be explained within a single deductive system.⁵

² Richard Mason, *The God of Spinoza* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 25, 27. The influence of Aristotle upon Spinoza's definition of substance is also discussed by Henry E. Allison in *Benedict de Spinoza* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975) 39.

³ René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, Part I, Principle LI, *Philosophical Works of Descartes Volume I* trans. E.S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (New York: Dover, 1955) 239. Quoted in Allison, *Benedict de Spinoza* 42.

⁴ Mason, *The God of Spinoza* 29. For his discussion of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* see Spinoza's *Ethics* I P 29. Spinoza, *Ethics* ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996) 20-21.

⁵ Allison, *Benedict de Spinoza* 46-47. Brackets added.

Thus, Spinoza sees God or substance as a rational system with necessary relationships between its constituents, and it is this aspect of his thought which has traditionally attracted the term 'Rationalism' used by Allison in the above passage.⁶ Spinoza argues that it is incumbent upon man to discover – through philosophy and its sub-sections: science, mathematics, geometry and ethics – his role within the grand scheme which emanates from the infinite Godhead or substance. Within this rational *Weltanschauung*, freedom and necessity are combined. Freedom consists in the subject gaining knowledge of its position within the divine order of necessity. Spinoza implies that knowledge of God can only be achieved through essentially secular means: the scientific investigation of the laws of nature through the deployment of reason or *logos*. This is due to the fact that, for Spinoza, God, nature and substance are effectively one and the same – hence, his famous statement in Part IV of the *Ethics: Deus sive Natura* (God or Nature).⁷ As we shall see later in this chapter, it was this particular statement which led to the so-called 'Pantheism' controversy: a dispute between two of Goethe's philosophical contemporaries (Johann Gottfried Herder and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi), in which the latter figure alleged that Spinoza's construction *Deus sive Natura* leads inexorably to atheism.

A similar philosophical system to that offered by Spinoza is proposed by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). Like Spinoza, Leibniz begins with his own particular conception of substance as the ground of all phenomena. Of interest for our purposes is the way in which Leibniz divides substance into individual units, which he calls monads. The monad is an entity which is not susceptible of further division, and which operates as the basic building block for all composites.⁸ Each monad is absolutely unique, and develops according to its own inner-law. Monads also exist in complete isolation: being 'windowless', they are not susceptible of alteration by external sources, and do not, of their own will, enter into direct relationships with other monads.⁹ Rather, the relationships between monads are

⁶ Here the term 'Rationalism' is used in a more specific sense than that invoked in Part One, in connection with Plato's general valorisation of reason. Within this context, the term 'Rationalism' is used to refer to general epistemological beliefs held by the so-called 'Continental Rationalists': Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. In particular, this sense of Rationalism refers to the belief that humans can have "non-empirical and rational access to the truth about the way the world is". In general this belief is seen to privilege "reason over knowledge derived from the senses." See Daniel Garber, 'Rationalism', The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy 673-674. This tendency to privilege reason over sensory or empirical experience leads to the view, generally attributed to Continental Rationalists, that "at least some of our concepts are not gained from experience but are instead innate". See Peter J. Markie, 'Rationalism', The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy ed. Edward Craig Volume VIII (London: Routledge, 1998) 76. For this reason, Continental Rationalism has traditionally been seen in opposition to Empiricism: in particular, to the British Empiricism commonly associated with Locke, Berkeley and Hume. Recent studies have, however, questioned the division between Continental Rationalism and British Empiricism. See, in particular, Hidé Ishiguro, 'Pre-established Harmony versus Constant Conjunction', Rationalism, Empiricism and Idealism ed. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) 61-85.

⁷ Spinoza, Ethics IV 114.

⁸ Leibniz, Monadology § 1, § 3, 251.

⁹ Leibniz, Monadology § 7, § 9, 251-252.

regulated by a supreme rational intelligence or God, not unlike Plato's divine *logos*, who is essentially concomitant with substance as the underlying cause of all phenomena. God functions as the 'principle of sufficient reason' which governs all events, and which is responsible for what Leibniz variously calls the 'universal harmony', 'perfect government' and 'mechanical order' of the universe.¹⁰

Leibniz acknowledges his debt to Aristotle by conflating his idea of the monad with the Aristotelean *entelechy*, a term which we examined in detail in Part Three of this study:

All simple substances or created Monads may be called Entelechies, because they have in themselves a certain perfection. There is in them a sufficiency which makes them the source of their internal activities...¹¹

Like the *entelechy*, the monad is located within the substance of the organism, and operates as the 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 principle which animates the organism and regulates its unfolding. Despite their substantiality, monads arise, says Leibniz, from the "continual outflashings of the divinity from moment to moment."¹² In this respect they resemble the daemon of *Timaeus* 90a-90d as a divine fragment, deposited by God in man, which determines the individual's fate, and which endows him with *nous* or reason. Thus, with regard to humans, the monad or soul is also capable of elevation to the rank of reason or *nous*, found so commonly in the Stoics and Neo-Platonists. In this connection Leibniz observes that:

...knowledge of eternal and necessary truths is that which distinguishes us from mere animals and gives us reason and the sciences, thus raising us to a knowledge of ourselves and of God. This is what is called in us the Rational Soul or Mind.¹³

¹⁰ See Leibniz, *Monadology*, § 32, § 38, § 59, § 90. Markie observes, in this connection, that Leibniz's *Monadology* is essentially 'rationalist' in that its view that "all substances are causally isolated monads...[a view which]...implies a general rejection of sense experience as a source of any ideas..." Markie, 'Rationalism', *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Volume VIII 76. Brackets added.

¹¹ Leibniz, *Monadology* § 18, 254.

¹² Leibniz, *Monadology* § 47, 261.

¹³ Leibniz, *Monadology* § 29, 257.

Differentiated by Leibniz from ordinary souls, such monads endowed with *nous* are called 'spirits' (*Esprits, Geister*) and as such they seem to function daemonically as intermediaries between the secular and the divine:

Among the differences that there are between ordinary souls and spirits...there is also this that, while souls in general are living mirrors or images of the universe of created things, minds are also images of the Deity himself and capable of knowing the system of the universe...each mind being like a small divinity in its sphere...Therefore spirits are able to enter into a sort of social relationship with God...¹⁴

Leibniz's *Monadology* constitutes one of the most important influences upon the notion of the dæmon, and this is due to the fact that the monad anticipates the modern (secular) conception of the genius.¹⁵ As we saw in parts Two and Three of this study, the ancient genius is a kind of external spirit or voice, not unlike the Socratic *daimonion*, which visits or even possesses the individual, speaking through him as through a medium. It was noted in the late stages of Part Two that the Socratic *daimonion* could perhaps be seen to presage the modern notion of the genius as a purely individual and subjective phenomenon, and this was due to the fact that the *daimonion* spoke to Socrates alone, in contradistinction to 'public' oracles like the oracle at Delphi. Likewise, in the latter stages of Part Three, we saw, in the case of Marcus Aurelius, the extent to which the notion of genius had perhaps more to do with the powers of exceptional individuals, than with 'spirits' who possessed or spoke through these individuals.

In Leibniz, the development of the notion of genius in the direction of immanence takes a further step, and this is due to the influence of Spinoza. In identifying the Godhead with the notions of substance and 'Nature', Spinoza locates the source of divinity within, and not beyond, the material world. In Leibniz's monad or soul, the Spinozan identity between God and Nature is endowed with a radical subjectivity. Not only does the monadic human soul constitute a kind of dialogue between man's 'rational soul' and God, and between the subject and Nature: this soul is itself a microcosmic manifestation of the Godhead, which for Leibniz is concomitant with the natural universe. Leibniz

¹⁴ Leibniz, *Monadology* § 83, § 84, 270.

¹⁵ For an account of Leibniz's influence upon Herder's theory of genius, see Jochen Schmidt, *Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik 1750-1945* Band I (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985) 131-132. See also the comments of R. Warning, B. Fabian and J. Ritter in their article 'Genie' regarding the influence of Leibniz upon the concept of genius. R. Warning, B. Fabian and J. Ritter 'Genie', *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Band III 292. In his section of the entry on 'Genie' Ritter observes that Leibniz's notion of the human "als zweitem Gott" ("as a second God") is crucial to the eighteenth century understanding of genius (292).

explicitly states that the monad is a "living mirror" of the "universe of created things".¹⁶ In an argument similar to Blake's notion of the world being contained within a "grain of sand",¹⁷ Leibniz implies that the individual subject, monad or rational soul has the capacity to represent and understand the entire system of nature. In other words, each monadic soul is a miniature representation of God, and of divine creation, and as such it is endowed with infinite potentialities.

The crucial point is that for Leibniz, the infinite potentialities of the human soul or monad are seen as being inherently rational by virtue of their pre-existing harmony with the divine *logos* or 'principle of sufficient reason'. Here Leibniz's monad displays a striking resemblance to the 'rational' daemon of *Timaeus* 90a-90d, which came to dominate Stoic and early Neo-Platonic interpretations of the term. It is precisely this purported 'inherent rationality' of the human soul that would come to be questioned by Goethe and his *Sturm und Drang* contemporaries like Hamann and Herder, who interpreted the Leibnizian monad in a radically individualistic fashion. The monad or *entelechy* is the locus of internal change and development within the organism, and in this role it is characterised by Leibniz as a kind of force. It was this notion of the 'windowless' or isolated monadic soul as the generator of potentially infinite creative force, and as the sensitive individual or subject who communes with a pantheistic, deified Nature, that was seized upon by the *Geniekult* (cult of genius) thinkers who dominated German literary culture during Goethe's youth. As we shall discover in Part Five of our discussion, the young Goethe was more naturally inclined toward Leibniz's formulation of the subject as a windowless 'monad' precisely because such a formulation stresses the autonomy of the individual as against the totality of God or Nature.¹⁸

Before we consider this *Geniekult* and its antecedents as important underlying aspects of the notion of the Daemonic as it manifested itself in late eighteenth century Germany, it is necessary to say a few words about the relationship between the systems of Spinoza and Leibniz and the Enlightenment. Both Spinoza and Leibniz attempt to remove any trace of doubt, or random chance, from philosophy. This is achieved, particularly in the case of Leibniz, by placing an inordinate, if not irrationally optimistic, amount of faith in a God as the seat of divine *logos*: a rational power which orders a perfectly harmonious, rational and logically comprehensible universe. As Karl Jaspers observes, in Leibniz:

¹⁶ Leibniz, *Monadology* § 83, 270.

¹⁷ "To see a World in a Grain of Sand / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower / Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour". William Blake, 'Auguries of Innocence' (1803), *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* ed. David V. Erdman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) 490.

¹⁸ See Nicholas Boyle's comments on this subject in *Goethe: The Poet and Age* Volume I 384.

Das Vertrauen in die Ordnung, Vernünftigkeit, Harmonie aller Dinge... scheint absolut. Überall spricht es sich aus. Harmonie ist zwischen dem physischen Reich der Natur mit ihrer Kausalität und dem moralischen Reich der Gnade mit ihrer Sinnhaftigkeit und Zweckmäßigkeit. Gott ist einer und derselbe als Architekt der Maschine des Universums und als Monarch im Gottesstaat der Geister. Die Wege der Natur führen von selbst zur Gnade... Die Fülle seines [Leibniz's] Wissens, Kennens und Könnens steht im Dienste einer Lebensverfassung, die als solche keine Größe hat... Es fehlt das Tragische und die Überwindung des Tragischen.¹⁹

The trust in order, reasonableness, the harmony of all things... seems to be absolute. It is expressed everywhere. There is harmony between the physical realm of nature, with its causality, and the moral realm of grace, giving meaning and purpose. God is one and the same as the architect of the machine of the universe and as monarch in the spiritual city of God. The paths of nature lead of themselves toward grace... The great wealth of his [Leibniz's] knowledge and abilities is at the service of an outlook on life that itself lacks greatness... It lacks a sense of the tragic and the overcoming of it.

Jaspers points out that there is arguably no room for the haphazard, or the tragic, in Leibniz's worldview. The apparent scientific 'advance' of securing a view of the universe which is serenely logical and comprehensible is purchased by a leap of faith: a leap which sees God as an omnipotent and rational deity (*logos*), and a leap which is therefore only sustainable on metaphysical, as opposed to scientific or 'enlightenment', grounds. The sense of the tragic lacking in Leibniz was, I will argue in Part Five of this study, belatedly provided by Goethe's *Werther*: the prototype of the creative, non-rational, monadic soul who brings about disorder and not order, tragedy and not harmony.

¹⁹ Karl Jaspers, Die grossen Philosophen Hans Saner Hg. Nachlaß I (München: Piper & Co. Verlag, 1981) 234. Translated by Edith Ehrlich and Leonard H. Ehrlich in Karl Jaspers, The Great Philosophers ed. Michael Ermarth and Leonard H. Ehrlich Volume III (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993) 182-183. Brackets added.

4.2. '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 which visits, or possesses, certain favoured 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 which 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. (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*)

And as I awake, sweet music breathe,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen genius of the wood. (Milton)²⁰

The Shakespearean example of genius quoted above is ambiguous, despite Johnson's attempt to characterise it after the manner of the Ancients. As is the case with the ghost of Old Hamlet which 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' is less complex, and clearly belongs to the species of tutelary spirits and local divinities which 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. Only five 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 irgend eine Aufmunterung zu haben, ja sogar, ohne selbst es zu wissen.²¹

²⁰ Samuel Johnson, 'Genius', *Johnson's Dictionary* (London: Harrison, 1786).

²¹ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Literaturbriefe Gesammelte Werke* Band IV (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1955) 434.

The true Genius works, like a torrential stream, his own way through the greatest of obstacles. Shakespeare, who was educated in a trade, became a great poet, without any encouragement at all, without, in fact, even knowing it himself.

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 parts Five and Seven of this study, in Goethe's extensive use of water-imagery in poems like 'Mahomets Gesang' and 'Mächtiges Überraschen'. In the present case, 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 – which saw him transcend social origins which were, at least in Lessing's view, less than propitious. In Leibniz, the individual monad or soul is subject to a greater universal order which he or she can mirror but not resist. For Lessing, Shakespeare is the exception to this rule – the monad or soul which, by sheer subjective, creative force – not only mirrors, but overcomes, rewrites, and subverts, the social, if not the universal order.

As the examples offered by Johnson's *Dictionary* demonstrate, the early eighteenth century was a period of transition for the concept of genius.²² 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 Universal Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (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.²³ Significant too is Zedler's entry under 'Daemon' (*Dämon*) in which he makes an explicit connection between the Ancient Greek conception of the term and "das Lateinische Wort Genius" ("the Latin word genius").²⁴

On the other hand, in eighteenth century Britain 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 Shakespear" as the prime example of this

²² See R. Warning, B. Fabian and J. Ritter 'Genie', *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Band III 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 [that is to say, the notion of aesthetic genius] und die Erfolge der Wissenschaftsbewegung" ("the Shakespeare problem and the success of the movement of science.") (282). Brackets added.

²³ Johann Heinrich Zedler, 'Genius', *Großes vollständiges universal Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* Band X (Halle und Leipzig: Verlag Johann Heinrich Zedlers, 1735). 878-883.

²⁴ Zedler, 'Dämon', Band VII 34.

phenomenon.²⁵ 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".²⁶

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.²⁷ 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') which had prevailed during the seventeenth century. In an attempt to understand the cause or origin 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 psychological phenomenon. 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 which is intimately connected with melancholy.²⁸ The sources of Enthusiasm, Shaftesbury argues, are more often than not found in human passions, and not in the numinous forces so often invoked by mystics and poets.

The 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.²⁹

²⁵ John Dryden, 'To John Dennis', 3 Mar., 1693, letter 31 of *The Letters of John Dryden*, ed. Charles E. Ward (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1942) 71-72.

²⁶ Denis Diderot, 'Genius', *The Encyclopedia. Selections*, ed. and trans. Stephen J. Gendzier (New York: Harper and Row, 1967) 120-121. The article on 'Genius' in *The Encyclopedie*, once attributed to Diderot, is now understood to have been written by Saint-Lambert.

²⁷ Herbert Dieckmann, 'Diderot's Conception of Genius', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 2 (1941): 151-182.

²⁸ Shaftesbury, 'A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm', *Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury Standard Edition, Complete Works, Selected Letters and posthumous Writings*, ed. and trans. Gerd Hemmerich and Wolfram Benda Volume I.1 (Stuttgart: Fromman-Holzboog, 1981) 360.

²⁹ Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759; Leeds: The Scholar Press, 1966) 12.

Young's use of a vegetative metaphor to explain genius echoes Aristotle's understanding of the soul as the *entelechy* or locus of animation: a kind of seed which drives the organism and determines its characteristics and faculties. It is also this Aristotelean tradition which, as we have seen, reappears in Leibniz's *Monadology*, a work which also favours a 'scientific' or 'naturalistic' view of the human soul as an immanent monad: a view which exerted a great influence upon subsequent understandings of genius as an indwelling, natural force or power.

But the phenomenon of genius ultimately resisted the powers of the Enlightenment to rationally explain it. 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.³⁰ It was precisely this inability of reason (*logos*), science, and the eighteenth century Enlightenment to account for genius in rational terms that allowed the non-rational thinkers who fuelled the fires of *Sturm und Drang* Romanticism to revivify, and elaborate upon, the Ancient Greek notion of genius as a numinous, mythological and otherworldly 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.

³⁰ 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*, 3 vols. Volume II (Paris: 1755) 14. Herbert Dieckmann, 'Diderot's Conception of Genius' 162. DuBos also speculates that genius may be attributable to "the influence of the air upon the human blood," Dieckmann 162.

4.3. The *Daimonion* as Genius: Johann Georg Hamann.

The most influential figure among these non-rationalists was undoubtedly Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788) the German religious mystic, whose book *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* (*Socratic Memorabilia*), published in 1759, was explicitly conceived as a refutation of the values of German Rationalism, and, in particular, the early thought of his friend and would be mentor, Immanuel Kant. 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: the young 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 "vanity and a curse to leaf through a part of the *Encyclopédie*", 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...³¹

If you are Socrates and your friend [Berens] wants to be Alcibiades, then for your instruction you need the voice of a genius. And that role belongs to me...allow me therefore to be called "genius" and to speak to you as a genius out of the clouds...

Speaking, or rather writing 'from the clouds', Hamann composed *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten*, ironically dedicating the book to Kant and Berens, and attacking the very enlightenment ideals which they sought to foster in him. *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* focuses upon the life of 'Socrates', or at least Hamann's eminently idiosyncratic portrait of Socrates.³² Holding that Christianity is a

³¹ Johann Georg Hamann, 'An Immanuel Kant', 27 Juli, 1759, Briefe 153 of Johann Georg Hamann Briefwechsel Erster Band 1751-1759 Walther Ziesemer und Arthur Henkel Hg. (Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, 1955) 373. Translated by Arnulf Zweig in Kant: Philosophical Correspondence 1759-1799 ed. and trans. Arnulf Zweig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) 35. Brackets added.

³² It is noteworthy that Hamann had not read Plato or Xenophon before writing *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten*. He was acquainted with Socrates through a secondary work dealing with Xenophon's account of Socrates, written by M. Charpentier, and translated into German by Christian Thomas as *Das Leben Socratis* (Halle, 1720).

continuation of, rather than a break with, the philosophy and culture of Ancient Greece, Hamann compares the life of Socrates with that of Christ. In this regard, he deploys the literary device of typology. Typology is a form of allegory which 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 manoeuvre are threefold. Firstly, in identifying Socrates with Christ, Hamann argues for a kind of unity between pagan Greece and Christianity. Secondly, Hamann's analogy between Socrates and Christ implicitly seeks to portray the former as a religious or mystical figure – a philosopher of *mythos* – as opposed to the inductive logician so often valorised by the Enlightenment. Finally, in comparing himself to Socrates, Hamann implies that there is a similarity between his relationship with Enlightenment thinkers like Kant and Berens, and Socrates's relationship with the Sophists. Accordingly, Hamann's aim is to construct a critique of reason and the Enlightenment, just as Socrates sought to expose the charlatanism of the Sophists, and his critique is aptly portrayed in the following phrase, taken from *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten*:

Die Beziehung und Übereinstimmung der Begriffe ist eben daſelbe in einer Demonstration, was Verhältnis und Symmetrie der Zahlen und Linien, Schallwürbel und Farben in der musikalischen Komposition und Malerey ist. 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. Das Schicksal setze den grösten Weltweisen und Dichter in Umstände, wo sie sich beyde selbst fühlen; so verleugnet der eine seine Vernunft und entdeckt uns, daß er keine beste Welt glaubt, so gut er sie auch beweisen kann, und der andere sieht sich seiner Muse und Schutzengel beraubt...³³

The connection and agreement of concepts is precisely the same in a logical demonstration as is the relation and symmetry of numbers and lines, sound and colors in a musical composition and painting. The philosopher is just as subject to the law of imitation as the poet. The muse of the latter and its hieroglyphic phantasmagoria is just as true for him as reason and its doctrinal structure are for the former. Let fate thrust the greatest philosopher and poet into circumstances where they have a shattering experience; in such a case one disavows his reason and discloses to us that he does not believe in the best of worlds, however well he can prove it, and the other sees himself robbed of his muse and guardian angel...

When Hamann mentions the 'beste Welt' ('best of worlds') of the philosopher, he is referring to the harmonious, mechanistic and mathematically derived representations of nature and the universal order

³³ Johann Georg Hamann, *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten/Socratic Memorabilia* trans. James C. O'Flaherty (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967) 169. James O'Flaherty's edition of *Socratic Memorabilia* contains both the original German text, and an English translation.

outlined, as we saw earlier, in the rationalist systems of Spinoza and Leibniz. Isaiah Berlin sees the optimism of such systems as existing in their belief that:

...a single system of knowledge, embracing all provinces and answering all questions, could be established by unbreakable chains of logical argument from universally valid axioms.³⁴

Hamann viewed such a belief as being no more empirically verifiable than the belief in *mythoi*, Gods, oracles or the Muses. The 'truths' of the Enlightenment philosophers, and the mythological phantasms of the poets and mystics of Ancient Greece are, argues Hamann, not at all distant from one another. Both, he would convince us, and in this regard he follows Hume, are founded upon acts of *belief*, upon *faith*, and faith, according to Hamann:

...ist kein Werk der Vernunft und kann daher auch keinem Angriff derselben unterliegen; weil Glauben so wenig durch Gründe geschieht als Schmecken und Sehen.³⁵

...is not the work of reason, and therefore cannot succumb to its attack, because faith arises as little from reason as tasting and seeing do.

In Hamann's opinion, the so-called Empiricism of the Enlightenment philosophers 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 world view which always values the universal model over the particular instance, and which attempts to simplify and contain the world within concepts, rather than experiencing phenomena in their infinite complexity. "Nature" according to Hamann, is:

...ein Räthsel, das sich nicht auflösen läßt, ohne mit einem andern Kalbe, als unserer Vernunft zu pflügen.³⁶

...a riddle which cannot be solved unless we plow with another heifer than our reason.

³⁴ Isaiah Berlin, 'The Counter-Enlightenment', Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas ed. Henry Hardy (London: Pimlico, 1997) 3.

³⁵ Hamann, Socratic Memorabilia 169.

³⁶ Hamann, Socratic Memorabilia 151.

Thus, for Hamann, the world is a kind of sacred, unfathomable poetry, but not poetry in the sense of *poiesis* or 'making'; rather, the world is poetry as *Offenbarung* (revelation), a divine mystery, the sources of which must remain forever veiled and inscrutable, as inscrutability is, for Hamann, the very mark of divinity. James C. O'Flaherty, the scholar who has made Hamann's *Socratic Memorabilia* available to English speaking readers, defines Hamann's approach to epistemology in the following way:

...any reality which is significant for the human spirit always transcends its representations. Its very obscurity would be the emblem of our limited understanding of the deeper realities of life.³⁷

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 Part Two of this study: Plato, and more specifically, the Plato who speaks through, and makes a philosophical example of, Socrates's life and deeds. In Part Two we viewed Plato's philosophy as being comprised of an *erotics* and a *poetics*, both of which enter into a relationship with the Daemonic. In Plato, the Daemonic brings into effect a mediation between the material world and the transcendent realm of the forms, and this mediation is normally performed by two non-rational means. The first of these means is Platonic Eros, a kind of metaphysical longing or desire which 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 Part Two it was pointed out that Plato's forms or *eide* are abstract, normative and negative Ideas which can be approached and approximated by humans, but which recede and disappear as soon as humans attempt to embody them finitely, 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. They are longed for by exponents of philosophical Eros or 'lovers of wisdom', and quested after by mantic poets, but consummation of this longing is forever forestalled, and it is precisely this forestallment which spurs humans on to greater heights of wisdom. When Plato's thought is seen in this light, Socrates's task of refuting and exposing false claims to knowledge, and his admission that the greatest knowledge possible is a recognition of one's own ignorance, become logical components of Plato's view of philosophy as a normative journey without an end.

³⁷ James C. O'Flaherty 'Introduction', in Hamann, *Socratic Memorabilia* 12.

Hamann, like Plato, is a philosopher of longing, both stylistically and thematically. 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.³⁸

I have written about Socrates in a Socratic manner. Analogy constituted the soul of his reasoning, and he gave it irony for a body.

Hamann's use of analogy implies a methodology which hints at comparisons and connections, without seeking exact correspondences or epistemological certitude, while his deployment of irony attests to the impossibility of absolute knowledge *per se*. As is observed by Isaiah Berlin in his study of Hamann, *The Magus of the North: J.G. Hamann and the Origins of Modern Irrationalism*, Hamann believes that:

We cannot see it all, for we are finite beings, and can only see parts, fragments, but that is sufficient to give us understanding; understanding, not the knowledge of experts, the scientists, those who arrange and order and collect and distribute and build systems.³⁹

Accordingly, Hamann celebrates the mythological image of Socrates – presented by Alcibiades in the *Symposium* – as “die Gestalt eines ziegenfüßigen Satyrs” (“the form of a goat-footed satyr”)⁴⁰: a figure whose beastly external appearance ironically belies and conceals an inner divinity which 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's admission of ignorance as one of his greatest virtues. In fact, Hamann cryptically views Socrates's professed ignorance as being the source of his genius:

Was ersetzt bey Homer die Unwissenheit der Kunstregeln, die ein Aristotles 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

³⁸ Hamann, *Socratic Memorabilia* 143.

³⁹ Isaiah Berlin, *The Magus of the North: J.G. Hamann and the Origins of Modern Irrationalism*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: John Murray, 1993) x.

⁴⁰ Hamann, *Socratic Memorabilia* 187.

Griechen, dessen Stimme er glaubte, und durch dessen Wind... der leere Verstand eines Sokrates so gut als der Schoos einer reinen Jungfrau, fruchtbar werden kann.⁴¹

What for a Homer replaces ignorance of the rules of art which an Aristotle devised after him, and what for Shakespeare replaces the ignorance or transgression of those critical laws? Genius is the unanimous answer. Indeed Socrates could very well afford to be ignorant; he had a tutelary genius, on whose science he could rely, which he loved and feared as his god, whose peace was more important to him than all the reason of the Egyptians and Greeks, whose voice he believed, and by means of whose wind... the empty understanding of a Socrates can become fruitful as well as the womb of a pure virgin.

There are, suggests Hamann, some miracles which cannot be rationally accounted for, and which 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's daemon (*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 hervorragende Idee seiner Einbildungskraft, oder ein erschlicher und willkürlich 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 weitläufiger über den Genius des Sokrates zu seyn.⁴²

Whether this daimon of Socrates was only a ruling passion, by whatever name it is called by our teachers of ethics, or whether it was an invention of his political cunning; whether an angel or familiar spirit, a distinctive idea of his imagination, or a surreptitious and arbitrarily assumed concept of mathematical ignorance; whether this daimon was not more like a thermometer or the machine to which the Bradleys and Leeuwenhoeks owe their revelations; whether one can compare it most readily with the prophetic feeling of a sober blind man or with the gift of foretelling the revolutions of the beclouded sky by means of corns and scars of badly healed wounds: so much has been written about this by so many sophists with such conclusiveness that one must be astonished that Socrates, in spite of his celebrated self-knowledge, could also be so ignorant in this matter that he would not answer Simias about it. No cultivated reader of our day lacks talented friends who will spare me the effort of going into more detail about Socrates's tutelary spirit.

⁴¹ Hamann, *Socratic Memorabilia* 170-171.

⁴² Hamann, *Socratic Memorabilia* 170-171.

Ever an opponent of the rationalist Enlightenment and the French Encyclopedists, Hamann set out to affirm the sense of mystery and divinity which the Ancient Greeks attached to the Socratic *daimonion*. The efforts to localise, immanentise and demystify the *daimonion*, and to see it as a faculty of reason or *logos* – beginning, as we saw in Part Three, with Aristotle and continuing through Neo-Platonism and Stoicism into Leibniz – culminated in Diderot's attempt to conscript it into the projects of science and Enlightenment philosophy. Diderot writes:

Socrate avait une si prodigieuse habitude de considérer les hommes et de peser les circonstances, que, dans les occasions les plus délicates, il s'exécutait secrètement en lui une combinaison prompte et juste, suivie d'un pronostic dont l'événement ne s'écartait guère... Il en est de même en physique expérimentale, de l'instinct de nos grands manouvriers. Ils ont vu si souvent et de si près la nature dans ses opérations, qu'ils devinent avec assez de précision le cours qu'elle pourra suivre dans les cas où il leur prend envie de la provoquer par les essais les plus bizarres. Ainsi le service le plus important qu'ils aient à rendre à ceux qu'ils initient à la philosophie expérimentale, c'est bien moins de les instruire du procédé et du résultat, que de faire passer en eux cet esprit de divination par lequel on *subodore*, pour ainsi dire, des procédés inconnus, des expériences nouvelles, des résultats ignorés.⁴³

Socrates had such a prodigious habit of considering men and weighing up circumstances that, in most delicate situations, he aligned himself with a prompt and just 'body' (*combinaison*) inside himself, followed by a forecast from which the event scarcely departed... It is the same for experimental science, and for the instincts of our great tacticians. They have seen nature so often and at such close range that they can guess, with a good deal of precision, the course it will follow in those cases where they are seized by the desire to provoke it by the most bizarre tests. As such, the most important service they have to offer to those whom they initiate into experimental philosophy is not so much to instruct them about processes and results, as it is to pass on to them this spirit of divination by which one presages, as it were, unheard-of procedures, new experiments and hitherto inconceivable results.

We should note that in Diderot, the *daimonion* has become completely immanent and physical as a 'body', 'composite', or 'construction' (*combinaison*) which resides 'inside' Socrates. Diderot sees the Socratic *daimonion* as a faculty of *logos* which can be used to assist the rational projects of science, and when he characterises it as a faculty of divination, he means divination in the sense of the German word – *Enthüllung* – which refers to an eminently secular, even scientific, procedure of unveiling, uncovering or dis-covering. Working against Diderot's approach, Hamann explicitly associates the

⁴³ Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes des Diderot* publiées par J. Assézat et M. Tourneux Volume II (Paris, 1857-1877) 24. Quoted in Herbert Dieckmann, 'Diderot's Conception of Genius,' 172-173. My thanks to Pierre de la Vernaye for this translation. 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): 273-281.

daimonion with the ancient mythological phenomenon of possession by external, divine forces: "Ein wenig Schwärmerei und Aberglauben" ("A little enthusiasm and superstition") 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.⁴⁴

...would not only deserve indulgence, but something of this leaven is necessary in order to put the soul in the ferment required for a philosophical heroism.

It is this kind of enthusiasm that Hamann locates in Socrates's *daimonion*. Possession, even when pathological, is for Hamann a divine blessing, and he accordingly sees Socrates's famous ignorance as a kind of hypochondria. Thus, in Hamann's view:

Wie man dies Übel selbst kennen muß um einen Milzsüchtigen zu verstehen und aus ihm klug zu werden; so gehört vielleicht eine Sympathie der Unwissenheit dazu von der Sokratischen einen Begriff zu haben.⁴⁵

Just as one must know this malady himself in order to understand a hypochondriac and make sense of him, so perhaps a sympathy with ignorance is required in order to have an idea of the Socratic ignorance.

The hypochondriac mistakenly believes himself to be ill, while Socrates, Hamann would argue, wrongly believes himself to be ignorant, and this mistaken belief is in fact the source of his wisdom, as it attests to the poverty of all knowledge in comparison with the divine truth of God, a truth which permeates the world at every level but can only be interpreted by a select group of individuals to which Socrates belongs.

In Part Two of this study we encountered three recent interpretations of the Socratic *daimonion*: namely, those of Paul Friedländer, G.R.F. Ferrari and Gregory Vlastos.⁴⁶ All of these commentators see the *daimonion* as a non-rational 'hint' or 'voice' which assists Socrates's rational arguments by reminding him that his knowledge is human and not divine, and by suggesting that there is a non-rational realm which extends beyond the cognitive bounds of human reason. In comparison with these

⁴⁴ Hamann, Socratic Memorabilia 146-147.

⁴⁵ Hamann, Socratic Memorabilia 160-161.

⁴⁶ See Friedländer, Plato Volume I 36; Ferrari, Listening to the Cicadas 116-117; Vlastos, Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher 283.

views, Hamann's portrait of Socrates, composed some forty-five years before the appearance of Schleiermacher's first translations of Plato into German,⁴⁷ 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's habitual use of inductive 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's relentless use of reason or *logos* – a tendency of his character much vaunted by Enlightenment figures like Diderot – Hamann isolates, and magnifies, the hint of non-rationality or *mythos* in Socrates's nature: his *daimonion*. In this connection, Hamann's aim is essentially to conflate his image of Socrates with that of Christ, and with his own religiously informed project or 'war' against German Rationalism.⁴⁸ Writing some five years prior to the publication of Winckelmann's ground-breaking 1764 study of Classical culture *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums (History of Ancient Art)*, Hamann makes no attempt to see Socrates within the context of Ancient Greek culture: rather, he reads Socrates through the lens of non-rational Pietism, a lens which turns Socrates into a mystical forerunner of Christ.

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.⁴⁹ 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 summarise 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 Hamann's 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

⁴⁷ 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.

⁴⁸ Here I am alluding to the analysis of Hamann's *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* undertaken by Erwin Metzke in his book *J.G. Hamann's Stellung in der Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (1967). Metzke describes *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* as nothing less than a 'Kampfansage' ('declaration of war') against German Rationalism. See Erwin Metzke, *J.G. Hamann's Stellung in der Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967) 36-46.

⁴⁹ "Hamann's Schriften haben nicht sowohl einen eigenthümlichen Styl, als daß sie durch und durch Styl sind" ("Hamann's writings do not so much have a characteristic style, they are style through and through"). G.W.F. Hegel, 'Hamann's Schriften', *Sämtliche Werke Hermann Glockner Hg. Band XX* (Stuttgart: Fr. Frommanns Verlag Günther Holzboog, 1958) 209.

verwerflich." Eine herrliche Maxime! Aber schwer zu befolgen. Von Leben und Kunst mag sie freilich gelten; bei jeder Überlieferung durchs Wort hingegen, die nicht gerade poetisch ist, findet sich eine große Schwierigkeit: denn das Wort muß sich ablösen, es muß sich vereinzeln, um etwas zu sagen, zu bedeuten. Der Mensch, indem er spricht, muß für den Augenblick einseitig werden; es gibt keine Mitteilung, keine Lehre ohne Sonderung. Da nun aber Hamann ein für allemal dieser Trennung widerstrebte, und, wie er in einer Einheit empfand, imaginierte, dachte, so auch sprechen wollte, und das gleiche von andern verlangte; so trat er mit seinem eignen Stil und mit allem, was die andern hervorbringen konnten, in Widerstreit. Um das Unmögliche zu leisten, greift er daher nach allen Elementen; die tiefsten geheimsten Anschauungen, wo sich Natur und Geist im Verborgenen begegnen, erleuchtende Verstandesblitze, die aus einem solchen Zusammentreffen hervorstrahlen, bedeutende Bilde, die in diesen Regionen schweben, andringende Sprüche der heiligen und Profanskribenten, und was sich sonst noch humoristisch hinzufügen mag, alles dieses bildet die wunderbare Gesamtheit seines Stils, seiner Mitteilungen.⁵⁰

The Principle to which all Hamann's expressions may be referred is this: "All that man undertakes to perform, whether by deed, by word, or otherwise, must proceed from all his powers united: everything isolated is worthless." A noble maxim, but hard to follow. To life and art it may indeed be applied: but in every communication by words, that is not exactly poetic, there is, on the contrary, a grand difficulty; for a word must sever itself, must isolate itself, in order to say or signify anything. Man, while he speaks, must, for the moment, become one-sided: there is no communication, no instruction, without severing. Now, since Hamann, once and for all, opposed this separation, and because he felt, imagined, and thought in unity, chose to speak in unity likewise, and to require the same of others, he came into opposition with his own style, and with all that others produced. To produce the impossible, he therefore grasps at every element: the deepest and most mystical contemplations in which mind and nature meet each other, – illuminating flashes of the understanding which beam forth from such a contact, significant images which float in these regions, forcible aphorisms from sacred and profane writers, with whatever else of a humorous kind could be added, – all this forms the wondrous totality of his style and communications.

In Goethe's view, this *Einheit* (unity, oneness) which Hamann seeks, is something which resists all of his attempts to embody it linguistically and conceptually: thus, Hamann 'came into opposition with his own style' because his philosophy was, like all systems of thought, confined to the logic of language, a logic which requires words to be separated and differentiated from one another, if they are to signify anything at all. But it was precisely this idea of a non-rational unity beyond language, and therefore beyond human powers of representation and human *logos*, which preoccupied Hamann, and which 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 which could express the divine plenitude of the world, without fragmenting this plenitude in the very act of its expression. As we saw in Part Two of this study, quests which have

⁵⁰ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band IX, 514-515. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume II 106.

impossible goals as their aim 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 which seemed at home "nur im Unmöglichen" ("only in the impossible") and which banished the possible from itself with contempt.⁵¹

Goethe once expressed the desire to edit and publish an edition of Hamann's *Werke*.⁵² This ambition was never realised, but Hamann's influence upon Goethe may nevertheless have emerged, albeit rather obscurely, perhaps even unconsciously, in his conception of the Daemonic. This possibility will be addressed later in this study. For now, it is necessary to look beyond the horizon of Goethe, in order to establish Hamann's influence upon the entire *Zeitgeist* of late eighteenth century German letters. In this connection, Isaiah Berlin's comments on Hamann are at least partially instructive:

Romanticism, anti-rationalism, suspicion of all theories and intellectual constructions as at best useful fictions, at worst a distorting medium – a mode of escape from facing reality itself – virtually begin with Hamann. There is more than something of this among the Neoplatonists of the Renaissance, in Pascal, and still more in Vico. But the frontal attack was delivered by him. The fact that it was often ill-conceived, overdone, naïve, ludicrously exaggerated and irresponsible, or touched with bitter and savage obscurantism and a blind hatred of some of the noblest moral and artistic – as well as intellectual – achievements of mankind, does not lessen its importance, even if it diminishes its value...it is doubtful whether without Hamann's revolt – or at any rate something similar – the worlds of Herder, Friedrich Schlegel, Tieck, Schiller, and indeed Goethe too, would have come into being.⁵³

Berlin sees Hamann as the chief progenitor of 'modern irrationalism': a broad cultural tendency which he views as being roughly allied with Romanticism in its opposition to Rationalism and the Enlightenment. As we shall see later in this study, particularly in relation to Goethe's *Werther*, the notion of a binary opposition between Romanticism and the Enlightenment does not always hold good, as these modes of thinking sometimes coalesce and intermingle, often with great success. The dilemma expressed in Berlin's judgement of Hamann – the need to recognise his importance, while at the same

⁵¹ Goethe *Dichtung und Wahrheit HA* Band X 175.

⁵² "Ich gebe die Hoffnung nicht auf, eine Herausgabe der Hamannschen Werke entweder selbst zu besorgen, oder wenigstens zu befördern..." ("I do not give up the hope of superintending myself, or at least furthering, an edition of Hamann's works..."). Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit HA* Band IX. 514. Translated by Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume II 106.

⁵³ Isaiah Berlin, *The Magus of the North* 23, 105.

time criticising his supposed 'irrationalism' – might be seen as symptomatic of an internal tension in the Enlightenment's conception of itself: that is to say, its need to distance itself from any suggestion of non-rational or emotional influences. We will return to this suggestion in the following chapter. At this point, it should be clear that the significance of Hamann for this study lies in the degree to which he places a renewed focus on the theme of the Daemonic by emphasising, perhaps even exaggerating, the significance of Socrates's *daimonion*, and by explicitly associating the *daimonion* with a non-rational notion of genius.

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

Herder's ideas about genius are most clearly explicated when we examine the ways in which they differ from those of Hamann. Having first encountered Hamann in Königsberg around 1763, Herder was particularly influenced by the former's virulent attacks upon the Enlightenment, while also sharing Hamann's pietist background. But Herder is by no means a mystic after the model of Hamann. His thought was equally influenced by the theological imperatives which accompanied his preeminent position in the Protestant clergy, as well as by other voices which prevailed in Europe during his age: the early thought of Kant, the Rationalism of Leibniz, Lessing's readings of Shakespeare, Rousseau's valorisation of natural 'primitivism', the Deism of Toland.

According to Herder's biographer, Robert T. Clark, Herder is perhaps best understood as a seculariser of Hamann's thought.⁵⁴ Herder's secular tendency, his preoccupation with the natural world, is already present in his *Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769* (*Journal of my Voyage in the Year 1769*) in which he aims to philosophise:

...über Himmel, Sonne, Sterne, Mond, Luft, Wind, Meer, Regen, Strom, Fisch, Seegrund...und die Physik alles dessen aus sich herausfinden zu können. Philosoph der Natur, das sollte dein Standpunkt sein mit dem Jünglinge, den du unterrichtest! Stelle dich mit ihm aufs weite Meer und zeige ihm Fakta und Realitäten...⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Robert T. Clarke, *Herder: His Life and Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955) 49.

⁵⁵ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769* *Johann Gottfried Herder: Werke in Zwei Bänden* Karl-Gustav Gerold Hg. Band I (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1953) 599-600. Translated by F.M. Barnard in *J.G. Herder on Social and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) 67.

... on the sky, the sun, the stars, the moon, the air, the wind, the sea, the rain, the currents, the fish and the ocean floor, and to discover the physical laws governing all these from within, as it were. Philosopher of nature – that should be your position with the youth whom you are teaching! Place yourself with your pupil on the wide sea and show him facts and the real properties of things...

Herder's *Journal* reads like a manifesto of the *Sturm und Drang* movement. 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 [which] kann nicht Träume der Kindheit, den Glauben eines ganzen Lebens zerstören...⁵⁶

...an ephemeral manifestation [which] cannot destroy the dreams and deep-seated beliefs of childhood.

Herder extols youth, spontaneity, sensitivity, and an affinity with nature as desirable human characteristics, and it is likewise these attributes which come to the fore in his early conception of genius:

Das ist der Weg, Originale zu haben, nämlich 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, lebhaft, 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.⁵⁷

To produce original men, let them experience many things in their youth and let them perceive these in the manner that is natural to them, without compulsion and without prejudicing them in any particular direction. Every sensation received by the youthful mind embodies experiential data which remain of consequence for a lifetime, since they are constantly worked over in later years. The diverse tangible and vivid sensations, spontaneously perceived in the most uniquely individual manner, constitute the basic components of a sound human frame and the very foundation of that characteristic which we principally associate with original genius: strong, lively creative ideas independently formed.

⁵⁶ Herder, *Journal Werke* (Hanser) Band I 607-8. Trans. Barnard, 74. Brackets added.

⁵⁷ Herder, *Journal Werke* (Hanser) Band I 665. Trans. Barnard, 83.

The connection between genius and originality made by Herder is, almost without doubt, derived from a source which we 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 is also an important influence upon Herder. Jochen Schmidt, the German scholar whose *Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik 1750-1945* is the most authoritative study of the conceptual history of the notion of genius in German literature and philosophy, comments that Herder was the first of the Germans to follow the ideas about genius presented in Young's *Conjectures*.⁵⁸ For Herder the genius mediates between 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 we need to revisit, refine and refashion two terms which have played a significant role so far in this study: immanence and transcendence.

Up until this point in our discussion, the terms immanence and transcendence, or the immanent and the transcendent, have 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 work which characterises the world of phenomena – and the faculty of the Understanding which 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.⁵⁹ Although Plato never used the terms immanence/transcendence in this way, they have been retroactively applied to his philosophy: the material world being seen as immanent and substantial, the forms or 'Ideas' as 'transcendent' in that Plato describes them as being beyond, prior to, and ontologically superior to, the corporeal world. This immanence/transcendence dualism has also, of course, been located in Judaeo-Christian theology, which has traditionally seen God as a transcendent creator who is separate from the world.

⁵⁸ Jochen Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik 1750-1945* Band I 120. See also Michael Beddow, 'Goethe on Genius', *Genius: The History of an Idea* ed. Penelope Murray (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989). Beddow opines (p.99) that Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* were first read by Hamann and then passed on to Herder. According to Beddow, Herder derived from Young "a programme for establishing a German national literature... [based on] the Old Testament, Homer, Pindar, Shakespeare (and, of course, Ossian) not as models to imitate but as instances of what emerged when all imitation was shunned." Brackets added.

⁵⁹ "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". ("We shall entitle the principles whose application is confined entirely within the limits of possible experience *immanent*; and those, on the other hand, which profess to pass beyond these limits, *transcendent*"). Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* B 352 A 296 *Werke in Sechs Bänden* Wilhelm Weischedel Hg. Band II (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956) 309-310. Translated by Norman Kemp Smith in Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1929; London: Macmillan, 1970) 298-299.

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 follows Spinoza, who sees God as the “immanent, and not the transitive cause of all things”.⁶⁰ As we saw earlier in this chapter, Spinoza maintains a virtual identity between God and substance as the grounds from which all natural phenomena spring. Nature is thus seen as being concomitant with, and not separated or ‘fallen’ from, God. Spinoza's conception of God as an indwelling, natural presence created a degree of controversy in 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 1770's. In 1783, Jacobi reported to his colleague Moses Mendelssohn a piece of news that was, at least in Jacobi's view, terrible. On visiting Lessing shortly before his death, the old dramatist admitted to Jacobi 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 Antispinozisten 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 der aller reellste, thätigste Eins... Was Ihr, lieben Leute, mit dem: außer der Welt existiren wollt, begreife ich nicht; existirt Gott nicht in der Welt, überall in der Welt, u. zwar überall ungemessen, ganz u. untheilbar, (denn die ganze Welt ist nur eine Erscheinung seiner Größe für uns erscheinende Gestalten) so existirt er nirgend... [Gott] ist das höchste lebendigste thätigste Eins – nicht in allen Dingen, als ob die was außer ihm wären; sondern durch alle Dinge...⁶¹

The *proton pseudos* (first falsehood), dear Jacobi, in your and in every anti-Spinozist system is that by understanding God to be the great *ens entium*, the first cause of being, that is eternally active in all phenomena, you take God to be a nullity, an abstract concept that we formulate according to our mental capacities. According to Spinoza, however, God is not this. Instead, God is the most real, the most active *one*... I do not understand what you dear people mean by [God] “existing outside of the world.” If God does not exist in the world, and everywhere in the world, and precisely without measure, wholly and indivisibly (for the whole world is but an appearance of God's greatness in forms appearing to us), then God exists nowhere... God is the

⁶⁰ Spinoza, *Ethics* I P18, 16.

⁶¹ Johann Gottfried Herder, ‘An F.H. Jacobi,’ 6. Februar 1784, letter 17 of *Johann Gottfried Herder: Briefe Gesamtausgabe 1763-1803* Wilhelm Dobbek und Günter Arnold Hg. Band V (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus: 1979) 28-29. Translated by Marcia Bunge in Johann Gottfried Herder, *Against Pure Reason: Writings on Religion, Language, and History* ed. and trans. Marcia Bunge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 122-3. Emphasis added. Brackets added.

highest, most living, most active *one* – not *in* all things, as if they were something outside God, but rather *through* all things...

Herder did not agree with Jacobi's contention that Spinoza's philosophy represents a kind of immanentist atheism. In fact, the respective aims of both thinkers were radically opposed: Jacobi was trying to draw a definitive line between the Judaeo-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*) published in 1811, for Herder, his short but important work explaining Spinozism entitled *Gott: Einige Gespräche* (*God: Some Conversations*) published in 1787. In *Gott: Einige Gespräche*, Herder speaks of God in the following way:

...ists wohl unerträglich zu denken, daß die Wurzel den Baum trage? Sie stürbe ab und wäre keine Wurzel, wenn sie die schöne Schöpfung des Stammes mit seinen Ästen, Zweigen, Blüten und Früchten nicht zu tragen hätte. So Gott, die ewige Wurzel vom unermesslichen Baum des Lebens, der durch das Weltall verschlungen ist: Er die unendliche Quelle des Daseins, des größten Geschenks, das nur Er mitteilen konnte.⁶²

...is it so intolerable to think of [the image of] the root that sustains the tree? The root would die, it would not be a root, if it did not have to sustain that beautiful creation of the trunk along with its branches, twigs, blossoms, and fruit. In the same way, God is the eternal root of the immeasurable tree of life that spreads throughout the universe. God is the infinite source of existence, the source of the greatest gift that only he could impart.

Herder maintains that the transcendent – God – can only exist insofar as it manifests itself in a realm of immanence – the sphere of nature. For Herder, the minutiae of nature, and the organic interrelations between different species, attest to God's divine wisdom, as God is active in "jeder lebendigen Kraft des Weltalls" ("in every lively force of the universe").⁶³ When Herder invokes the concept of 'force' (*Kraft*), he shows his debt to another interpreter of Spinoza: Leibniz. Herder shares with Leibniz a dynamic view of the cosmos as the realm in which a divine logic expresses itself through natural forces. But unlike the Leibnizian monad, which is 'isolated' and 'windowless', Herder points out in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (*Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of*

⁶² Johann Gottfried Herder, *Gott: Einige Gespräche Werke Band IV: Schriften zur Philosophie, Literatur, Kunst und Altertum 1774-1787* Jürgen Brummack und Martin Bollacher Hg. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994) 770. Translated by Marcia Bunge in: *Against Pure Reason* 127-128. Brackets added to English translation.

⁶³ Herder, *Gott: Einige Gespräche Werke* (Klassiker) Band IV 772. Trans. Bunge, 129.

Mankind) that humans are intimately connected with their local habitat and climate.⁶⁴ The Herderian genius dwells in, and gives expression to, the divine – but not, as is the case in Hamann, a divine which speaks to certain chosen individuals through inscrutable voices like that of Socrates's *daimonion* – rather, a divine which unfolds organically in nature.

This is not to suggest that in 'secularising' Hamann, Herder concurred with the Rationalism of Leibniz, a Rationalism which sees nature as a serenely logical and mechanistic system. Herder stays true to Hamann insofar as he maintains that:

Ins innere Wesen der Dinge hineinzuschauen, haben wir keine Sinne; wir stehen von außen und müssen bemerken.⁶⁵

We have no senses to see the inner essence of things; we stand on the outside and we have to observe.

In observing nature we intuit its presence without capturing or containing it logically or conceptually, and thus, for Herder, the 'essence' remains an object of longing. Accordingly, Herder developed a conception of science as the 'sister' of art: a mode of observation which appreciates the object without necessarily confining it within rational strictures.⁶⁶ It comes as no surprise that *Gott: Einige Gespräche* was written at a time in which Herder was in close consultation with Goethe on the subject of Spinoza, and on the scientific implications of Spinozism.⁶⁷ In fact, notions not at all dissimilar to Herder's tentative ideas about science were, at that very time – around 1787 – being explored by Goethe as part of his quest for the *Urpflanze* or 'Primal Plant'. In Part Six of this study, we will investigate the *Urpflanze* in connection with Goethe's forays into science, and in relation to his later intuition of the Daemonic as an *Urphänomen* or 'Primal Phenomenon'.

But now we have come a long way indeed from the early Herder, the Herder who exerted an influence upon Goethe in his formative years. Before we leave the Herder/Jacobi dispute, it should be noted that

⁶⁴ The *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* is Herder's longest, and arguably his most important, philosophical work. It was published in four parts between 1784 and 1791. It is translated by Frank E. Manuel as *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

⁶⁵ Herder, *Gott: Einige Gespräche Werke* (Klassiker) Band IV 778. Trans. Bunge, 132.

⁶⁶ See Herder, *Gott: Einige Gespräche Werke* (Klassiker) Band IV 778-779.

⁶⁷ In his biography of Herder, Robert T. Clarke observes that the book was "the precipitate of conversations with Goethe", Clarke, *Herder: His Life and Thought* (339), while Goethe's biographer, Nicholas Boyle comments that there is "little in the book that Goethe had not already sketched out". Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 496.

Herder's erstwhile mentor – Hamann – sided with Jacobi during the Spinoza controversy, and this was essentially because Herder was in the process of abandoning, or at least modifying, a tenet of Judaeo-Christian thought which was as crucial to Hamann as it was to Jacobi: the absolute transcendence of God. In this connection, Herder's secularisation or immanentisation of Hamann had already played itself out in an earlier dispute about the origin of language.

Herder's *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (*Treatise on the Origin of Language*) was 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?' He eventually won the prize offered by the Academy for the most impressive written answer to this question, and his answer, perhaps best summed up in the following phrase, is an odd compromise between the mysticism of Hamann, and the immanentist, scientific tendencies found in both Spinoza and Leibniz:

Der Ursprung der Sprache wird also nur auf eine würdige Art göttlich, sofern er menschlich ist.⁶⁸

The origin of language is explained in a truly divine manner only insofar as it is truly human.

Language, argues Herder, is "expressive of an original force of nature",⁶⁹ and as such it emerges from "einen tierischen Ursprung" ("an animal origin").⁷⁰ Seen in this way, the earliest, most primitive languages represent the attempts of human animals to conceptualise their environment. Thus, the letters of the alphabet emanated, in the first instance, "nicht aus Buchstaben der Grammatik Gottes" ("not from symbols of a divine grammar") but were belatedly and secondarily developed by humans "aus wilden Tönen freier Organe" ("from the primitive sounds of natural organs").⁷¹ Human language is then differentiated by Herder from the sounds made by animals only insofar as it develops beyond the animal's instinctive language of 'feeling' ("die feinsten Saiten des tierischen Gefühls" or "the most delicate chords of animal feeling")⁷² into a speech which combines itself with reason and thereby has the capacity to form reflective concepts. Thus, while animals remain largely determined by instinct

⁶⁸ Herder, *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache Werke* (Hanser) Band I 829. Trans. Barnard 177.

⁶⁹ The full sentence in German is: "Diese Seufzer, diese Töne sind Sprache: es gibt also eine Sprache der Empfindung, die unmittelbares Naturgesetz ist." Herder, *Abhandlung Werke* (Hanser) Band I 734. Trans. Barnard 118.

⁷⁰ Herder, *Abhandlung Werke* (Hanser) Band I 739.

⁷¹ Herder, *Abhandlung Werke* (Hanser) Band I 740. Trans. Barnard 122.

⁷² Herder, *Abhandlung Werke* (Hanser) Band I 733. Trans. Barnard 117.

(*der Instinkt*), it is humans, according to Herder, who, through “Verstand, Vernunft, Besinnung usw...” (“understanding, reason, consciousness, etc...”) are able to obtain a limited measure of freedom from determination by natural forces.⁷³

At this point it seems as though Herder’s explanation of language is completely immanentist and rationalist. But later in the essay, when addressing the concept of reason, he gets drawn into a difficult question, a question which penetrates to the centre of the relationship between *mythos* (the use of images and narratives) and *logos* (the deployment of reason). Did reason precede language, or did language predate, and therefore make possible, reason? Herder eventually decides that attempting to answer this aporetic question leads to a situation in which each side of the argument appears to hold a similar weight. In this regard, he is really trying to avoid repeating an ancient commonplace which we have already encountered in this study, particularly in the Stoics and Neo-Platonists: the notion that reason is a divine gift, planted in humans by the gods. Accordingly, Herder states 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” (“a listening sensible creature is discernible, but not a heavenly spirit”).⁷⁴

Herder thus wishes to attribute the origin of language to visible, empirical and human causes, as opposed to the invisible, spiritual ‘higher-origin-argument’ traditionally put forward by religious thinkers like Hamann. Humans, Herder argues, differ from animals in that they are endowed with a capacity for reflection (*Besonnenheit*). While animals make sounds which can express emotions arising from sensations like pleasure or pain, only humans, says Herder, are capable of abstractly reflecting upon these sensations, and naming or conceptualising 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.

⁷³ Herder *Abhandlung Werke* (Hanser) Band I 750.

⁷⁴ Herder *Abhandlung Werke* (Hanser) Band I 767. Trans. Barnard 142.

Predictably, Hamann received Herder's arguments coolly, responding to them in a number of articles which are too numerous and complex to be dealt with here.⁷⁵ 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'), published in 1771. In this piece, Hamann asserts his belief that since the whole of existence has its origin in God as the Divine Creator, then language itself is merely an off-shoot of 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...⁷⁶

Every phenomenon of nature was a word – the sign, the symbol, and pledge of a new, inexpressible, but all the more intimate union, communication, and community of divine energy and ideas. Everything that man heard in the beginning, saw with his eyes, contemplated, and his hands touched was a living word, for God was the Word. With this word in his mouth and in his heart, the origin of language was as natural, as near, and as easy as child's play...

Hamann's response to Herder on the issue of language is to be expected, given his opposition to the secularising 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 Part Two of this study, we looked at how Plato's conception of the Daemonic served an intermediary function by allowing for communication between the secular (the corporeal world, the world of humans), and the divine (the transcendent realm of the Ideas or forms). In the case of Aristotle, Plato's transcendent forms were then seen to have been secularised in his notion of the *entelechy*, an immanently located essence or seed which Aristotle describes as the indwelling biological prototype of the living organism, a later version of which is also found in Leibniz's concept

⁷⁵ Hamann's first review of Herder's *Treatise* appeared in the *Königsbergsche Gelehrte und Politische Zeitungen* in 1772. This review was followed by an essay entitled 'The Last Will and Testament of the Knight of the Rose-Cross', (1771), and a second review written by Hamann under the pseudonym of 'Aristobulus'. Two further works dealing with Herder's theory of language were also composed in 1772, the first, 'Philological Ideas and Doubts about the Academic Prize-Essay' was written in German, the second 'To Solomon of Prussia', was written in French. 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) 123-135.

⁷⁶ Johann Georg Hamann, 'Des Ritters von Rosencreuz letzte Willensmeynung', *Sämtliche Werke* Joseph Nadler Hg. Band III (Wien: Verlag Herder, 1951) 32. Translated by James C. O'Flaherty in *Johann Georg Hamann* 127-128.

of the monad. Likewise, we saw, in Part Three, how the Stoics and Neo-Platonists also served to secularise or immanentise the Platonic daemon of *Timaeus* 90a-90d by associating it with the indwelling faculty of *nous* or reason.

In Herder, this process of secularisation continues as a result of the influence of Spinoza. When Spinoza asserts that God exists *through* nature, through the things of the world, 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, as is the case in Platonism and Neo-Platonism. On the contrary, the Herderian genius is a medium who relays information about nature, by deploying the eminently human, and eminently natural, faculty of language. Some thinkers – like Jacobi and Hamann – objected to this immanentist Pantheism, and especially in the case of Hamann's *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten*, this led to a reanimation of Plato's mythological notion of the Daemonic as a mode of divine or 'mantic' inspiration. But Hamann did not convince Herder of the divine truth of Socrates's *daimonion* enough to counter the immanentising influences of Spinoza and Leibniz. As a consequence, we find in Herder a notion of the genius which, in terms of spatial metaphors, communicates to us knowledge from 'down there', from nature, and not from the 'heavens' of Plato's forms or Hamann's God. The effect of this spatial or topological transformation on the idea of genius is aptly summarised by Jochen Schmidt, and Schmidt's summary introduces a concept which will become crucial to our discussion of the Daemonic in parts Seven and Nine of this study – the unconscious (*Das Unbewußte*):

...die Verbindung des Unbewußten mit der genialen Naturhaftigkeit [erscheint als] wichtiger Fortschritt – als Fortschritt, der nicht nur historische Wandlung signalisiert, sondern auch einen Zuwachs an systematischer Qualität für die Genie-Konzeption bringt. Die archaische Inspirationslehre nämlich, die selbst noch in Youngs 'Conjectures' von großer Bedeutung ist, und die ihr verwandte Anschauung vom sokratischen 'Dämon' (Genius), die sich Herder im Anschluß an Hamann zu eigen gemacht hatte, war um so mehr zum Fremdkörper geworden, je entschiedener sich die Vorstellung vom naturhaften Schaffens des Genies durchsetzte. Ein Genie, dessen Leistung auch auf Inspiration oder auf Dämonie, also auf übernatürlicher Einwirkung beruhte, konnte nur wenig überzeugend als reine Natur dargestellt werden. War die naturhafte Konzeption des Genies zunächst hauptsächlich gegen die Nachahmungs- und Regelpoetik gerichtet, so drängte sie nun mit der inneren Logik des Naturbegriffs selbst auch zur Überwindung der heterogenen Inspirationstheorie. Die Autonomie des naturhaften Genies vertrug sich nicht mit der heteronomen Inspiration. ...Da sich der Autonomie-Gedanke aber erst in dem Stadium der Entwicklung voll ausbilden konnte, in dem sich die 'Natur' des Genies zur *organischen* ausrundete, war dies auch der historische Moment, der zur Abstoßung der Inspirationstheorie führen mußte. Das Über-Bewußte der Inspiration wurde ersetzt durch das

Unter-Bewußte, das den entscheidenden Vorteil hatte, daß es sich in die Natur-Sphäre integrieren ließ.⁷⁷

...the connection of the unconscious with an ingenious naturalness [appears to be] an important progression – a progression which not only signals a historical development, but also brings about an increase in the systematic quality of the conception of genius. The archaic theory of inspiration for instance, which still carries great importance in Young's 'Conjectures', and which is related to the notion of the Socratic daimon (genius), a notion absorbed by Herder in conjunction with Hamann, became increasingly transformed and marginalised into a foreign body, the more decisively the idea of the genius as a creative power of nature gained the upper hand. A genius, whose achievements were based upon inspiration or daemonic forces, and therefore upon a supernatural agency, could only be convincingly portrayed as purely natural to a limited extent. Just as the natural conception of the genius was, in the first instance, predominantly directed against the tradition of poetics as imitation and rules, so too it also pressed forward with the inner logic of the conception of nature towards a surmounting of the heteronomous theory of inspiration. Thus, the autonomy of the natural genius would not stand for the various notions of inspiration...The point at which the idea of autonomy was able to reach the stage of its full development, a stage in which the 'nature' of the genius became fully *organic*, was also the historical moment which necessarily led to the rejection of the theory of inspiration. The extra-conscious content of inspiration was replaced by the sub-known or that which is beneath consciousness, which had the decisive advantage of being susceptible of integration into the sphere of nature.

Despite the efforts of religious non-rationalists like Hamann, the secularising forces of the Enlightenment, the forces of *logos*, held sway, and accordingly the theory of the genius took a decidedly immanentist, psychological turn. Consequently, a new force, arguably just as invisible and mysterious as the powers of the Gods, but purportedly more susceptible of rational analysis because of its immanent, or even organic, location, began to be theorised in the closing stages of the eighteenth century, and subsequently right through the nineteenth century up until its theoretical apotheosis, initially in the thought of Arthur Schopenhauer, Carl Gustav Carus and Eduard von Hartmann, and ultimately in the writings of Sigmund Freud. The contention that the history of the unconscious and the history of the Daemonic are related will be approached in parts Seven and Nine of this study. Presently, it is necessary to prepare the way for the figure who will dominate the next four chapters of our analysis: Johann Wolfgang Goethe.

⁷⁷ Schmidt, Geschichte des Geniegedankens Band I 134-135. Brackets added.

4.5. Herder, Goethe and the Historical Theory of Genius.

The early Strasbourg exchanges between the young Goethe and Herder have been documented at length.⁷⁸ Our 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 dubious literary construct known as 'Ossian'. In the first volume of his authoritative biography, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age*, Nicholas Boyle writes that Goethe "read each instalment" of Herder's *Treatise on the Origin of Language* "as it was written."⁷⁹ Goethe also mentions Herder's *Treatise* in Book Ten 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.⁸⁰

... idle in some measure; for, if God had created man as man, language was just as innate in him as walking erect: he must have just as well perceived that he could sing with his throat, and modify the tones in various ways with tongue, palate and lips, as he must have remarked that he could walk, and take hold of things. If man was of divine origin, so was also language; and if man, considered in the circle of nature, was a natural being, language was likewise natural. These two things, like soul and body, I could never separate.

Although there is no evidence to suggest that Goethe had been exposed to the thought of Spinoza before 1773,⁸¹ and despite the fact that, according to Robert T. Clarke, Herder's first "serious mention" of Spinoza occurs as late as 1775 (four years after he completed his *Abhandlung über den*

⁷⁸ See, for example, Book 10 of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 94-100.

⁷⁹ Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 96.

⁸⁰ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band IX 406. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume II 16.

⁸¹ Nicholas Boyle writes that "Goethe is known in 1773 to have become acquainted with some of the ideas of Spinoza". Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 160.

Ursprung der Sprache),⁸² 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 we are prepared to accept the retrospective testimony which he offers in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, published between 1811 and 1833.

The significance of the question of Goethe's relation to Spinozism is highlighted when we return to spatial or topological dynamics of the Daemonic as a conduit between the secular and the divine. 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? This question is perhaps best answered when we investigate the full extent of Herder's influence upon the young Goethe. 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 "repelling pulse" (*abstoßende Puls*) of Herder's propensity for sarcasm and bitterness.⁸³ But when we turn to the letters which the twenty-two year old Goethe wrote to Herder (five years his senior) in 1771, the picture is much clearer:

Herder, Herder, bleiben Sie mir, was Sie mir sind. Bin ich bestimmt, Ihr Planet zu sein, so will ichs sein, es gern, es treu sein. Ein freundlicher Mond der Erde.

Herder, Herder, remain what you are to me. If I am destined to be your satellite, so would I gladly, truly be. A friendly moon to the earth.⁸⁴

If we accept that Goethe saw himself as Herder's 'satellite' in 1771, then we must investigate those works by Herder which convinced him to adopt such a position of apparent subservience. We have already seen the immanentist strain in Herder's thought in our discussion of his *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, a text with which the young Goethe was acquainted. But Herder had also developed a decidedly immanentist and historical concept of genius in the 1760's, before his first

⁸² Robert T. Clarke writes that Herder's first serious mention of Spinoza appears in a letter to Gleim dated February 15, 1775. Robert T. Clarke, *Herder: His Life and Thought* 205.

⁸³ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band IX, 403. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume II 15.

⁸⁴ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, 'An J.G. Herder,' Oct. 1771, Briefe 63 of *Johann Wolfgang Goethe: Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche* Ernst Beutler Hg. Band XVIII (Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1949) 168.

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*) and his *Fragmente zur deutschen Literatur* (*Fragments on German Literature*).

Written in 1764, Herder's *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode* contains many of the ideas which 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 "einfältig hohe poetische Theopneustie" ("simple, lofty, poetic, divine inspiration") an inspiration which "raset trunken den Weg des Affekts" ("drunkenly rages on the path of emotion or feeling"), the ode appears to flow from sources which are both natural and divine.⁸⁵ On the one hand, Herder tells us that the "Geist der Ode ist ein Feuer des Herrn" ("spirit of the ode is the fire of the Lord"),⁸⁶ while at the same time maintaining that it emerges from a mysterious, apparently human source which he calls 'affect' (*Affekt*), a term which is perhaps best translated as 'emotion' or 'feeling'⁸⁷:

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 genauesten Merkmale 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...⁸⁸

Affect, which at the outset silently, encapsulated within, benumbed the entire body and surged as a dark feeling, gradually pervades all slight stirrings, until it finds expression in recognizable signs. It moves through the facial expressions and unarticulated sounds to the level of reason, where at last it seizes upon language, and here, too, through most subtle differentiation it loses itself at last in a clarity that gives it identity... In affect one perceives the most comprehensive sensuous unity without being able to bring it into correspondence with the intellect...

⁸⁵ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode* Johann Gottfried Herder: Werke Ulrich Gaier Hg. Band I (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985) 80. Translated by Ernest A. Menze and Michael Palma in Johann Gottfried Herder: Selected Early Works 1764-1787 (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992) 37.

⁸⁶ Herder, *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode* Werke (Klassiker) Band I 79. Trans. Menze 36.

⁸⁷ Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* gives the following synonyms for 'Affekt': "Begierde, Neigung, Gefühlsaufwallung" ("desire, inclination, surging or 'welling-up' of feelings"). Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* Neubearbeitung Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR Band I (Leipzig: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1983).

⁸⁸ Herder, *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode* Werke (Klassiker) Band I 88-90. Brackets added. Trans. Menze 43-44.

This discussion of 'affect' seems to confirm Jochen Schmidt's view that Herder's theory of poetic inspiration was essentially organic. In spatial terms, 'affect' appears to originate from deep within the human subject, a subject which partakes in a close relationship with his or her natural surroundings. As affect rises to the surface of our 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 which best approximates the surging, natural force of affect.

While this discussion of affect 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:

...die Poesie stets sinken *muß* von der goldnen Höhe ihres Ursprunges... Je mehr sich die Gegenstände erweitern, die menschlichen *Geisteskräfte* 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.⁸⁹

...poetry...beginning with the golden apex of its origin, *must* deteriorate; the more the subject matter is broadened, the more the capacities of the human *spirit* unfold, the more the capacities of the sensuous animal spirit will fade away. The spread of the sciences infringes upon the arts, the refinement of poetics upon poetry; in the end we have rules rather than poetic sensibilities; we borrow scraps from the Ancients, and the poetic art is dead.

Herder laments the German preoccupation with Classical themes and motifs. In obsessively looking 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:

Und kann ich hier nicht laut fragen: wie wenige *unserer* Gegenstände wir noch bearbeitet haben; immer als wenn wir Griechen oder Römer wären! – Aber der antworte mir bloß, den Regeln und Muster und Vorurteile noch nicht aus sich selbst geworfen haben. Das muß schon in uns schlafen, was der Gegenstand aufwecken soll: 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 würden wir alsdann auch

⁸⁹ Herder, Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode Werke (Klassiker) Band I 85. Trans. Menze 41.

Originalstücke von Oden haben, ohne daß sie durch eine antike Stellung sich einen Wert geben dürfen.⁹⁰

And may I here not ask loudly, how little of *our* subjects have we yet dealt with; always as if we were Greeks or Romans! – But only he should answer me who has not yet been warped by the rules and models and prejudices. That which the subject is meant to arouse is already slumbering within us; when there slumbers in the people of the Morn the son of the gods, in the Greek the free hero, in the Roman the citizen soldier – what slumbers within the German?... A German's *Metamorphoses* ought not to be Ovidian, any more than Aeneas could be Homer's hero. – Shakespeare's works and the Nordic Edda, the songs of the Bards and the Skalds must shape our poetry; perhaps then we too would have original odes, without needing to prove their worth by means of antiquity.

The situation, then, appears to call for a genius, and it is this call which Herder endeavours to answer in the second collection of his *Fragmente zur Deutschen Literatur* (1767). In the introduction to this collection, Herder points out that genius cannot be roused by analysing 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 of fragments, it becomes quite clear that Herder associates genius with the transgression of rules and principles rather than with their erection:

Wenn...das Genie hervorbricht: so ists rasend, reißt alles nieder und schreckt Gelehrte und Ungelehrte...⁹¹

...when genius breaks loose it is frenzied with rage, tears everything down, and terrifies the learned and the ignorant...

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 is effectively asking for nothing less than a complete renewal of German language and culture, a renewal which would arrest the historical inertia of poetic decline outlined in his *Treatise on the 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, a poetry which could at once by-pass 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,

⁹⁰ Herder, *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode Werke* (Klassiker) Band I 85-86. Trans. Menze 41.

⁹¹ Herder, *Fragmente zur deutschen Literatur Werke* (Hanser) Band I 585. Trans. Menze 209.

Herder's proposed return to a poetics of nature may have led only to more sophisticated forms of culture – forms which specialised 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 which might live up to Herder's ideal of the authentic German ode. A dispatch from the cultural researcher to his master is indicative of Herder's great influence upon the young Goethe:

Daß ich Ihnen geben kann, was Sie wünschen, und mehr als Sie vielleicht hoffen, macht mir eine Freude, deren Sie mich so wenig als eines wahren Enthusiasmus fähig glauben können, nach dem Bilde, das Sie sich einmal von mir haben machen müssen. Genug, ich habe noch aus Elsaß zwölf Lieder mitgebracht, die ich auf meinen Streifereien aus denen Kehlen der ältesten Mütterchens aufgehascht habe.⁹²

That I can give you what you wished for, and perhaps more than what you hoped for, gives me a happiness of which you could believe me of being capable as little as of true enthusiasm, in keeping with the image that you must once have had of me. Enough, I have collected twelve songs from Alsace, which I caught from the throats of the oldest mothers during my travels.

The fact that these songs ceased to be 'innocent' and 'natural' 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, gives the following assessment of the authenticity of Macpherson's 'translations':

The researches of modern Celtic scholars... have accorded Macpherson the place that in justice belongs to him, the place of a 'skillful artificer', who took a few scattered fragments of Irish – not distinctively Scottish – folk-songs as his foundation, and not only lengthened them into more elaborate and refined poems, but built up long epics, which, although accepted as genuine by a credulous age in a moment of blind enthusiasm, have not been able to withstand the scrutiny of the unprejudiced scholar.⁹³

⁹² Johann Wolfgang Goethe, 'An J.G. Herder,' Sept. 1771, letter 61 of *Johann Wolfgang Goethe: Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche* Band XVIII 162.

⁹³ Rudolf Tombo, *Ossian in Germany* (New York: AMS Press, 1966) 66-67.

Goethe was subject to the 'blind enthusiasm' with which Ossian was received in Germany, an enthusiasm which likewise infected Klopstock, Tieck and Novalis, among others. Keen to share his new interest with Herder, Goethe sent the latter an English edition of Ossian, along with some of his own translations of other Ossianic fragments, in 1771.⁹⁴ 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 which 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. Clarke puts it:

There was no Ossian, so one had to be invented. This invented Ossian was cut to measure out of the poetic presuppositions of an unpoetic age and affected everyone who desired to experience poetry. In Western European literary, political, and social history this desire was epoch-making, since from it developed not only a Romantic literature but also an ideal of the classless nation state, an organic conception of culture, and hence a foundation of the radical movements of the nineteenth century.⁹⁵

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 our understanding of the Daemonic? The answer to this question is that 'Ossian' was an artificially (which is to say, culturally) 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 Christianised 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 force which is a constant presence, immanently located in nature, and discernable as the efficient cause of all things natural.

⁹⁴ Herder's biographer, Robert T. Clarke, reports that Goethe sent Herder an English edition of Ossian in 1771. Goethe's translations of Ossian from Celtic into English can be found in letter 62 ('An Johann Gottfried Herder,' Sept. 1771) of Johann Wolfgang Goethe: Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche Band XVIII 163-167.

⁹⁵ Clarke, Herder: His Life and Thought 143.

In its implications for our understanding of Goethe's notion of the Daemonic, and for the next chapter of this study, Herder's literary adaptation of Pantheism is a far more crucial influence than the philosophical systems of Spinoza and Leibniz. This is because Herder transplanted Spinoza's natural, pantheistic conception of God into the realm of culture, and, more specifically, into German literary culture. As we saw earlier in this chapter, Herder insistently asked: 'What slumbers within the German?' 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 coloured by the decidedly *unnatural*, cultural construct of 'Ossian' did not matter. Far from organically approximating nature, this genius would become the cultural construct *par excellence*, a construct which managed to unify the disparate forces which 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 'Sensitivity' or *Empfindsamkeit*. All of these forces would find their expression in the character of Werther, a character who would have been inconceivable without Herder's influence upon the young Goethe.

The fact that the German national genius called for by Herder took its most fully realised form in a fictional character (Werther) rather than in a real person (Goethe) is no surprise, given that this genius was modelled after the artificial image of Ossian. Herder's desire for a German national genius to manifest itself in the 1770's is discussed by Michael Beddow in the following passage:

...in contemporary Germany [ie: Germany of the the 1760's and 1770's]...the chief critical topic was the absence of a native literary culture and the prospects of creating one. There was a consensus that something was seriously amiss in German cultural life and a general longing, sustained by underlying social and political aspirations, for a German national literature...Instead of a pedagogical programme, Herder offered a messianic hope, full of anxious expectation of the original genius who would have the strength of character and will to break through the stultifying bonds of an effete [Neo-Classical] tradition. And Herder found his cultural Messiah in Goethe.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Michael Beddow, 'Goethe on Genius', *Genius: The History of an Idea* 98-99. Brackets added.

Despite Herder's ardent desires, no human could have adequately answered his call for a complete renewal of German literary culture, not even Goethe. And Goethe's closest fictional approximation of this national genius – Werther – turned out to be a pathological failure, despite the unprecedented success of the novel in which he appeared.

It is not the intention of this study to examine the Daemonic as a force in Goethe's actual life – this would amount to literary biography. But the complex relationship between literature and life, a relationship that informs Goethe's works at every stage of his literary career, and which Goethe himself saw as being best expressed in the concept of the Daemonic which he outlines in Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, is nowhere more apparent than in *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*. The next chapter of this study will see Werther as the prototype of the daemonic individual – but an individual who differs crucially from the daemonically inspired characters of ancient Greece, Stoicism and Neo-Platonism in that he is not a god-intoxicated prophet or a mantic poet: rather, he is one of the earliest prototypes of the new, decidedly modern, daemonic individual – the individual in the grip of his own emotions and pathologies.

Nicholas Boyle speculates that it was the period of Goethe's life shortly before the composition of *Werther* which set the tone for his later literary career, a period in which the young writer was beginning to deal with problems which were his own, and those of his age, through the medium of literature. By this time, Boyle argues, literature had effectively displaced the primacy of religion in Goethe's inner life, and it is no coincidence that Boyle sees Herder as having been the chief cause of this displacement:

Herder's theory of the creative individual linked by language to his national culture was a powerful counter-model to the Lutheran pattern of individual election and salvation within the Church, and his rejection of all supernatural explanations of the origin of language... accorded well with Goethe's own suspicion that God and Nature, body and soul, were synonyms, rather than distinct and independent forces that occasionally interfered with each other's domains... The substitution of literature for religion as the medium of Goethe's self-understanding was achieved in 1770 and 1771 with remarkably little theoretical fuss... In later life Goethe laid particular weight on Herder's propagation of his own favourite modern authors, Swift, Sterne, and Goldsmith... The 'irony' which Goethe found particularly in Goldsmith and Sterne was essential to the most important lesson he believed they had to teach him: that it is possible to write works of literature which incorporate the author's own feelings and experiences, but which, taken as a whole, as a 'poetic world', express an 'attitude' which transcends such accidents of life and fortune. The theoretical formulation belongs of course to the later Goethe... [but] Goethe at 21 was coming to sense in the very process of literary representation a completely secularized manifestation of the autonomous and invulnerable self

on which Leibnizianism and Pietism equally focused their attention and one which might enable him both to share in the passions of his age and to stand reflectively aside from them.⁹⁷

The most important phrase in Boyle's discussion of Goethe's early development is: 'a completely secularized manifestation of the autonomous and invulnerable self'. This phrase is crucial because it isolates a key transition in Goethe's conception of the individual, while at the same time marking an important moment of secularisation or immanentisation in the history of the Daemonic. This is not to suggest that, at this early stage of his career, Goethe had *theorised* this new conception of the Daemonic, any more than he had theorised the new conception of the individual highlighted in Boyle's passage. This theorisation would come much later in poems like 'Mächtiges Überraschen' and 'Urworte. Orphisch', prose works like *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and other texts like Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe*. What had occurred was this. Via the influence of Herder and his philosophical precursors (namely, Spinoza and Leibniz) Goethe was able to renounce the traditional, Christian view of the soul, as an entity involved in a relationship with a God which is wholly separate from the world. Instead, through Spinoza's conception of God as a pantheistic force of nature, and through Leibniz's individualisation of this force in his concept of the monad, Goethe came to – and here Boyle's term is also crucial – 'suspect' that the self is through and through a *natural* self: a self which is required to give expression to the relationship – not between the soul and a divine, external God – but between the soul and a divinely infused, pantheistic conception of 'Nature'.

Goethe's view that this relationship could be most adequately consummated through the medium of literary language is largely attributable to the influence of Herder. It was Herder who showed Goethe that literature must give voice, not only to nature, but also to organic national cultures and idioms. In turn, as we have seen in this chapter, this view led Herder to propose a new model of the genius as the individual who mediates between the human and the natural, as opposed to the Neo-Platonic, Stoic and Hamannian notion of the genius as a spirit who bridges the gap between the secular world and an external or transcendent divinity.

As we saw in Part Three of this study, for Neo-Platonic and Stoic thinkers, the genius and the daemon were essentially one and the same: subjects, spirits or intermediaries who became inspired by, or infused with, the inherently rational external forces of the divine. But this would not continue to be the case. In the character of Werther, Goethe created a new, thoroughly secularised version of the daemonic genius as the individual who attempts to consummate the relationship between the human

⁹⁷ Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 100. Brackets added.

soul and the natural world. This soul, philosophically pre-figured in Leibniz's conception of the monad as a kind of individual force, would come to represent the striving of a secular, individual subjectivity. This striving would not be directed towards transcendent, other-worldly goals like Plato's forms. Rather, its aims would be thoroughly immanent objects of erotic intoxication, natural reverie, or artistic representation, and – in some cases – a combination of the three, a combination perhaps best represented in a constellation of terms which became crucial for the early Goethe, and which will function as theoretical touchstones for our next chapter: the related concepts of longing (in German *Verlangen, Sehnsucht*) and striving (*Streben*).

The notions of longing or striving are intimately linked with Goethe's understanding of subjectivity as a kind of individual, monadic force – an understanding which was still being developed in the early 1770's. Although this notion of subjectivity owed a great deal to Leibniz's concept of the 'rational soul' or monad, it also represents a crucial departure from the inherent 'orderliness' of Leibnizianism. As was suggested earlier in this chapter, Leibniz's philosophy did not account for the possibility that the individual forces of monads might sometimes come into conflict with his overarching 'principle of sufficient reason' or divine *logos*: a kind of universal, harmonising force presided over by God. The Leibnizian soul or monad is isolated or 'windowless', and its activities are, to some extent, preordained by this regulating divinity. But the monadic individual 'gone wrong', the tragic individual whose non-rational, subjective longings and strivings are wholly incompatible with external realities, and with divine law, would come to find its fullest expression in *Werther*. The character of Werther is one of Goethe's earliest, albeit *untheorised*, representations of the Daemonic. It is to this representation that we will turn in the following chapter.

5. Unlimited Subjectivity: The Daemonic in the Early Works of Goethe.

In Part One of this study, I suggested, following Wilhem Dilthey, that Goethe's early *Sturm und Drang* works can be seen to question the inherently 'rational' universe proposed by earlier philosophers like Spinoza and Leibniz. In *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung*, Dilthey observes that:

Goethe und die Romantik als ein Unzertrennliches halfen überall bei der Befreiung der dichterischen Phantasie von der Herrschaft des abstrakten Verstandes und des von den Kräften des Lebens isolierten guten Geschmacks.¹

Goethe and the Romantics were inseparably linked in their efforts to further the emancipation of the poetic imagination from the domination of abstract thought and 'good taste' which knew nothing of life.

A certain aspect of the 'abstract thought' or reason (*Verstand*) referred to by Dilthey was seen, in Part Four of our discussion, in the philosophy of Leibniz. In his *Monadology*, Leibniz describes the soul as an indwelling monad that strives for complete, unencumbered fulfillment and self-realisation. Within Leibniz's philosophical system, the relationships between these monads are seen to be regulated by a divine reason or *logos*, referred to as the 'principle of sufficient reason'.

This chapter will examine the way in which Goethe depicts the Leibnizian monadic subject in two of his early works: the poem 'Mahomets Gesang' and his first novel, *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*. In both of these texts, I will argue, we can find representations of Goethe's early, untheorised notion of the 'daemonic' subject as a 'Genius' which strives to unify itself with the pantheistic 'All' of God/Nature.

In parts Three and Four of this study I have endeavoured to show the historical conditions which gave rise to this notion of the daemonic genius, by outlining the way in which Plato's original notion of the Daemonic undergoes a historical process of secularisation or what I have previously termed 'immanentisation'. This secularisation is seen firstly in Aristotle's alternative to the Platonic *eidōs* – the notion of the *entelechy* as an indwelling essence or biological imprint – and secondly in the tendency to associate the daemon with the eminently human faculty of *nous* or reason, a tendency peculiar to the Stoic and Neo-Platonic inheritors of the Platonic philosophical tradition. In Part Four,

¹ Wilhelm Dilthey, 'Goethe und die dichterische Phantasie', *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* 111-112. Trans. Rodie, *Poetry and Experience* 235-236.

this process of secularisation was seen to have continued in the various discussions of genius which occurred in the first two thirds of the eighteenth century, particularly in Germany, France and England. It was this period, roughly between 1760 and the late 1780's, popularly referred to by Germanists as both the *Geniezeit* (Genius-period) and the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) period, which is seen to have had a decisive influence upon the young Goethe. Again, the most important feature of this period for the purposes of our discussion is that of secularisation. Particularly through the influence of Spinoza, and, to a lesser extent, Leibniz, the distinction between God or 'the divine' and the things of the world or 'nature' – a distinction crucial to both the Platonic and Christian traditions – began to be questioned. In fact, something like an inversion takes place during this period. Instead of being located beyond the world, as spirit, the divine begins to be seen as something located within the world, and particularly within the realm of nature. Accordingly, the Daemonic – as a kind of nexus or conduit between the secular and the divine – also undergoes a process of alteration, whereby it becomes increasingly associated with a particular concept of genius. Not the ancient, essentially mythological notion of genius as a faculty of inspiration flowing from external, divine sources, but rather a new, decidedly modern understanding of genius as the subjective ability to give poetic expression to divine forces which are immanently located in nature, including those forces or 'traces' of nature which manifest themselves within the secular individual.

In this chapter I will demonstrate the way in which this notion of the genius is depicted in both 'Mahomets Gesang' and in *Werther*. But while 'Mahomets Gesang' will be seen to depict the genius as a Leibnizian monadic subject which strives for unlimited expansion, fulfillment and self-realisation, Goethe's *Werther* will be characterised as a *counter-narrative* (in Plato's sense, a *mythos*, image or story) to Leibniz's philosophy. Accordingly, I will propose that in *Werther*, Goethe shows the limitations of the purely rational Leibnizian world-view by demonstrating the power of the sensitive, emotional, non-rational 'daemonic' subject to disrupt the inherent orderliness of the universe and its 'principle of sufficient reason'. It is in *Werther*, I will argue, that Goethe questions the notion that there can be a simple progression from *mythos* to *logos*, from the non-rational to the 'purely rational'. As part of this discussion, I will also suggest that Goethe's questioning of Rationalism can be seen to situate him, albeit rather ambiguously, within the movement known (in a broad European, as opposed to a specifically German, context) as Romanticism.

5.1. Excursus on Romanticism I.

Before we go on to explore Goethe's early notion of the Daemonic, it is necessary to address some questions of periodisation with regard to the aesthetic movement commonly known as 'Romanticism'. In the introduction to this study, I suggested that the Romantic period offers us one of the richest veins of artistic and philosophical material relating to the Daemonic in the history of Western culture. This suggestion is substantiated by a number of studies which focus upon the theme of the Daemonic in relation to the works of key figures in the history of both British and German Romanticism.² But in order for the term 'Romantic' to have any functional meaning within the limited context of this study, it is necessary to endow it with a degree of specificity – not so much in terms of the vexed issue of its exact periodisation, but rather with regard to both its thematic content and its role within the history of ideas. Such a task becomes particularly difficult when one seeks, as this study does, to speak about Romanticism in Western literature *per se*, as opposed to its manifestations within the confines of a particular national culture.

When one considers periodisation alone, the traditional approaches to Romanticism in German and English are often fundamentally at odds. The German period known as *Romantik* is comparatively short in time-span compared with its English counterpart. Among traditional Germanists, the consensus appears to be that *Romantik* begins near the end of the eighteenth century in Jena. In his classic study of the period, *Die romantische Schule* (1833), Heinrich Heine writes that Romanticism arose "während den letzten Jahren" ("during the last years") of the eighteenth century, "and Messers August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel presented themselves to us as its directors."³ The term *Frühromantik* (early Romantic) thus commonly refers to the brothers Schlegel, along with Friedrich Leopold von Hardenberg (Novalis) and less well known figures like Tieck and Wackenroder. Significantly, this more or less 'official' model of German literary history refuses to see the earlier *Sturm und Drang* movement and its key figures – namely Hamann, Herder, and the young Goethe – as having belonged to the *Zeit der Romantik*. Although Heine points out that Goethe's early works were

² See, for example: Stefan Zweig, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon: Hölderlin, Kleist, Nietzsche* (1928); J.B. Beer, *Coleridge the Visionary* (1959); Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (1964); Charles I. Patterson Jnr., *The Daemonic in the Poetry of John Keats* (1970); Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) and *Poetry and Repression* (1976).

³ Heinrich Heine, *Die romantische Schule* 180. Trans. Hermand and Holub, *The Romantic School and Other Essays* 16. Rudolph Haym's later work *Die romantische Schule* (1870), also confines the movement to the Jena Romantics: the Schlegels, Novalis and Tieck. Rudolph Haym, *Die romantische Schule: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Geistes* (1870; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961).

much admired by the Schlegels and other early Jena Romantics like Tieck, he is nevertheless seen as having stood at a critical distance from the German Romantic movement proper. Even Walter Benjamin, in his famous essay 'Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik' ('The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism') sees the core of German Romanticism, not in the early Goethe or Herder, but rather in the works of Friedrich Schlegel (particularly the *Athenaeum Fragments*, which appeared between 1798 and 1800) and Novalis.⁴ Standard German texts on Romanticism often go on to describe two further periods of Romanticism: the middle or 'high' phase of the *Heidelberger Romantik* including figures like Brentano, von Arnim, Görres and the brothers Grimm, and a late *Berliner* period characterised by writers like Fouqué, Chamisso, Eichendorff, Gentz, Adam Heinrich Müller, Savigny and E.T.A. Hoffmann, among others.⁵

The picture in Anglo-American criticism is very different. Most English speaking scholars of Romanticism would agree that the Romantic movement begins with figures like Blake (1757-1827), continuing through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in key writers like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, the Shelleys and Keats, before enjoying a second flowering in the United States, manifested chiefly in the works of Emerson, Thoreau and even Walt Whitman. Among American critics, Harold 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, into twentieth century American poets like Hart Crane and Wallace Stevens. Identifying the core of Romanticism in the literary *topos* of the quest-romance, Bloom argues that the *Odyssey* is the "first Romantic poem", a poem which is subsequently reworked *ad infinitum* in the Western tradition.⁶ Likewise in the field of French literature, critics like René Wellek have characterised nineteenth century figures like Hugo and Balzac as "Romantic".⁷ In fact, when used in English language criticism, and particularly when used by figures like Bloom who see Romanticism as a 'broad church', the term 'Romantic' often refers more to a kind of sensibility or mode of thinking, than to a finite period in literary history. Inevitably, the historical breadth of the 'Romantic' movement or

⁴ Walter Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik* *Gesammelte Schriften* Band I.1 14-15. Translated by David Lachterman, Howard Eiland and Ian Balfour, *The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism* *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume I 1913-1926* 118-119.

⁵ See, for example, *Erläuterungen zur Deutschen Literatur: Romantik* Kurt Böttcher Hg. (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1967) and J. G. Robertson *A History of German Literature* (London: William Blackwood, 1966).

⁶ Bloom outlines this view most clearly in *The Ringers in the Tower* (1971). For an example of Bloom's 'broad church' of Romanticism, see the introductory chapter to this volume: 'First and Last Romantics'.

⁷ See, for example, René Wellek, 'The Concept of Romanticism in Literary History', *Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1963) 170-176.

'Romanticism' depends upon how the term is defined, but it is not my intention to give an exhaustive list of such definitions here.⁸ Rather, I intend to pose two questions. Firstly, can the early works of Goethe be seen – in a broader European context – as 'Romantic' and if so, why? And secondly, 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 patterns of thinking were modified and secularised in modern European literature, it is useful to deploy a theory of Romanticism which uses secularisation 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 deletion 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.⁹

⁸ See Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). In Part I 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 centres 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): 229-253. Wellek, by contrast, argues for a holistic view of the Romantic movement as it manifested itself in Britain, France and Germany. For Wellek, Romantic literature is the "kind of literature produced after Neoclassicism". *Concepts of Criticism* 161. Recently, Rosemary Ashton has also argued for an essential unity between German and British Romanticism, while also pointing to the key role of Goethe's *Werther* in the genesis of European Romanticism. Rosemary Ashton, 'England and Germany', *A Companion to Romanticism* ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998) 495-504.

⁹ M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971) 13.

Abrams presents the reader with a complex model of history in which the Enlightenment's values of 'progress' and 'revolution' are problematised. Progress, Abrams argues, 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 secularisation. Rather, these modes of thought remain within individual and collective consciousness as a kind of cultural memory or palimpsest which is often subsequently altered and reformulated in the attempt to accommodate ancient ways of thinking to newer, increasingly secular, cultural mores. In *The Ringers in the Tower*, Harold Bloom speaks of Romanticism in a similar fashion: "The Gods", says Bloom, "are a fiction never obsolete enough to cease from menacing the probable world...there is no Romanticism without a return, in some form, of the Gods."¹⁰ Like Bloom, 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 Judaeo-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."¹¹

When characterised 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 secularising the religious patterns of thought or *mythoi* which have recurred throughout Western history. In this context, both 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* (1989). The term 'secularisation', according to Taylor, is "more a locus of questions than a source of explanations".¹² By this I take Taylor to mean that the project of secularisation 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': that is to say, he always maintains that, despite the forces of secularisation 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: that element – perhaps best embodied in Bacon's conception of *una scientia universalis* and in Leibniz's

¹⁰ Bloom, *The Ringers in the Tower* 5-6.

¹¹ Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* 68.

¹² Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989) 309.

notion of *mathesis universalis* – which holds that all phenomena can be accounted for in terms of universal rational principles or *logoi*.¹³ 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” (“unresolved remainder”) in human experience, a remainder which can only be named and approached through *mythoi* (images or narratives).¹⁴

Likewise, if it is to acknowledge Taylor’s contention that the project of secularisation is not susceptible of completion, Abrams’s definition of Romanticism would have to account for both a *pantheistic* and a *panentheistic* understanding of existence.¹⁵ On the one hand, the doctrine of Pantheism – which, as we saw in Part Four of our analysis, 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.¹⁶ The concept of Panentheism, by contrast, does not allow for a complete immanentisation or secularisation of the divine within the world. Instead, it argues that God cannot simply be identified with the world monistically: 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.¹⁷

In reading the works of Goethe in conjunction with M.H. Abrams’s broad definition of Romanticism, my intention is not completely to ignore traditional German literary-historical periodisations like the *Geniezeit* and the *Sturm und Drang* period. Thus, although we are more concerned here with conceptual genealogies than with exact dates and periodisations, it is nevertheless useful to point out

¹³ See: Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 10-13. Trans. John Cumming, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 4-7. Horkheimer and Adorno find in Bacon’s notion of *una scientia universalis* a world-view in which nature is understood to be something which can be “commanded” through the discovery of “the happy match between the mind of man and the nature of things.” Francis Bacon, ‘In Praise of Human Knowledge’, *The Works of Francis Bacon* ed. Basil Montague Volume I (London, 1825) 254. Quoted in Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 9-10. Trans. John Cumming, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 3-4.

¹⁴ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 437. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 401.

¹⁵ Abrams’s definition of Romanticism has also been criticised for other reasons. Anne K. Mellor has argued that Abrams’s definition does not account for the existence of Romantic irony. See Anne K. Mellor, *English Romantic Irony* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980). I will consider the existence of Romantic irony in Goethe’s poem ‘Mächtiges Überraschen’ in section 7.3. of Part Seven of this study. For an account of Mellor’s objection to Abrams’s definition, see McGann *The Romantic Ideology* 21-24. For his part, McGann observes that “although [Abrams] erects a comprehensive theory of Romanticism, it does not rest upon an investigation of Keats, or, more crucially, of Byron.” *The Romantic Ideology* 24. Brackets added. For our purposes, it is merely necessary to note that Abrams’s definition is required only to help us to elucidate the role which Goethe may have played in the Romantic movement.

¹⁶ Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Dictionary of Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 360.

¹⁷ Rahner, *Dictionary of Theology* 359-360.

that the *Sturm und Drang* period does at least partially coincide with the broader historical time-frame (roughly 1780 up until the mid-nineteenth century) referred to as 'Romantic' by Anglo-American scholars¹⁸, while at the same time not coinciding with the later and shorter period (roughly 1798 up until the late 1820's) known as the *Romantikzeit* in German literary scholarship.¹⁹ Nor do I wish to efface the many differences between the respective *Weltanschauungen* of Goethe and his younger German Romantic contemporaries like the Schlegels and Novalis, differences which arise partly as a result of Goethe's adoption of Classicism following his first journey to Italy in 1786. In this connection, we should not forget Goethe's objections to the productions of many of his Romantic contemporaries,²⁰ while also keeping in mind the ambiguous light in which many of these selfsame contemporaries viewed Goethe's works – in particular, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.²¹

¹⁸ Hans-G. Winter sees the *Sturm und Drang* period as beginning in the late 1760's and ending with Schiller's early dramas of the early to mid 1780's. Hans-G. Winter, 'Antiklassizismus: Sturm und Drang', *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur Band I.1 Geschichte der deutschen Literatur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* Viktor Zmegac Hg. (Königstein: Athenäum Verlag, 1978) 194-245. Gerhart Hoffmeister prefers to see the *Sturm und Drang* within the context of a broader period known as pre-Romanticism (*Vorromantik*), which begins with Macpherson's 'Ossian' poems in 1760. Gerhart Hoffmeister, *Deutsche und europäische Romantik* Zweite Auflage (Stuttgart: Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1990) 25-32. The editors of *Beyond Romanticism* (Stephen Copley and John Whale) see the Romantic period as coinciding with the dates 1780-1832. Stephen Copley and John Whale eds., *Beyond Romanticism* (London: Routledge, 1992). This is also the view of Andrew Sanders in his *Oxford History of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 333-398.

¹⁹ It is noteworthy, in this connection, that Heine was already able to publish a kind of history of the German Romantic period – *Die romantische Schule* – as early as 1833. McGann writes of Heine's study: "He [Heine] writes between 1833 and 1835 as an expatriate German Jew to a French intellectual public about a cultural phenomenon, German Romanticism, which is now historically concluded." *The Romantic Ideology* 33. Brackets added.

²⁰ Take, for example, the following passage from Goethe's *Maximen und Reflexionen*: "Das Romantische ist schon in seinen Abgrund verlaufen; das Gräßlichste der neuern Produktionen ist kaum noch gesunkener zu denken." ("What is Romantic has already lost its way in its own abyss; one can hardly imagine anything more horrible than its quite disgusting recent productions"). Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen HA Band XII* 487. Trans. Elizabeth Stopp in Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998) 132. Goethe's objections to the German Romantics are also alluded to by Heinrich Heine in the following passage: "... die Romantische Schule ... erlitt...in ihrem eigenen Tempel einen vernichtenden Einspruch, und zwar aus dem Munde eines jener Götter, die sie selbst dort aufgestellt. Nämlich Wolfgang Goethe, trat von seinem Postamente herab und sprach das Verdammnisurteil über die Herren Schlegel..." ("...the Romantic School ...suffered ... a catastrophic protest within its own temple, and that from the lips of one of the gods whom they themselves had enshrined there. It was Wolfgang Goethe who stepped down from his pedestal and pronounced judgement on the Messers Schlegel..."). Heine, *Die romantische Schule Werke Band IV* 192. Trans. Hermand and Holub, *The Romantic School* 29.

²¹ An example of what Heine sees as the "ambiguous role" (*Romantic School* 29) 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." ("The philosophy and moral of the novel are Romantic.") Novalis, 'Aus dem Allgemeinen Brouillon 1798-1799', *Werke Gerhard Schulz* Hg. (München: C.H. Beck, 1981) 469. Later, however, Novalis sees Goethe's novel as: "im Grunde ein fatales und albernes Buch – so präntiös und preziös – undichterisch im höchsten Grade...poetische Maschinerie." ("at bottom an embarrassing and stupid book – so pretentious and precious – unpoetic in the highest degree...poetic machinery"). Novalis, 'Fragmente und Studien 1799-1800', *Werke* 545. In his essay on *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre in Goethe und seine Zeit*, Georg Lukács argues that the novel was actually written as a polemic designed to achieve an "Überwindung der unfruchtbaren Romantik" ("overcoming of sterile Romanticism"). Accordingly, Lukács sees Novalis as being the only figure within the circle of Jena Romanticism to understand this polemic, hence his (Novalis's) later, negative reaction toward the novel. Georg Lukács, 'Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre', *Goethe und seine Zeit* (Bern: A. Francke Verlag, 1947) 38-39. Translated by Robert Anchor in Lukács, *Goethe and his Age* (London: Merlin Press, 1968) 58-59.

By the same token, however, we should also not pass over the affinities and similarities between Romantics like the brothers Schlegel, and Goethe: especially the young Goethe who, apart from his lyrics, also composed works like *Götz von Berlichingen*, *Werther* and *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. As Walter Kaufmann observes, in his essay 'Goethe Versus Romanticism':

The early Romantics – Novalis, Tieck and the Schlegels...took their cue from some of Goethe's non-classical works: *Götz* and *Werther*...They began by paying extravagant homage to some of Goethe's works, notably *Meister* [ie: *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*], and by opposing the hopelessly shallow version of the enlightenment which was then propagated in Germany by Nicolai.²²

More recently, Hans Blumenberg has argued along similar lines that the elderly Goethe's rejection of his younger Romantic contemporaries also amounted to a refusal on his behalf to recognise similarities between their world-views and the attitudes which he himself had adopted during the 1770's.

Blumenberg writes:

Es ist merkwürdig, wie wenig Goethe im Alter bemerkt hat, daß das von ihm verächtlich betrachtete Treiben der Romantik um ihn herum doch so sehr dem ähnlich war, was er selbst in der Genieperiode getrieben und ausgebreitet hatte.²³

It is curious, how little Goethe noticed in his old age, that the activities of the Romantics, which he viewed with contempt, were in fact very similar to what he himself undertook and extended during the Genius-period.

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 immanentist tendencies to which he alludes in his definition are already present in the epoch referred to by Blumenberg in the above passage as the *Genieperiode*.²⁴ In fact, when we look back at

²² Walter Kaufmann, 'Goethe Versus Romanticism', *From Shakespeare to Existentialism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959) 77-78. Brackets added. Kaufmann's view is supported by Nicholas Boyle in Volume I of *Goethe: The Poet and Age*. Boyle writes, on page ix, that: "Goethe was not just a poet – for the whole Romantic generation, in Germany, England and even France, he was *the* poet, and through his influence on that generation he affected all subsequent notions of what poets are and what poetry does." See also Ernst Behler's discussion of the importance of *Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* for the Schlegels, Novalis and Tieck. Ernst Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 165-180. Most recently, David E. Wellbery has proposed, in *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (1996), that one of the key origins of the Romantic movement exists in Goethe's early lyric poetry. See, in particular, pages 7-27.

²³ Hans Blumenberg, *Goethe zum Beispiel* 219.

²⁴ Abrams in fact points out, in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, that there is 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'

the different figures who dominated this *Genieperiode* and 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 secularisation. 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 'unresolved remainder' – in the life of Socrates. But at the same time, 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 not to give his or herself up to moments of divine intoxication, but rather to harness the natural, divine energies within the self through the deployment of an eminently rational and human faculty – the faculty of language.

The decisive influence in this process of immanentisation 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 and applied to Goethe's early involvement with Hamann and Herder, and continuing into Goethe's early lyrics 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 programme developed by Herder and communicated to Goethe in the early 1770's, a programme that exerted an enormous influence upon Goethe's early artistic productions, and a programme which, as we shall see in parts Six and Seven of our analysis, the later Goethe attempted to develop, refine and refashion in his *Zeit der Klassik*. Thus, while keeping in mind Abrams's broad definition of European Romanticism, I am in agreement with René Wellek when he writes that:

..it is impossible to accept the common German view that Romanticism is the creation of the Schlegels, Tieck, Novalis, and Wackenroder. If one looks at the history of German literature between the date of Klopstock's *Messiah* (1748) and the death of Goethe, one can hardly deny

period of German Romanticism. See in particular, pages 88-94. In this connection, Lawrence Lipking makes the important point that Abrams's definition of Romanticism is more concerned with questions of influence and genealogy, than it is with exact dates or periods. In particular, Lipking sees Abrams's importance in his willingness to see mid to late eighteenth century figures as being crucial to the development of Romanticism. See Lawrence Lipking, 'The Genie in the Lamp: M.H. Abrams and the Motives of Literary History', *High Romantic Argument: Essays for M.H. Abrams* ed. Lawrence Lipking (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981) 128-148.

the unity and coherence of the whole movement which, in European terms, would have to be called 'romantic'.²⁵

Wellek goes on to isolate 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."²⁶ The last of these features appears to concur with Abrams's understanding of Romanticism as a movement that sought to preserve religious *mythoi* by humanising and secularising 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 to us in that it questions two fundamental assumptions that characterise the more cursory treatments of the Romantic period. Firstly, the view that Romanticism is a reactionary opponent or irrational 'opposite' of the Enlightenment, and secondly, 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 – a view championed by Isaiah Berlin, among others – equates Romanticism with anti-Rationalism, and perhaps even with the emergence of reactionary politics.²⁷ The Romantics, such a view argues, represented an attempt to subvert the Enlightenment and return to the religious obscurantism of the Middle Ages and the chivalric romance. Worse still, this view holds, Romantics like Rousseau advocated a kind of cultural regression through their valorisation of 'primitive' or 'natural' ways of life. But the Rousseau who composed the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality among Men* knew that we could not return to natural innocence just as surely as the Plato of the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* realised that there could be no absolute reunion with the forms. The Romantics, perhaps more than any other movement, were acutely aware that humankind cannot return

²⁵ René Wellek, 'The Concept of Romanticism', *Concepts of Criticism* 161. More recently, Behler also observes that "Outside of Germany, the antagonism between Jena, the seat of the Romantics, and Weimar, the residence of Goethe and Schiller, appears so minor as to virtually disappear, the name 'romantic' emerging as a common denominator for both groups." Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory* 2.

²⁶ Wellek, 'The Concept of Romanticism', *Concepts of Criticism* 161. McGann observes that Wellek has "produced the most influential and holistic view [of Romanticism] in our period". *The Romantic Ideology* 27. Brackets added. Marc Redfield also suggests that "institutional history awards the victory to Wellek" with regard to the question of defining Romanticism. Marc Redfield, 'Romanticism, *Bildung*, and the Literary Absolute', *Lessons of Romanticism* ed. Thomas Pfau and Robert F. Gleckner (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). 41.

²⁷ See for example, Berlin's summary of Hamann's influence on page 134 of *Part Four* of this study. See also Berlin's discussion of Romanticism as 'The Counter Enlightenment' in *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* 1-21. Berlin also reiterates this view in *The Roots of Romanticism* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999). See, in particular, Chapter 2 'The First Attack on the Enlightenment'.

to a state of nature. The split between human consciousness and the natural world, a split which is at the centre of, and inspires, much Romantic literature and philosophy, could not be overcome 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*.

In Part Two of this study, we encountered one of the earliest examples of the Daemonic in the thought of Empedocles. The daemon, in Empedocles's *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 Classical, Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy. 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: namely, 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 reapproximated in poetry and song, through mankind's rediscovery of nature, or the natural 'voice', within the self. It is this secularised sense of the Daemonic which this chapter will seek to uncover in Goethe's early works, beginning with 'Mahomets Gesang' and continuing into *Werther*.

But the task of returning to nature via culture (that is to say, via 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 recognise 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. We cannot go back to a preconscious, prelinguistic state of nature precisely because we are human – because we speak and think abstractly. What we can do is conceive of the positive aspects of nature as a *telos* towards which humankind 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 or panentheistic 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, Dionysiac celebration of nature as the mystical, chthonic goal of all art: rather, it urges us to recognise nature, and the natural aspects of ourselves, 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" by explicitly differentiating it from the Plotinian (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.²⁸

The Romantic return to nature does not necessarily involve a surrender of human rationality (*logos*) 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 which 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 nowhere more clearly expressed than in Schiller's famous essay 'Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung' ('On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry'), published in 1795. Schiller asks:

...Was hätte ...eine unscheinbare Blume, eine Quelle, ein bemooster Stein, das Gezwitzcher der Vögel, das Summen der Bienen, u. s. w. 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.²⁹

²⁸ M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* 184.

²⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung*, ed. William F. Mainland (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957) 2. Translated by Julius A. Elias in Friedrich Schiller, *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry, On the Sublime* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966) 84-5.

...what could a modest flower, a stream, a mossy stone, the chirping of birds, the humming of bees, etc., possess in themselves so pleasing to us? What could give them a claim even upon our love? It is not these objects, it is an idea represented by them which we love in them. We love in them the tacitly creative life, the serene spontaneity of their activity, existence in accordance with their own laws, the inner necessity, the eternal unity with themselves. They are what we were; they are what we should once again become. We were nature just as they, and our culture, by means of reason and freedom, should lead us back to nature.

A corollary of this process outlined by Schiller is that the concept of the human is also *naturalised* – although we are not necessarily identical with, or indistinguishable from, nature, we nevertheless emanate from and dwell within the natural world. Nature is thus within us and constitutes us, even though our consciousness, the very precondition of us even conceiving of a concept called 'nature', in some way separates or differentiates us from our natural surroundings.

Romanticism does not inexorably descend into irrationalism as long as it recognises boundaries and limits: in particular, the boundary which divides human consciousness from the external world and which therefore constitutes the very ground of human subjectivity – the ego or self. Indeed, as Jerome J. McGann has shown in his book *The Romantic Ideology* (1983), Romantic poetry is sometimes capable of mounting a critique of the unrestrained or unlimited mode of subjectivity which lies at its core. McGann writes:

Romantic poetry incorporates Romantic Ideology as a drama of the contradictions which are inherent to that ideology. In this respect Romantic poetry occupies an implicit – sometimes even an explicit – critical position toward its subject matter.³⁰

When specifically applied to Goethe (a figure ignored by McGann in his book, which, apart from some discussion of Heine, deals almost exclusively with British Romanticism) these statements require a good deal of argument and elucidation. In this connection, parts Five, Six and Seven of this study will attempt to demonstrate that Goethe, and Goethe's *Werther* in particular, can be seen to offer a simultaneous depiction and critique of the model of unlimited subjective longing which 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'.³¹ Here we need to draw attention to the logical connection between Abrams's broad definition of Romanticism as

³⁰ McGann, *The Romantic Ideology* 2.

³¹ Paul De Man, 'The Rhetoric of Temporality', *Blindness and Insight* (1971; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) 198.

the secularisation of religious ideas, and De Man's later and more specific suggestion that Romanticism (in both Germany and Britain) may constitute a 'subjective idealism'. In his famous essay, 'The Rhetoric of Temporality' De Man observes that in Romantic poetry, the relationship between subject and object referred to by Abrams is often:

...superseded by an intersubjective, interpersonal relationship that, in the last analysis, is a relationship of the subject toward itself...[in which] the priority...[passes]... from the outside world entirely within the subject, and we end up with something that resembles radical idealism.³²

As will become apparent in this chapter, following our discussion of *Werther*, the secularisation of religious ideas pointed to by Abrams led to a situation in which the Romantic subject – often understood as 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 divine forces of nature which exist within the self. The contention of this chapter is that Goethe's early lyrics like 'Mahomets Gesang' and 'Prometheus' depict the notion of the radical, unlimited and unbounded subject alluded to by De Man,³³ while *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 which 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 or *logos*. 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 so-called 'Classicism'.

A typical example of this view occurs in Hegel's *Aesthetics*, in which the author endeavours to outline the characteristic features of Classical and Romantic art. Hegel begins his discussion of art in general with the following premise: "the task of art is to represent the idea to direct perception in a sensuous shape".³⁴ Art, argues Hegel, functions as a kind of container which holds (renders formal) the idea,

³² De Man, 'The Rhetoric of Temporality' 196. Brackets added.

³³ De Man also discusses this notion of the unlimited subject, in *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism*, as the 'delusion' of 'Romantic individualism' which valorises "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: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) 6.

³⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* trans. Bernard Bosanquet (London: Penguin, 1993) 78.

with a greater or lesser degree of success. Classical art represents the perfect unity of the idea and its form, it is "the free and adequate embodiment of the idea in the shape that, according to its conception, is peculiarly appropriate to the idea itself."³⁵ Thus, Hegel argues that Classical art is the art of form and of limits, and this is due to the fact that the Greek gods themselves were highly formal and objective in their mode of representation as exalted versions of the human. 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 which Hegel calls 'absolute inwardness', it must always exceed any completed, sensuous representation. This is due to the fact that subjective reflection is an infinite and therefore unrepresentable process – it is beyond shape, color or tone. Thus, writes Hegel, Romantic art:

...withdraws itself from any adequate union with the external element, inasmuch as it can seek and achieve its true reality and revelation nowhere but in itself.³⁶

For Hegel, Romantic art retreats into the realm of the idea, of inwardness, whereas Classical art concerns itself primarily with external and objective forms. This distinction occurs elsewhere in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century aesthetics, most notably in Schiller's essay 'Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung', in which the 'Naïve' is something like the 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" ("Every true genius must be naïve, or it is not genius").³⁷

So who are these naïve poets? Schiller 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 celebrates nature as an abstract idea, and longs for it as for a lost mother. The sentimental poet is characteristically *elegiac*. He composes elegies

³⁵ Hegel, *Aesthetics* 84.

³⁶ Hegel, *Aesthetics* 88.

³⁷ Schiller, *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung* 10. Trans. Elias, *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry, On the Sublime* 96.

about nature which, for the very reason that they conceptualise 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 like “der Empfindung des Kranken für die Gesundheit” (“the feeling of an invalid for health”),³⁸ says Schiller, and later in this chapter we will meet his apotheosis in the figure of Werther – the sentimental individual *par excellence*.

But now we must ask to what extent the image of ‘the Ancients’ propagated by both Schiller and, to lesser extent, Hegel, is accurate. Did Classical culture always manifest an absolute unity between form and content? Or did, as I suspect is the case, 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 we need to examine what the term ‘Classical’ actually meant in the eighteenth century, as it clearly did not simply refer to the culture of Ancient Greece. To a large extent, ‘Classicism’ also referred to French Neo-Classicism, a movement which valorised the aesthetics of figures like Aristotle and Quintilian and Longinus, among others, and which sought to formalise and codify art in a series of classically derived aesthetic norms. The emphasis in Neo-Classicism was more on Aristotelean sources than on the works of Plato. Works like Aristotle’s *Poetics*, which neatly describe and categorise certain key aspects of drama, and the effects of drama upon audiences, were the order of the day. The predominant literary credo was also the Aristotelean concept of mimesis: that is to say, the notion that art works should adequately 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, among others.³⁹

In his recent study of Hellenism in modernity, David S. Ferris contends that eighteenth century Hellenism and eighteenth century Classicism have “written the history of a promise and not a history of Greece.”⁴⁰ By this Ferris means that the eighteenth century image of Classical culture propagated by the likes of Hegel – a culture which is purely formal, sensuous, clear and complete, and a culture in which a perfect unity is achieved between artistic form and content – is, at least in part, an idealisation 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.

³⁸ Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* 17. Trans. Elias, *Naive and Sentimental Poetry, On the Sublime* 105.

³⁹ See Robert L. Montgomery ‘Neoclassical Poetics’, *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* 825-831.

⁴⁰ David S. Ferris, *Silent Urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, Modernity* (Stanford CA.: Stanford University Press, 2000) 2.

In fact, for Plato any artwork necessarily falls short of embodying the absolute form of the *eidōs*. The artwork, at third remove from the realm of the *eidē* or forms, is forever less than complete, partial and distorted. This is due to the fact that, like Hegel's absolute Idea, the *eidē* 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 *eidē*, a unity distantly remembered by way of *anamnesis* – the recollection of divine memory. 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 secularised reinterpretation of ancient religious myths, the Romantic longs for an immanent alternative to the Platonic *eidōs* – an alternative which manifests itself as a pantheistic or panentheistic, culturally constructed idea of 'nature'.

The fact that there is an affinity between the Classical and Romantic world-views is confirmed by the phenomenon popularly known as Romantic Hellenism. This phenomenon is perhaps more obviously present in British 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 Classicism, particularly with reference to the works of Goethe and Schiller. For now it is merely necessary to point out that key Romantic works like Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, Keats's *Hyperion* and Hölderlin's *Hyperion* are all significant, albeit secularised, reworkings of Ancient Greek myths, both of which demonstrate that a preoccupation with Ancient Greek myths and motifs in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century poetry does not necessarily amount to a complete adoption of Neo-Classical aesthetics. Arguing in this vein, René Wellek comments that:

If [the] view that a large part of Hellenism is Romantic is justified, it will be possible to minimize the excessive stress the Germans have traditionally put on the supposed conflict between their 'classicism' and 'romanticism'.⁴¹

It is not my intention to resolve this enormous issue in this study. 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*,

⁴¹ Wellek, 'The Concept of Romanticism', *Concepts of Criticism* 165. Brackets added.

and that this continuity presents itself quite clearly to us when we view 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 will arise: Was there a sense in which the Daemonic permeated Goethe's earliest works – works like *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* and early lyrics like 'Mahomets Gesang' – before Goethe himself had begun to consciously speculate upon its influence and effects? Or, more specifically, was the young Goethe an exponent of the Daemonic before he had actually formulated his own conception of the term in later *Zeit der Klassik* works like 'Mächtiges Überraschen', 'Urworte. Orphisch', *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, and Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe*? As we have seen in Part One of our analysis, one possible answer to this question is offered by Benno von Wiese in his essay 'Das Dämonische und seine Gegenkräfte in der Tragödie Goethes', in which he suggests that the Daemonic is something *experienced* by the early Goethe of the *Sturm und Drang* period, and then subsequently *theorised* by the later Goethe in his *Zeit der Klassik*.⁴²

Wiese's analysis suggests that the Daemonic is a subject with which Goethe engages most intensely, if not unconsciously, in his youth. This is arguably true not only of Goethe in his early poetry and in *Werther*, but also of later interpreters of Goethe's tradition like Walter Benjamin.⁴³ At this point, then, in preparation for our discussion of the early Goethe, it is necessary to address a theme which we have already encountered in the works of Plato, and which will come to the fore in our present consideration of 'Youth': namely, the concept of 'longing' and the constellation of German terms which are attached to it in Goethe's writings: *Verlangen*, *Sehnsucht*, *Streben*.

⁴² Wiese outlines his historical formulation of the Daemonic in Goethe in the following passage, also quoted in Part One: "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." ("There is no doubt that the young Goethe was more emotionally involved with the Daemonic than the old, who retrospectively understood it more and more as a secret of the universe. In Goethe's youth the Daemonic penetrated the dithyrambic experience of the genius and his presentiments regarding the whole world. It then blends with an awareness of an inexorable and elemental fate, which leads the chosen one into its merciful but also deadly path. The word certainly belongs completely in the sphere of the old Goethe, just as surely as the young Goethe experienced the extraordinariness, effusiveness and individuality of human existence as daemonic"). Benno von Wiese, 'Das Dämonische und seine Gegenkräfte in der Tragödie Goethes', *Die Deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel* 81.

⁴³ As we shall see in Part Six, Benjamin considers the notion of the Daemonic in his early essay 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften' (1924).

5.2. Goethe's Early Romanticism, Youth, and the Concept of Longing.

In *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, with the benefit of hindsight and the circumspection of old age, Goethe makes the following comments with regard to the idea of 'Youth'. "Youth" ("Jugend") according to Goethe:

...darf man... nur gewähren lassen; nicht sehr lange haftet sie an falschen Maximen; das Leben reißt oder lockt sie bald davon wieder los....So viel 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.⁴⁴

... should be allowed its own course: it does not stick to false maxims very long; life soon tears or charms it away again...This much, however, is certain, that the undetermined, widely expanding feelings of youth and of uncultivated peoples are alone adapted to the sublime, which, if it is to be excited in us through external objects, formless, or moulded into incomprehensible forms, must surround us with a greatness to which we are not equal.

Of interest here is not the autobiographical verity of Goethe's testimony, nor are we concerned with the accuracy or inaccuracy of Goethe's characterisation of 'Youth'. Rather, I am interested in what might be called, to borrow the title of an early essay by Walter Benjamin, Goethe's 'Metaphysics of Youth': the way in which the term 'Youth' carries a certain rhetorical force in Goethe's *oeuvre*.⁴⁵ Evidently, Goethe associates 'Youth' not only with wildness, inconsistency and changeability, but also with imaginative and artistic power, expansiveness, a capacity to commune with nature or 'external objects', and an affinity with the sublime. In a later source, the *Gespräche* with Eckermann, Goethe discusses youth 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...im Bunde finden...⁴⁶

I did not write my love songs, or my *Werther*, a second time. That divine illumination, whence everything proceeds, we shall always find in connection with youth...

⁴⁴ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band IX 222-223. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume I 183-184.

⁴⁵ See Walter Benjamin, 'Metaphysik der Jugend', *Gesammelte Schriften* Band II.1. 91-104. Translated by Rodney Livingstone as 'The Metaphysics of Youth', *Selected Writings* Volume I 1913-1926 6-17.

⁴⁶ Eckermann, *Gespräche* 509. Translated by John Oxenford in *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann* (London: J.M. Dent, 1930) 246.

'Youth', then, is also associated by Goethe with divinely inspired productivity. In reply to Goethe's linkage between youth and productivity, Eckermann replies:

Sie scheinen...Produktivität zu nennen, was man sonst Genie nannte.⁴⁷

You appear...to call productiveness that which is usually called genius.

A few lines on, and in the same entry (dated Tuesday March 11 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 handle aus eigenem Antriebe. In solchen Fällen ist der Mensch oftmals als ein Werkzeug einer höheren Weltregierung zu betrachten, als ein würdig befundenes Gefäß zur Aufnahme eines göttlichen Einflusses.⁴⁸

No productiveness of the highest kind...no remarkable discovery, no great thought that bears fruit and has results, is in the power of anyone; such things are above earthly control. Man must consider them as an unexpected gift from above, as pure children of God which he must receive and venerate with joyful thanks. They are akin to the daemonic, which does with him what it pleases, and to which he unconsciously delivers himself whilst he believes he is acting from his own impulse. In such cases, man may often be considered an instrument in a higher government of the world – a vessel worthy to contain a divine influence.

In this entry of Eckermann's *Gespräche*, Goethe begins with a retrospective analysis of his own artistic creativity during the 1770's, an analysis which then becomes a meditation upon the ontology of artistic inspiration *per se*. As is often the case with Goethe, the results of this analysis are confusing because they draw on such a variety of possible sources. On the one hand, Goethe invokes the higher, mythological, external origin argument – the ancient, essentially Platonic conception of divine inspiration – which we saw Jochen Schmidt jettison in the previous chapter of this study. By the late 1760's and the time of Herder, Schmidt argues, the theory that artistic inspiration emanates from an external, divine source was well on the way to being surmounted by organic theories of genius:

⁴⁷ Eckermann, *Gespräche* 510. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 246.

⁴⁸ Eckermann, *Gespräche* 514. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 250.

theories which were both acceptable to enlightenment sensibilities, and which posited the natural individual as the sole source of his or her artistic productivity.

On the other hand, however, Goethe does use the term 'unconscious' (*bewußlos*), but this can scarcely be equated with the Freudian conception of the unconscious (*Das Unbewußte*) which we will encounter in Part Nine of this study. It seems, then, that even at this late stage in his life Goethe had not been able to completely free himself of 'religious' or 'higher-origin' explanations (*mythoi*) for his own preternatural creative power. This is an issue which will be reconsidered at a later stage of our analysis. For now, I wish merely to draw attention to the fact that, in a single entry of Eckermann's *Gespräche*, the subject of 'Youth' seems to trigger a chain of rhetorical associations which might be characterised as follows: 'Youth', 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 youth? Youth, Goethe suggests, is a stage of life characterised by longing (*Verlangen*,⁴⁹ *Sehnsucht*⁵⁰) and striving (*Streben*).⁵¹ It is this constellation of themes which comes through most strongly in the

⁴⁹ The notion of longing as *Verlangen* is central to Goethe's early works. Take, for example, the following passage from *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, in which Werther observes the relationship between a farmer and his widowed mistress: "Ich hab' in meinem Leben die dringende Begierde und das heiße, sehnliche Verlangen nicht in dieser Reinheit gesehen... Schele mich nicht, wenn ich dir sage, daß bei der Erinnerung dieser Unschuld und Wahrheit mir die innerste Seele glüht, und daß mich das Bild dieser Treue und Zärtlichkeit überall verfolgt, und daß ich, wie selbst davon entzündet, lechze und schinachte." ("Never in my life have I witnessed... intense desire and burning, ardent longing of such purity. Bear with me when I tell you that when I recall this innocence and truth my very soul is afire, and that the image of this devotion and tenderness follows me wherever I go, and that, as if kindled by it myself, I am all longing and languishing"). *HA* Band VI 19. Translated by Michael Hulse in: Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989) 35-36.

⁵⁰ Julius Zelter's *Goethe Handbuch* makes the following comments on Goethe's use of the term *Sehnsucht*: "Liebe und Vaterland, erscheint aber sonst für Goethe vielfach als Hauptmotiv wahren Sehns." ("But more than anything else, Love and Fatherland appear most frequently as the main motives for true longing/yearning [*Sehnsucht*]"). Julius Zelter Hg., *Goethe Handbuch* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1918) 318. Brackets added. One of the examples highlighted by Zelter is the following passage from Goethe's 'Campagne in Frankreich': "Sehnsucht und Befriedigung [muß] in einem pulsierenden Leben miteinander abwechseln, sich gegenseitig ergreifen und loslassen...." ("Yearning or longing [*Sehnsucht*] and satisfaction [must] interchange with one another in a pulsating life, must reciprocally seize and release one another..."). *HA* Band X 339. Brackets added. See also Goethe's poem/song 'Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt', *HA* Band VII 240, sung by Mignon and the Harper in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, and Goethe's use of the verb *sehnen* in the poem 'Ganymed' *HA* Band I 26.

⁵¹ Zelter's *Goethe Handbuch* uses Platonic terminology in its discussion of Goethe's use of the term *Streben*: "Es ist der Gedanke, daß die Erscheinung niemals der Idee adäquat ist und daß es der wahre Beruf der Menschheit ist, unablässig nach dem Ideal zu streben, selbst mit dem Gefühl, es nie erreichen zu können." ("It is the thought, that the appearance is never adequate to the Idea, and that the true task of humanity is continually to strive [*streben*] toward the Ideal, while at the same time feeling that it can never be reached"). Zelter, *Goethe Handbuch* Band III 381. In this connection, Zelter's reference is chiefly to the final act of *Faust II* in which an angel makes the following comment regarding the salvation of Faust: "Gerettet ist das edle Glied / Der Geisterwelt vom Bösen, / Wer immer strebend sich bemüht, / Den können wir erlösen." ("Saved is our spirit-peer, in peace, / Preserved from evil scheming: / For he whose strivings never cease / Is ours for his redeeming").

writings of the young Goethe. Take, for example, Goethe's letter to Salzmann, dated June 1771.

Speaking of his own feelings of dissatisfaction with life, Goethe writes:

Sind nicht die Träume deiner Kindheit alle erfüllt? ...Sind das nicht die Feengärten nach denen du dich sehntest? – Sie sinds, sie sinds! Ich fühl es lieber Freund, und fühle dass man um kein Haar glücklicher ist wenn man erlangt was man wünschte. Die Zugabe! die Zugabe! die uns das Schicksal zu jeder Glückseligkeit drein wiegt....⁵²

Are not all the dreams of your childhood fulfilled?... Are these not the enchanted gardens for which you yearned? – They are, they are! I know it, dear friend, and know that one is not a jot happier when one attains what one wanted. The little extra! the little extra! that fate dispenses to us with every happiness...

It is not my intention to indulge in biographical speculation as to the sources of Goethe's longing. What I do intend to do is outline a thematics, or – to be more precise – an aesthetics of longing which we can relate to the theme of the Daemonic, and then to see how such an aesthetics permeates those works by Goethe's which belong to both the *Sturm und Drang* and *Klassik* periods. We have already seen, in Part Two of this study, how the theme of longing relates to the Daemonic in the philosophy of Plato. Longing represents the poet/philosopher's desire to know the transcendent *eide* or forms, and this longing is expressed in two non-rational forms – through Eros, an erotics of knowledge through which the philosopher is led from the contemplation of physical beauty to beauty as *eidōs* or form, and through *poiesis* – the poetic theories outlined particularly in *Ion* and *Phaedrus*, which see the poet as a mantic intermediary between the material world and the realm of the *eide*.

But Platonic longing and Goethean longing are very far indeed from being the same thing. Goethe's attitude towards Plato is ambivalent. One of his most definitive late statements on Plato's philosophical methodology occurs in his *Materialien zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre*:

Plato verhält sich zu der Welt wie ein seliger Geist, dem es beliebt, einige Zeit auf ihr zu herbergen. Es ist ihm nicht sowohl darum zu tun, sie kennenzulernen, weil er sie schon voraussetzt, als ihr dasjenige, was er mitbringt und was ihr so not tut, freundlich mitzuteilen. Er dringt in die Tiefen, mehr um sie mit seinem Wesen auszufüllen, als um sie zu erforschen. Er bewegt sich nach der Höhe, mit Sehnsucht, seines Ursprungs wieder teilhaft zu werden.

Goethe, Faust II HA Band III 359. Translated by Phillip Wayne in Goethe, Faust Part Two (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959) 282.

⁵² Goethe, 'An Salzmann', Sesenheim 19. Juni 1771, Briefe 51 of Goethes Briefe Hamburger Ausgabe Karl Robert Mandelkow Hg. Band I (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1962) 122. Translated by Nicholas Boyle in Goethe: The Poet and the Age Volume I 102.

Alles, was er äußert, bezieht sich auf ein ewig Ganzes, Gutes, Wahres, Schönes, dessen Forderung er in jedem Busen aufzuregen strebt. Was er sich im einzelnen von irdischem Wissen zueignet, schmilzt, ja man kann sagen, verdampft in seiner Methode, in seinem Vortrag.⁵³

Plato behaves toward the world like a heavenly spirit, who loves, from time to time, to make it his home. His purpose is not so much to get to know the world, because he already presupposes it, but rather to disseminate in a friendly manner that which he brings to it and that of which it is in need. He penetrates into its depths, more to fill it with his own essence rather than to explore it. He moves upwards with yearning [*Sehnsucht*] to once again become part of its source. Everything that he expresses is related to an eternal totality, goodness, truth, beauty, whose demands he tries to incite in every breast. That which he particularly attributes to earthly knowledge melts, one could even say evaporates, in his method, in his dialogue.

Goethe portrays Plato as a philosopher of longing (*Sehnsucht*) who is suspended between heaven and earth. All of Plato's attempts to explain and explore earthly phenomena are, Goethe suggests, ultimately superceded by his metaphysical world-view, his prioritisation of, and yearning for, spirit and essence over matter. Plato builds his philosophy from the heavens down, like an obelisk, says Goethe, while Aristotle begins from the ground up, from empirical observations. Thus Goethe observes, in comments which proceed directly from his observations on Plato, Aristotle:

...steht zu der Welt wie ein Mann, ein baumeisterlicher. Er ist nun einmal hier und soll hier wirken und schaffen. Er erkundigt sich nach dem Boden, aber nicht weiter, als bis er Grund findet.⁵⁴

... stands toward the world like a man, a master builder. He is only here once, and should work and create here. He directs his inquiries to the soil, but no further than where he finds ground.

The strong affinities between Goethe's later conception of the Daemonic and the philosophy of Aristotle will become clear in Part Seven of this study, when we examine his meditation on the Aristotelean concept of the *entelechy* in the poem 'Urworte. Orphisch' (1817). But Goethe also has a Platonic side which manifests itself more readily in the earlier stages of his development. Goethe's early letters to Herder reveal that he was fascinated with the image of Socrates as it is presented in the

⁵³ Goethe, Materialen zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre HA Band XIV 53-54. Brackets added to English translation. Goethe began his research for the Materialen zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre in 1798, and continued working on this volume for the next twelve years. See Dorothea Kuhn's commentary on the genesis of the Materialen zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre HA Band XIV 270-272.

⁵⁴ Goethe, Materialen zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre HA Band XIV 54.

Symposium and in Hamann's *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten*.⁵⁵ Likewise, the following passage from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* also demonstrates the extent to which the young Goethe was influenced by Platonic and Neo-Platonic sources:

...da ich oft genug hatte sagen hören, jeder Mensch habe am Ende doch seine eigene Religion, so kam mir nichts natürlicher vor, als daß ich mir auch meine eigene bilden könne...Der neue Platonismus lag zum Grunde; das Hermetische, Mystische, Kabbalistische gab auch seinen Beitrag her, und so erbaute ich mir eine Welt, die seltsam genug aussah.⁵⁶

...as I had often enough heard that every man has his own religion at last, so nothing seemed more natural to me than that I should form mine too; and this I did with much satisfaction...Neo-Platonism lay at the foundation; the hermetical, the mystical, the cabalistic, also contributed their share; and thus I built for myself a world that looked strange enough.

Although this retrospective account of Goethe's early religious development was written some forty years after the events which it describes,⁵⁷ 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 of existence that we have encountered in the philosophy of Plato. According to this world-view, observes Goethe:

...die ganze Schöpfung nichts ist und nichts war, als ein Abfallen und Zurückkehren zum Ursprünglichen.⁵⁸

...the whole creation is nothing and was nothing but a falling from and returning to the original.

This pattern would, however, soon be displaced or at least secularised by what Goethe calls 'Natural Religion' – a belief which corresponds with Spinoza's identification of God and Nature. For a young man moving in enlightenment circles, such a belief had certain advantages, namely that:

⁵⁵ See, in particular, Goethe, 'An Herder', Frankfurt, Anfang 1772, Briefe 57 of Goethes Briefe Hamburger Ausgabe Band I 129-131; and also: Goethe, 'An Herder', Wetzlar, etwa 10. Juli 1772, Briefe 58 of Goethes Briefe Hamburger Ausgabe Band I 131-134.

⁵⁶ Goethe, Dichtung und Wahrheit HA Band IX 350. Trans. Oxenford, The Autobiography of Goethe Volume I 291.

⁵⁷ The above passage appears in the Eighth Book of Dichtung und Wahrheit, which Goethe began to write in 1811. See Lieselotte Blumenthal's and Erich Trunz's commentary, HA Band IX 705-706.

⁵⁸ Goethe, Dichtung und Wahrheit HA Band IX 353. Trans. Oxenford, The Autobiography of Goethe Volume I 292.

Die allgemeine, die natürliche Religion bedarf eigentlich keines Glaubens: denn die Überzeugung, daß ein großes, hervorbringendes, ordnendes und leitendes Wesen sich gleichsam hinter der Natur verberge, um sich uns faßlich zu machen, eine solche Überzeugung dringt sich einem jeden auf...⁵⁹

...natural religion, properly speaking, requires no faith; for the persuasion that a great producing, regulating, and conducting Being conceals himself, as it were, 'behind' Nature, to make himself comprehensible to us – such a conviction forces itself upon everyone...

Goethe's feeling for nature made it difficult for him to accommodate himself to Plato's dictum that natural phenomena are merely a shadow of higher, insubstantial forms, and Goethe himself notes that:

Weder die Schärfe des Aristoteles, noch die Fülle des Plato fruchteten bei mir im mindesten.⁶⁰

Neither the sagacity of Aristotle nor the richness of Plato produced the least fruit in me.

Goethe's 'religion' was a faith 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 which, 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.

In an essay which displays an acute understanding of how the Platonic concept of love-as-longing made its way into Romantic thought – an essay which we have already encountered in Part Two of this study – the young Georg Lukács accurately diagnoses what we might call Goethe's 'condition':

Love always leads somewhere beyond itself: 'it's object,' says Socrates, 'is to procreate and bring forth in beauty'. It was towards this high point that he had forced his life, and towards this that he seduced and deceived the youths of Athens. Through him, they ceased to be objects of love and became lovers; and the lover is more divine than the beloved, because his love, being a way towards self-perfection, must always remain unrequited. "They are," said Schiller of the objects of human longing, "what we once were; they are what we are to become once more." But the past – that which has been lost to us – has become a value because we create

⁵⁹ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit HA* Band IX 138. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume I 114.

⁶⁰ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit HA* Band IX 222. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume I 183.

what has been lost to us, a way and a goal, out of its never-having-existed; this is how longing rises above the goal which it has set itself, and this is how it ceases to be bound to its own goal.⁶¹

Lukács's observations serve a double function within the scope of this study. In Part Two, the above passage was used to elucidate the extent to which Platonic longing directs itself toward a *telos* which is both empty and formless: the *eide*, 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 for our present purposes is the way in which Lukács equates, or at least associates, Platonic anthropological longing with the arguments outlined in Schiller's essay 'Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung'. Schiller's 'objects of human longing' are fundamentally different, yet in some ways the same, as those of Platonic longing. As we saw earlier in this chapter, Schiller's longing is directed towards a kind of Golden Age in which there is no split or scission between the human and the natural. Dwelling unconsciously or preconsciously within nature, Schiller depicts the naïve poet as being fundamentally 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 we have a memory of a time in which the very precondition of human memory – human subjectivity, the differentiation of self from Other – is absent? This is an argument that is likewise applicable to Platonic *anamnesis*: How can we possibly recollect a time before we were born, before we even came into existence? The answer to this question is obviously that we cannot. What we can do is create this preconscious stage of absolute unity (with either nature or the *eide*) as a fiction which then becomes the *raison d'être* for all poetic and philosophical longing and striving. Thus, argues Lukács, the past becomes a goal 'out of its never-having-existed', and longing accordingly becomes limitless and unrequited precisely because its object is endowed with the openness and boundlessness of a fictional phantasm.

⁶¹ Georg Lukács, 'Longing and Form', Soul and Form 93-4.

5.3. Goethe's Early Understanding of Genius.

In Goethe's age this phantasm manifests itself in the cultural image of nature as a unified, surging, Ur-source of all poetic and philosophical creativity. Related to this conception is the idea of the daemonic genius who is able to harness this source through poetry, song and various other art-forms. In the previous chapter of this study we encountered this theory of genius in the work of Herder – a theory which Goethe perpetuates in both essays and poems written during the 1770's. The earliest of these works on genius is the essay 'Von deutscher Baukunst' ('On German Architecture') (1772), in which Goethe characterises genius in the following way:

Die Kunst ist lange bildend, eh' sie schön ist, und doch so wahre, große Kunst, ja oft wahrer und größer als die schöne selbst. Denn in dem Menschen ist eine bildende Natur, die gleich sich tätig beweist, wann seine Existenz gesichert ist. Sobald er nichts zu sorgen und zu fürchten hat, greift der Halbgott, wirksam in seiner Ruhe, umher nach Stoff, ihm seinen Geist einzuhauchen... Und laßt diese Bildnerei aus den willkürlichsten Formen bestehn, sie wird ohne Gestaltsverhältnis zusammenstimmen; denn eine Empfindung schuf sie zum charakteristischen Ganzen. Diese charakteristische Kunst ist nun die einzige wahre. Wenn sie aus inniger, einiger, eigner, selbstständiger Empfindung um sich wirkt, unbekümmert, ja unwissend alles Fremden, da mag sie aus rauher Wildheit oder aus gebildeter Empfindsamkeit geboren werden, sie ist ganz und lebendig... Je mehr sich die Seele erhebt zu dem Gefühl der Verhältnisse, die allein schön und von Ewigkeit sind, deren Hauptakkorde man beweisen, deren Geheimnisse man nur fühlen kann, in denen sich allein das Leben des gottgleichen Genius in seligen Melodien herumwälzt; je mehr diese Schönheit in das Wesen eines Geistes eindringt, daß sie mit ihm entstanden zu sein scheint, daß ihm nichts genügt als sie, daß er nichts aus sich wirkt als sie, desto glücklicher ist der Künstler, desto herrlicher ist er, desto tiefgebeugter stehen wir da und beten an den Gesalbten Gottes.⁶²

Art is creative long before it is beautiful. And yet, such art is true and great, perhaps even truer and greater than when it becomes beautiful. For in man there is a creative force which becomes active as soon as his existence is secure. When he is free from worry and fear, this demigod [*Halbgott*], restless in tranquility, begins to cast about for matter to inspire with his spirit... And even if this creative activity produces the most arbitrary shapes and designs, they will harmonize despite the apparent lack of proportion. For a single feeling created them as a characteristic whole. This characteristic art is in fact the only true art. If it springs from a sincere, unified, original, autonomous feeling, unconcerned, indeed unaware of anything extraneous, then it will be a living whole, whether born of coarse savagery or cultured sensitivity... The more the soul develops a feeling for proportion, which alone is beautiful and eternal, whose fundamental harmony we can prove but whose mysteries we can only feel, in which alone the life of the god-like genius dances to blissful melodies, and the more deeply this penetrates the mind so that both seem to have originated as one and the mind can be satisfied with nothing but beauty and produces nothing but beauty – then we bow before him and worship God's anointed one.

⁶² Goethe, 'Von deutscher Baukunst (1772)', *HA* Band XII 13-14. Translated by Ellen von Nardroff and Ernest H. von Nardroff, 'On German Architecture', *Goethe: Essays on Art and Literature Goethe's Collected Works Volume III* (New York: Suhrkamp, 1986) 8-9. Brackets added to English translation.

The key features of Goethe's notion of genius can be listed as follows: unity, originality, autonomy, sincerity, naturalness. The genius, having somehow mysteriously originated out of itself, from its own autonomous powers, rises like a demi-god in quest of beauty and proportion, the perfect, harmonising principles which emanate from God and which the gifted individual is able to intuit. It is here that we begin to approach the myth of genius which prevailed during the *Sturm und Drang*, a myth which is central to Goethe's early 'unlimited' or 'unbounded' Romanticism of limitless longing or striving. This myth is comprised in the notion of the daemonic genius: the 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, and who endows all of his artistic products with a kind of unity.

But there is a contradiction at work in this essentially Romantic 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*) of 1790 – a definition that has its roots in the early Romanticism of Goethe and Herder – genius is a kind of pure originality.⁶³ 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. This returns us, once again, to 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) which precedes it: rather, genius is pure self-creation and self-mimesis – it does not recognise any models or patterns which are anterior to itself. Thus, so the story goes, genius does not imitate nature, it *is* nature: a pure and unified expression of organic creative forces.

This then leads us to a secondary contradiction in the theory of genius. In order for the genius to express itself, to give voice to its creative forces, it must deploy a means of expression – language. But, as was demonstrated earlier in this chapter, it is precisely the capacity for language – or 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 which corresponds with genius – the longing for a unity with God/Nature – also represents the barrier which forever bars genius from its

⁶³ See Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, § 46-50. Kant writes: "Genie ist die angeborene Gemütsanlage (ingenium), durch welche die Natur der Kunst die Regel gibt." ("Genius is the in-born predisposition of the mind [*Gemütsanlage*] (ingenium) through which nature gives rules to art"). Immanuel Kant, *Werke in Sechs Bänden Band V Kritik der Urteilskraft und Schriften zur Naturphilosophie* 405-406. For a general discussion of Kant's notion of genius in comparison with earlier definitions of the term, see 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. Blamberger writes on page 66 that originality is the defining characteristic of genius for Kant.

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, its undoing.

In fact, the theory of genius constitutes itself through a kind of double denial. Firstly, the genius must deny its origin (its lineage or parentage) in order to endow itself with an originary, non-mimetic structure. This form of denial – a denial central to the Romantic theory of genius – has been well documented in Harold Bloom's famous work *The Anxiety of Influence*, in which the author presents a theory of poetry based upon misreading and denial. The young poet, says Bloom, comes into being (as a poet) at the precise moment in which he or she misreads – and therefore effectively denies – his or her own poetic origin.⁶⁴ The second denial posited by the theory of genius involves a refusal to accept linear succession or time, a refusal which Bloom has called 'Lying Against Time'.⁶⁵ Because the genius must originate out of itself, it must also inaugurate time at the moment of its birth: to accept a temporality external to itself would be tantamount to admitting a prior origin, which then leads to an admission of mimesis. Thus, in order to deny time, succession or any phase anterior to itself the genius invents an ahistorical category known as the moment (*Augenblick*).

The notion of the 'moment' or 'instant' recurs throughout Western philosophy from the Ancient Greeks into German Idealism.⁶⁶ One of its earliest and most famous sources occurs in Plato's *Parmenides* dialogue. Parmenides explains the moment or instant as follows:

The word instant would appear to mean that from which change in either direction takes place, or something of the kind. Change from a state of rest does not occur while the subject of it is still at rest, nor change from a state of motion while the subject is still moving. Between the motion and the rest there is located this paradoxical entity, the instant, which occupies no time whatever; into this and out of this the moving passes toward rest, and the resting toward movement.⁶⁷

The 'instant' is thus the intermediate point of transition which cannot be said to exist within linear time, precisely because an object cannot occupy two contrary states at once: an object cannot be

⁶⁴ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973).

⁶⁵ Harold Bloom, 'Lying Against Time: Gnosis, Poetry, Criticism', *Agon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) 52-71.

⁶⁶ See M. Theunissen's entry 'Augenblick' in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Band I 649-650. Theunissen traces the term from Plato's *Parmenides* into the work of Søren Kierkegaard.

⁶⁷ Plato, *Parmenides* trans. A.E. Taylor (London: Oxford University Press, 1934) 94-95.

simultaneously moving and at rest. In a similar way, when pushed to its logical conclusion, Goethe's early conception of genius also displays the contradictory logic of the instant. In order to exist, the genius must exist within history, while at the same time beginning history anew through an act of pure self-creation or self-origination.

The historical aspects of Goethe's early definition of genius are clearly present in poems like 'Wanderers Sturmlied', 'Prometheus' and 'Ganymed', all of which can be seen as early examples of Romantic Hellenism. 'Wanderers Sturmlied' (1772), with its references to Greek gods like Jupiter and Apollo, its valorisation 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) also concern themselves with God-like figures from Ancient Greek myths. Ganymede, "the most beautiful of mortal men", according to Homer,⁶⁸ was chosen as a cup-bearer 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 valorised the Ancient Greek notion of genius as a daemonic faculty – as a conduit between the secular and the divine – while at the same altering the nature of this selfsame daemonic faculty by reconceiving 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 Neo-Classicism.

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 irretrievably lost. There can be no going back to this naïve phase, a phase in which the human and God/Nature coalesced as one. Instead, we must reapproximate this phase in modernity, through the reinvigoration of genius. The past is therefore not lost but recreated in a present which, 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: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (1996), David E. Wellbery summarises the temporal/atemporal logic of Goethe's notion of genius most succinctly:

⁶⁸ See Homer, *The Iliad* xx.

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.⁶⁹

Before we go on to examine this conception of genius in one of Goethe's most famous early lyrics – 'Mahomets Gesang' (1772/3) – it is necessary to take stock of the many different aspects of his early Romanticism. To begin with, we saw that Goethe's early Romanticism displays a significant rhetorical investment in the idea of 'Youth'. In the *Sturm und Drang* period, Goethe endows the concept of 'Youth' with the following qualities: abundant artistic productivity, excessive desire, and the tendency to transgress limits. In short, 'Youth' represents a stage of life shot through with a sense of subjective longing or yearning (Goethe uses the terms *Verlangen*, *Sehnsucht*, *Streben*). On one level, this longing can be seen to exist within the tradition of Platonism, in the sense that it is a longing directed towards ideal images or love objects which exceed sensuous representation. But this longing also breaks with Platonism in that its goals are more secular than divine, or, more to the point, they are in fact secularised images of the divine. By the late eighteenth century, Plato's lost stage of unity with the divine is reconfigured in a more secular, sensuous understanding of the Golden Age as the site of an absolute coalescence or reciprocity between the human and the natural. Although this longing is purportedly directed towards goals which are purely immanent and this-worldly, it nevertheless retains an element of Platonic Idealism. This is due to the fact that Goethe's (and Spinoza's) divinely infused 'Nature' remains, despite its professed immanentism, an idea, a culturally constructed concept, as opposed to a strictly empirical reality. In turn this cultural concept of nature is then erected as the source and aim of artistic creativity, and the daemonic genius comes to be seen as the individual who, through sheer subjective, creative force, is able to mediate between the human sphere and nature's divine immanence. Situated within modernity, within a period which valorises nature as an abstract idea, the genius is presented with an impossible task. He must effectively 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 endeavour the genius can only fail, and in this way the limitless subjectivity which we find in Goethe's early Romanticism is forced to learn its limits, to understand that an absolute unity between the human and the natural, between the subjective and the objective, is neither possible nor desirable.

⁶⁹ David E. Wellbery, *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* 129.

But Goethe had not yet learnt this lesson by late 1772. It was a lesson which he would learn during and after the composition of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*.

5.4. 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 the commentary in the *Hamburger Ausgabe* of Goethe's *Werke* informs us, 'Mahomets Gesang' is a representation of the prophet's course, his trajectory, not his teaching.⁷⁰ Indeed, this is first and foremost a poem about 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.

Of interest is Goethe's choice of perspective for 'Mahomets Gesang'. Unlike his three other major poems on the subject of genius – 'Wanderers Sturmlied', 'Prometheus' and 'Ganymed' – the narrative voice of the poem does not occupy the subjective position of the poem's protagonist. Instead, Goethe presents us with a panoramic, objective 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, we nevertheless feel that its speaker experiences a strong sense of identification with the position of the protagonist.⁷¹ The poem begins by characteristically placing a positive value upon the notion of youth⁷²:

⁷⁰ "Das Gedicht selbst handelt nur von dem Strom. Das Wesen des religiösen Genius ist also dadurch gedeutet, daß seine Laufbahn – nicht seine Lehre – beschrieben ist." ("The poem itself deals only with the stream. The existence of the religious genius is thereby indicated, that is to say his life-trajectory – not his teachings – are described"). Erich Trunz, *HA* Band I 470.

⁷¹ A slightly altered 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.

⁷² 'Mahomets Gesang' appears on pages 42-44 of the *Hamburger Ausgabe* Band I. The English translation of the poem is by Christopher Middleton and appears in: *Goethe: Selected Poems* 22-26.

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.

See the mountain spring
 Flash gladdening
 Like a glance of stars;
 Higher than the clouds
 Kindly spirits
 Fuelled his youth
 In thickets twixt the crags.

Brisk as a young blade
 Out of cloud he dances
 Down to marble rocks
 And leaps again
 Skyward exaltant.

The youthful stream emerges 'out of cloud' from a mysterious, unseen origin. Apparently self-generating, we hear 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' ('Kindly spirits') which 'fuelled' or 'nourished' (*nährten*) the stream's youth exist within an ancient tradition of genius-discourse, a tradition which we saw earlier in this study in the myriad of guardian deities which 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 devoted to 'Enthusiasm' (*Enthousiasme*)⁷³ and can be traced back at least as far as Horace's *Odes*.⁷⁴

⁷³ Diderot, 'Enthousiasme', *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné Des Sciences, Des Arts Et Des Métiers* Volume V (1755; Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann, 1966) 719-722.

⁷⁴ In Ode V, 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: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963) 187.

The image of water represents absolute unity, fluid adaptability, potency (both artistic and sexual) and, of course, nature. The stream rushes happily and exultantly 'Durch die Gipfelgänge' ('Down passages that hang from peaks'), 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 recognise limits:

Doch ihn hält kein Schattental,
Keine Blumen,
Die ihm seine Knie' umschlingen,
Ihm mit Liebesaugen schmeicheln;
Nach der Ebne dringt sein Lauf,
Schlangenwandelnd.

Yet no valley of the shadows
Can contain him
And no flowers that clasp his knees,
Blandishing with looks of love;
To the lowland bursts his way,
A snake uncoiling.

For Plato the Daemonic operates as both an erotics and a poetics – by either of these means the mantic individual may attempt to gain knowledge of the transcendent and infinite *eide*. In Goethe, the non-rational modes of *Eros* and *poiesis* become almost indistinguishably fused in a form of longing which 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: 'Und nun schwillt er / Herrlicher' ('And now he swells more lordly still'). Sexuality and subjectivity have now become one, and in this context *Eros* functions as a metonym for nature. Just as Plato's Daemonic corresponds with the divine capacities within the self, so Goethe's Daemonic expresses itself through humankind's link with the pantheistic natural order, an order which expresses itself through biological imperatives, and, in particular, through the biological imperative of procreation.

But the natural order is also subject to death. As our protagonist continues its course, its fellow streams (*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 ew'gen Ozean,
 Der mit weitverbreit'ten 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!

Freshets nestle
 Flocking to his side. He comes
 Into the lowland, silver sparkling,
 And with him the lowland sparkles,
 And the lowland rivers call,
 Mountain freshets call exultant:
 Brother, take your brothers with you,
 With you to your ancient father,
 To the everlasting ocean,
 Who with open arms awaits us,
 Arms which, ah, open in vain
 To clasp us who are craving for him;
 Avid sand consumes us
 In the desert, sun overhead
 Will suck our blood, blocked by a hill
 To pools we shrink! Brother, take us,
 Take your lowland brothers with you,
 Take your brothers of the mountains,
 To your father take us all!

The imagery of the poem suggests that the power of death can be mitigated or perhaps even overcome by two different means: the erotic and the poetic. Through *Eros* we procreate and thus secure a

measure of immortality for our species. Although this process does not manifest itself literally within 'Mahomets Gesang', we nevertheless feel a sense of sexual urgency in the trajectory of the poem's protagonist/stream. When infused by the subject-stream the "lowlands" (*Ebne*) "sparkle" (*prangen*: literally, to be resplendent) as if they are renewed, reborn and revived by its liquid force.

Poiesis, if we follow 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 *Fragmente zur deutschen Literatur* – works which we investigated in Part Four of our analysis – the efforts of the poetic genius do not simply have ramifications for poetry. Rather, they serve to galvanise a broader sense of indigenous linguistic culture. Thus, as Nicholas Boyle observes, the fact the other *Bäche* (rivers) 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" – that collective enterprise being the birth of a national German poetry.⁷⁵ In 'Mahomets Gesang' this form of rebirth or procreation is embodied in the protagonist's act of naming the landscape, an act which 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.

Onward he rolls triumphant,
Naming countries, in his track
Towns and cities come to be.

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 Mohammed's act of creating a new religion for his people, and of distributing this new creed across the earth as a means to reconcile individuals to their position within the divine order. But beneath these religious themes there are other issues which have far more to do with Goethe, and particularly 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 which a much older Goethe would eventually unite – in Eckermann's *Gespräche* – under the

⁷⁵ Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 201.

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 Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the Daemonic seems: "...mit den notwendigen Elementen unsres Daseins willkürlich zu schalten" ("to sport at will with the necessary elements of our existence").⁷⁶

Late in his life, Goethe tended to theorise this confrontation in Aristotelean terms, by seeing the individual as akin to Aristotle's concept of the indwelling soul or *entelechy*. The *entelechy* – like the Leibnizian monad – is, according to Goethe, that element of the individual which determines his or her role within the grand scheme layed 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 (*Schicksal*). As Dietrich Mahnke observes in his study *Leibniz und Goethe: die Harmonie ihrer Weltansichten* (1924):

Goethes persönlicher Schicksalsdämon ist im Grunde nichts anderes als Leibnizens individuelles Gesetz, das die Eigenart jeder einzelnen Monade im Unterschied von jeder anderen bestimmt und aus dem die ganze Folge ihrer Lebenserscheinungen nach und nach mit Notwendigkeit hervorfießt, so daß jede individuelle Persönlichkeit sich allein aus sich selbst, aus ihrem inneren Wesen heraus, entwickelt, ohne durch äußere Gewalten von der ihr eigentümlichen Bahn abgelenkt werden zu können.⁷⁷

Goethe's personal daemon-of-fate is, at bottom, nothing other than Leibniz's individual law, which distinguishes every individual monad from other monads, and out of which necessarily flows the whole progression of its life-manifestations [*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.

While the monadic soul discussed by Mahnke may be apparently oblivious to external powers, its path may nevertheless be obstructed by the mythological forces of 'fate' (*Schicksal*) or God/Nature, which decree that all living things must die. This is the reality that presents itself to the smaller tributaries or *Bäche* which 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 professed 'Natural Religion' – the individual may be better able to reconcile itself to a divine order over which it can have little control, and perhaps 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 ew'gen Ozean' ('the everlasting ocean'), these smaller *Bäche* are forced to

⁷⁶ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band X 175. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume II 321.

⁷⁷ Mahnke, *Leibniz und Goethe* 16-17. Brackets added to English translation.

surrender their own discrete boundaries to a greater force. The individual is thus subsumed by the totality. This is 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 pressing importance to Goethe around the time of the Jacobi-led Spinoza controversy which began 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 briefly 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 defence of Spinoza, Goethe composed his *Studie nach Spinoza* (*Spinozan Study*) in 1785.⁷⁸ But Goethe's *Studie nach Spinoza* tended to avoid the issue of the individual's insignificance within the totality of God/Nature. As Boyle observes:

Goethe's Spinoza is, philosophically speaking... a markedly Leibnizian figure. In the crucial matter of the relation between individuals and the divine, between finite modes and infinite substance, Goethe still gives practical, and to a great extent theoretical, priority to individual existences, conceived as centres of energy just like Leibniz's monads.⁷⁹

Boyle argues – and in this regard he agrees with Dietrich Mahnke⁸⁰ – 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.

⁷⁸ See HA Band XIII 7-10. *Studie nach Spinoza* was not published until after Goethe's death.

⁷⁹ Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 384.

⁸⁰ Mahnke observes on page 14 of *Leibniz und Goethe* that Goethe preferred Leibniz's "individualistischen Metaphysik" ("individualistic metaphysics") to Spinoza's notion of a great totality or "Weltsubstanz" ("world-substance").

So he bears his brothers, bears
 His treasures and his children surging
 In a wave of joy tumultuous
 To their waiting father's heart.

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 'Father' or 'everlasting ocean'. In this way the *agon* which lies at the heart of 'Mahomets Gesang', the quest for artistic and religious individuation undertaken by the protagonist/stream, reaches a climax of renunciation.

'Mahomets Gesang' is often compared with another of Goethe's early lyrics: 'Prometheus' (1774). Both works can be seen as meditations by Goethe on the subject of genius – in fact this is the view taken by Erich Trunz in the *Hamburger Ausgabe* of Goethe's works:

Ebenso wie der 'Mahomets Gesang' hat dieses Gedicht ['Prometheus'] Monumentalität; nur eine einzige Gestalt, kraftgeschwellt, zornrohrend, ausblickend...Ist Prometheus in diesen Zügen der antike Halbgott, so ist er andererseits doch auch mythische Übersteigerung des Genies...⁸¹

Like 'Mahomets Gesang' this poem ['Prometheus'] has monumentality; only a single form, swollen with power, threateningly wrathful, outward-looking...If Prometheus is, in terms of these characteristics, the ancient demi-god, so is he, on the other hand, also a representation of the excessiveness of the mythical genius....

But unlike the stronger Prometheus, who defiantly declares to his God: "Ich dich ehren? Wofür?" ("I pay homage to you? For what?")... and, later in the poem, "Hier sitz ich, forme Menschen / Nach meinem Bilde, / Ein Geschlecht, das mir gleich sei" ("Here I sit, forming men / In my image, / A race to resemble me"),⁸² 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 "unendlichen Regression, die als Sehnsucht nach der 'Natur' in der Zeit lag" ("limitless regression which was characteristic of the longing for nature during this period").⁸³

⁸¹ Erich Trunz, *HA* Band I 472. Brackets added.

⁸² Goethe, 'Prometheus', *HA* Band I 44-46. Translated by Michael Hamburger *Goethe: Selected Poems* 26-27.

⁸³ Schmidt, *Geschichte des Geniegedankens* Band I 279.

Thus, the conclusion of 'Mahometers Gesang' does not depict what David Wellbery describes as a case of the genius returning "to – and as – the Father", a return which fulfills the myth of "auto-engenderment, of self-fathering".⁸⁴ 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 – not unlike, as we shall shortly see, Werther – wants the world to be his own projection, an emanation of his own excessive subjectivity.

⁸⁴ Wellbery, *The Specular Moment* 144.

5.5. *Werther*: The Genius as Daemonic.

In his famous essay on *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (*The Sorrows of Young 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...⁸⁵

Goethe...the poet, the genius, the true-hearted and sincere, but also unfaithful and – in the popular sense – unreliable vagabond of the feelings...the young daemon, who in "Faust" says of himself: "Am I not the fugitive? The out-caste? The daemon [literally, inhuman, *Unmensch*] without purpose and peace?" – A loveable daemon: handsome, talented, laden with spirit and life, fiery, sensitive, lively and melancholy, in short – crazy in a loveable way...

Mann's portrayal of Goethe, and the passage from *Faust Part I* with which he supplements it, both correspond with the 'official' Goethe-endorsed mythology which surrounds *Werther*. In this scenario, Goethe is seen as the fiery young *Stürmer und Dränger*: a figure who is compared to a "Wassersturz" ("waterfall" or "cataract") which "has stormed" ("brauste") "von Fels zu Felsen.../ Begierig wütend nach dem Abgrund zu" ("in greedy fury from rock to rock towards the abyss below").⁸⁶ 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 lyric. 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 exorcise himself of his overweening, transgressive and dangerously anti-social subjectivity. To use a formulation coined by Goethe's biographer, 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.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Thomas Mann, 'Goethe's Werther', *Schriften und Reden zur Literatur, Kunst und Philosophie* Band II Hans Bürglin Hg. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1968) 342. Brackets added to English translation.

⁸⁶ Goethe, *Faust I HA* Band III 107. Translated by Stuart Atkins, *Goethe. Faust I and II* ed. Stuart Atkins (Boston: Suhrkamp/Insel, 1984) 86.

⁸⁷ Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 167-168.

Goethe was thus, according to Mann, 'der junge Dämon' ('the young daemon') in that he embodied the notion of genius promoted by the cult of *Empfindsamkeit* 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 which is constitutive of modernity and which differentiates the poetry of eighteenth century Germany from the so-called naïve art of the 'Ancients'. This conception of the daemonic individual is aptly expressed in the following passage from Paul Fischer's book, *Goethes Altersweisheit*:

Der dämonische Mensch handelt unbewußt, ungewollt, nicht auf Grund von Erwägung und Entschluß, sondern wie die Natur, das Kind, der Wilde.⁸⁸

The daemonic human behaves unconsciously, unforced, not upon the grounds of consideration or decision, but rather like nature, like a child, like a savage.

In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Goethe leads us to believe that in writing *Werther* he simultaneously represented and overcame the aesthetic expectations of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, expectations which were impossible for any human being to satisfy and which consequently posed a threat to his (Goethe's) health:

...ich hatte mich durch diese Komposition, mehr als durch jede andere, aus einem stürmischen Elemente gerettet, auf dem ich durch eigne und fremde Schuld, durch zufällige und gewählte Lebensweise, durch Vorsatz und Übereilung, durch Hartnäckigkeit und Nachgeben auf die gewaltsamste Art hin und wider getrieben worden. Ich fühlte mich, wie nach einer Generalbeichte, wieder froh und frei, und zu einem neuen Leben berechtigt.⁸⁹

... by this composition, more than by any other, I had freed myself from that stormy element, upon which, through my own fault and that of others, through a mode of life both accidental and chosen, through design and thoughtless precipitation, through obstinacy and pliability, I had been driven about in the most violent manner. I felt, as if after a general confession, once more happy and free, and justified in beginning a new life.

⁸⁸ Paul Fischer, *Goethes Altersweisheit* 28.

⁸⁹ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band IX 588. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume II 167.

In a later source,⁹⁰ the *Gespräche* with Eckermann, this notion of writing-as-therapy is given a broader significance by Goethe in the conversation dated January 2 1824:

Die vielbesprochene Wertherzeit gehört, wenn man es näher betrachtet, freilich nicht dem Gange der Weltkultur an, sondern dem Lebensgange jedes einzelnen, der mit angeborenem freiem Natursinn sich in die beschränkenden Formen einer veralteten Welt finden und schicken lernen soll. Gehindertes Glück, gehemmte Tätigkeit, unbefriedigte Wünsche, sind nicht Gebrechen einer besonderen Zeit, sondern jedes einzelnen Menschen...⁹¹

On considering the much-talked-of Werther period, we discover that it belongs, not to the course of universal culture, but to the career of every individual who, with an innate and free instinct, must accommodate himself to the narrow limits of an antiquated world. Obstructed fortune, restrained activity, unfulfilled wishes, are the calamities not of any particular time but of every individual man...

The subject of *Werther* is thus, according to Goethe, quite close to the theme which would come to dominate the nineteenth century European novel: that of the individual versus 'society', and, in particular, 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 has, at least to some degree, been able to distance himself from the subject matter of *Werther*. The question remains as to whether we should, like Thomas Mann and others,⁹² continue to posit a similarity between Werther the character 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 only to mythologise, and thus to obscure, an appropriate understanding of the forces which contributed to the composition of this difficult novel. As Matthew Bell has commented:

The picture of an irrationalist *Sturm und Drang* is complemented by the biographical details of Goethe's frustrated love for Lotte Kestner and the rapid, emotionally driven composition of the novel. That Goethe appeared to have written *Werther* rapidly, and grounded it only on a brief account of Jerusalem's suicide and his own experience, confirms a familiar picture of an anti-rational, anti-scientific *Sturm und Drang*...⁹³

⁹⁰ The above passage from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* belongs to the Thirteenth Book of the volume, which was completed by Goethe in July 1813. See the notes on its composition in *HA* Band X 577.

⁹¹ Eckermann, *Gespräche* 413. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 34.

⁹² Erich Trunz, the editor of the *Hamburger Ausgabe* of Goethe's *Werke*, contributes to the mythologization of the events in Goethe's life which 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." ("The genesis of the work points to three different spheres of events; but these are already so closely arranged with one another, almost as if a daemon secretly directed us toward such a connection"). *HA* Band VI 558.

⁹³ Matthew Bell, *Goethe's Naturalistic Anthropology: Man and Other Plants* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 70.

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” (“unconsciously, like a somnambulist”)⁹⁴ – and with this transformational act, managed to free himself from *Sturm und Drang* ideology, thus preparing him for the courtly, aristocratic culture of Weimar. But the question remains as to whether the Goethe who wrote *Werther* actually subscribed to the theory of genius which the novel depicts, a theory which we have already seen in early lyrics like ‘Mahomets Gesang’ and in the essay ‘Von deutscher Baukunst’. David Wellbery comments that the *Sturm und Drang* theory of genius “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.”⁹⁵ Can Goethe himself be consigned to such backwaters? Or does *Werther* present us with 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 our discussion of *Werther* become clearer still when we investigate the changes that Goethe made to the text for the Göschen edition of his works, published in 1787.⁹⁶ By this time, Goethe had endured accusations that the novel was blasphemous, and suggestions that it encouraged suicide.⁹⁷ In response to this controversy, the Göschen edition serves to emphasise 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 sub-plot added to the section entitled ‘Der Herausgeber an den Leser’ (‘The Editor to the Reader’), the significance of which we will examine later in this chapter. For now it is merely necessary to observe that the Göschen edition (which appears in the *Hamburger Ausgabe*, and which I have chosen to use for this discussion) shows us a Goethe who 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 1787.⁹⁸ As Michael Beddow observes:

⁹⁴ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band IX 587. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume II 167.

⁹⁵ Wellbery, *The Specular Moment* 7.

⁹⁶ *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* was originally published in 1774.

⁹⁷ Nicholas Boyle reports that Pastor Goeze of Hamburg saw *Werther* as “a book calculated to encourage the mortal sins of adultery and suicide...” *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 175.

⁹⁸ This is the view of Dieter Welz in *Der Weimarer ‘Werther’: Studien zur Sinnstruktur der zweiten Fassung des ‘Werthers’* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1973) 63.

Werther shows Goethe already moving away from Herder, for whom truly natural feeling, consistently cultivated, could neither do nor suffer any genuine harm.⁹⁹

But this second edition of *Werther* still puts Herder's aesthetic preoccupations of the early 1770's on display, and it is to these preoccupations – in particular the daemonic theory of genius, that we will presently turn.

5.6. *Werther: The Pathology of an Aesthetic Idea.*

In *Werther*, Goethe presents the novel's protagonist as a mediator between humanity and nature, between subject and object. Werther's view of natural phenomena concurs with Spinoza's contention that God and 'Nature' are at the very least connected with one another, if not being one and the same:

Vom unzugänglichen Gebirge über die Einöde, die kein Fuß betrat, bis ans Ende des unbekanntes Ozeans weht der Geist des Ewigschaffenden und freut sich jedes Staubes, der ihn vernimmt und lebt. – Ach damals, wie oft habe ich mich mit Fittichen eines Kranichs, der über mich hin flog, zu dem Ufer des ungemessenen 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.¹⁰⁰

From the most inaccessible of mountains, to the desert where no man has ever set foot, breathes the spirit of the eternal Creator, rejoicing in every speck of dust that is alive and knows Him. – Ah, how often in former times did I long for the wings of a crane that passed overhead, to fly to the shores of the measureless sea, and there drink the full joy of Life from the foaming goblet of the Eternal, and taste, if only for a single moment, with the limited power that it is my breast, one drop of the blessed serenity of that Being who makes all things, in Himself and through Himself.

The longing (*Sehnsucht*), presented in this passage cannot be equated with a Platonic longing for the forms. Unlike the winged soul of the philosopher presented in Plato's *Phaedrus*, a soul which strives to leave the corporeal world in order to find the realm of the Ideas, Werther only wants to grow wings in order to better investigate the earth, not the heavens, and while an aerial perspective may assist him in appreciating the grandeur of God/Nature, he is just as happy to find this grandeur on the ground:

⁹⁹ Michael Beddow, 'Goethe on Genius', *Genius: The History of an Idea* 103.

¹⁰⁰ Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* HA Band VI 52. Trans. Hulse, *Werther* 65-66.

...ich dann im hohen Grase am fallenden Bache liege, und näher an der Erde tausend mannigfaltige Gräschen mir merkwürdig werden; wenn ich das Wimmeln der kleinen Welt zwischen Halmen, die unzähligen, unergründlichen Gestalten der Würmchen, der Mückchen näher an meinem Herzen fühle, und fühle die Gegenwart des Allmächtigen, der uns nach seinem Bilde schuf...¹⁰¹

...I lie in the long grass by the tumbling brook, and lower down, close to the earth, I am alerted to the thousand various little grasses.... I sense the teeming of the little world among the stalks, the countless indescribable forms of the bugs and flies, closer to my heart, and feel the presence of the Almighty who created us in his image...

This passage alerts us to the influence of Leibniz upon the young the Goethe, an influence which, as we saw earlier, is also detected by Dietrich Mahnke. Werther is fascinated by the minute organisms of the natural world because they serve as a confirmation of the inter-connectedness of God/Nature's divine order. Each individual being or monad exists in harmony with its companions, and the deeper Werther's investigations become, the more they confirm his intuitions about the inherent orderliness of the divine *logos* or 'principle of sufficient reason'. 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 over-arching 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 war meine Empfindung an der Natur, bis aufs Steinchen, aufs 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 Ton hätte oder Wachs, so wollte ich's wohl herausbilden. Ich werde auch Ton nehmen, wenn's länger währt, und kneten, und sollten's Kuchen werden! Lottens Porträt habe ich dreimal angefangen, und habe mich dreimal prostituiert...¹⁰²

I have never felt happier, and my feelings for Nature, down to tiny pebbles and blades of grass, have never been so full and acute, and yet – I do not know how to express myself; my imaginative powers are so weak, and everything slides and shifts before my soul, so that I cannot grasp the outlines; but I fancy I might have a go at it if I had some clay or wax to model. If things are like this much longer I really shall get some clay and model it, even if all I produce is dumplings! I have started on a portrait of Lotte three times, and three times I have failed disgracefully...

¹⁰¹ Goethe, Werther HA Band VI 9. Trans. Hulse, Werther 26-27.

¹⁰² Goethe, Werther HA Band VI 40-41. Trans. Hulse, Werther 55.

Evidently, Leibniz's philosophy does not translate well into a theory of aesthetics, as it is beyond the scope of the human imagination (the human monad or 'soul') to fully represent 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.¹⁰³

Only in eternal expansion [*Weiterschreiten*: literally, further-striding] can the human find happiness.

Faced with this impossible task of achieving an endless expansion (*Weiterschreiten*) of his capacity for artistic representation, Werther's attempts descend into formlessness. Likewise, it is no coincidence that Werther's chain of associations 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 zwei Jahren um ein Mädchen von schöner Gestalt, mittlerer Größe, die ein simples weißes Kleid, mit blaßroten Schleifen an Arm und Brust, anhatte. Sie hielt ein schwarzes Brot und schnitt ihren Kleinen rings herum jedem sein Stück nach Proportion ihres Alters und Appetits ab, gab's jedem mit solcher Freundlichkeit...¹⁰⁴

In the hallway, six children aged between eleven and two were milling about a girl with a wonderful figure of medium height, wearing a simple white dress with pink ribbons at the sleeves and breast. She was holding a loaf of rye bread and cutting a piece for each of the little ones about her, according to their age and appetite, she handed out the slices with great kindness...

Lotte's mode of dress is provincial and her 'schöne Gestalt' ('wonderful figure') resonates with the inherent orderliness of nature's forms. Like nature, Lotte intuitively knows the appropriate amount of food required to sustain each organism. Thus, in Werther's imagination, Lotte appears to symbolically occupy 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 which nature provides,

¹⁰³ Mahnke, *Leibniz und Goethe* 11. Brackets added to English translation.

¹⁰⁴ Goethe, *Werther HA* Band VI 21. Trans. Hulse, *Werther* 37.

shown, exerted a great influence on Goethe¹²¹ – we need to ask the following questions: To what extent was Goethe, during the process of writing *Werther* 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 (*gesellig*) human soul – a soul naturally endowed with rationality, benevolence and virtue? Or was Goethe aware of a darker side to the soul of *Empfindsamkeit*: a soul which was seen as a well-spring of natural emotions, but natural emotions which were purportedly ‘guaranteed’ not to go astray by a ‘natural benevolence’, and by Leibniz’s divine *logos* or ‘principle of sufficient reason’? 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.¹²²

Likewise, Jochen Schmidt detects in *Werther* a certain “kritisch-diagnostische Kontur”¹²³ (“critical-diagnostic contour”) which suggests that Goethe stood at some distance from the emotional standpoint of the novel’s protagonist. Walter Benjamin, on the other hand, gives us an even more telling analysis of the novel:

Das Buch [*Werther*] war vielleicht der größte literarische Erfolg aller Zeiten. Hier vollendete Goethe den Typus der genialen Autorschaft. Wenn nämlich der große Autor seine Innenwelt von Anfang an zur öffentlichen Angelegenheit, die Zeitfragen restlos zu Fragen seiner persönlichen Erfahrungs- und Denkwelt macht, so stellt Goethe in seinen Jugendwerken diesen Typus des großen Autors in unerreichter Vollendung dar. In ‘*Werthers Leiden*’ fand das damalige Bürgertum seine Pathologie ähnlich scharfblickend und schmeichelhaft zugleich bezeichnet wie das heutige in der Freudschen Theorie.¹²⁴

This book [*Werther*] may well be the greatest success in the history of literature. Goethe here perfected the portrait of the writer as ‘genius’. For if the great writer is someone who transforms his inner life into a matter of public interest from the very outset, and

¹²¹ Mahnke traces the Leibnizian notion of the soul as a monad back to the Aristotelean conception of the *entelechy*. Mahnke is also in agreement with Nicholas Boyle (Boyle, Volume I 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, in particular, pages 14-18.

¹²² Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 168.

¹²³ Schmidt, *Geschichte des Geniegedankens* Band I 323.

¹²⁴ Walter Benjamin, ‘Goethe’, *Gesammelte Schriften* Band II.2 709. Brackets added. Translated by Rodney Livingstone, *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings Volume II, 1927-1934* ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999) 164.

simultaneously makes the questions of the day into matters of immediate concern for his own personal thought and experience, then it is in Goethe's early works that we find the most consummate avatar of this kind of author. In *Werther* Goethe provided the bourgeoisie of his day with a perceptive and flattering picture of its own pathology, comparable in its way to the one supplied by Freud for the benefit of the modern bourgeoisie.

Although I do not concur with Benjamin's assumption that we can posit a direct correlation between the inner life of the writer (Goethe) and that of his character (Werther), I nevertheless agree with his contention that *Werther* can be seen as a 'diagnosis' of the aesthetic preoccupations of the *Sturm und Drang* movement.

These preoccupations stem from two main sources. The first – to which Dietrich Mahnke draws our attention – is the Leibnizian conception of the individual as a rational soul or monad which must expand (*Weiterschreiten*) at all costs, independently of external obstacles, or the rights of other monads. The second, alluded to by Gerhard Sauder, is the notion that human emotions are always naturally benevolent, rational and inherently convivial and sociable (*gesellig*). If we follow the suggestion – made by Boyle, Schmidt and Benjamin – that Goethe's *Werther* is a diagnosis and critique of these preoccupations, then we can begin to see that *Werther*, far from being an example of *Sturm und Drang* 'irrationalism', is in fact a key text in the European Enlightenment – a text which teaches us 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) which appears in *Goethe und seine Zeit* (1947), Lukács observes that:

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.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Georg Lukács, 'Die Leiden des jungen Werther' (1936), *Goethe und seine Zeit* 17-19. Translated by Robert Anchor in: Lukács, *Goethe and his Age* 35-37. The essay 'Die Leiden des jungen Werther' was written by Lukács at the end of the 1930's. Ehrhard Bahr observes, in this connection, that Lukács's intention in writing about Goethe was to "mobilize the traditions of the Enlightenment and humanism against the heritage of fascism". See Ehrhard Bahr, 'Georg Lukács's 'Goetheanism': Its Relevance for Literary Theory', in *Georg Lukács: Theory, Culture and Politics* ed. Judith Marcus and Zoltán Tarr (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989) 92.

...the exceptionally extensive and profound effect of *Werther* on the entire world brought to light the leading rôle of the German Enlightenment. The German Enlightenment? That startles the reader who has been 'schooled' in the literary legends of bourgeois historiography and the vulgar sociology that depends upon them. Indeed, both in bourgeois literary history and vulgar sociology it is a commonplace that the Enlightenment, on the one hand, and 'Storm and Stress' – and especially *Werther* – on the other, are exclusively opposed to one another... Only by destroying such historical legends and contradictions, which have never existed in reality, can we open the way to an understanding of the actual inner contradictions of the Enlightenment.

Lukács argues that the traditional opposition between intellect or *logos* (*Verstand*) on the one hand, and 'feeling' (*des Gefühls*) or 'instinct' (*des Triebes*) 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 which he finds in the character of *Werther*. *Werther*, Lukács writes, is a:

...Tragödie des bürgerlichen Humanismus.. [und]...zeigt bereits den unlösbaren Konflikt der freien und allseitigen Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit mit der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft selbst.¹²⁶

...tragedy of bourgeois humanism and shows the insoluble conflict between the free and full development of personality and bourgeois society itself.

In this reading, *Werther's* suicide is reduced to being merely an effect of the social restrictions which bourgeois society places upon young individuals. In short, Lukács offers us a strong and at times compelling sociological interpretation of the novel, but an interpretation which lacks psychological depth. Of interest for our purposes, however, is Lukács's observation that in *Werther* we can find the culmination of:

...die Kämpfe des jungen Goethe um den freien und allseitig entwickelten Menschen, jene Tendenzen, die er in 'Götz', im 'Prometheus'-Fragment, in den ersten Entwürfen zum *Faust* usw. ebenfalls ausgedrückt hat.¹²⁷

... the young Goethe's struggles for the free and universally developed man, those tendencies which he also expressed in *Götz*, in the *Prometheus* fragment, the first drafts of *Faust*, etc...

¹²⁶ Lukács, *Goethe und seine Zeit* 26. Brackets added. Trans. Anchor, *Goethe and his Age* 45. 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" ("... allows the revolutionary element in his youth to have its say"). Walter Benjamin, 'Goethe', *Gesammelte Schriften* Band II.2 709. Trans. Livingstone, *Selected Writings Volume II* 165.

¹²⁷ Lukács, *Goethe und seine Zeit* 25. Trans. Anchor, *Goethe and his Age* 44.

If we assess this comment within the context of our earlier discussions of 'Mahomets Gesang' and 'Prometheus', it appears to be correct. In both of these poems we encounter poetic representations of the Leibnizian subject. That is to say, we find in them protagonists who are primarily interested in an unimpeded expansion (*Weiterschreiten*) 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 within this framework – namely, from within 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 subscribes to Leibniz's notion of the monadic subject, *Werther* may in fact amount to Goethe's earliest critique of, and his earliest counter-narrative to, Leibniz's rational 'monadisation' of the human soul. As we have already seen in this chapter, in our reading of 'Mahomets Gesang', one of Goethe's favourite metaphors for subjectivity is the image of water. We will revisit this metaphor, once again, in Part Seven of this study, when we consider a sonnet written by Goethe in late 1807 and early 1808: 'Mächtiges Überraschen'. But at this point, we need to investigate an earlier manifestation of this metaphor in Goethe's *Werther*.

5.7. Water as Subjectivity II: *Werther*.

In the letter dated May 26, *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 Fluten hereinbraust und eure staunende Seele erschüttert? – Liebe Freunde, da wohnen die gelassenen Herren auf beiden Seiten des Ufers, denen ihre Gartenhäuschen, Tulpenbeete and Krautfelde zugrunde gehen würden, die daher in Zeiten mit Dämmen und Ableiten der künftig drohenden Gefahr abzuwehren wissen.¹²⁸

You ask why the torrent of genius so rarely pours forth, so rarely floods and thunders and overwhelms your astonished soul? – Because, dear friends, on either bank dwell the cool, respectable gentlemen, whose summerhouses, tulip beds and cabbage patches would all be washed away, and who are therefore highly skilled in averting future dangers in good time, by damming and digging channels.

¹²⁸ Goethe, *Werther* HA Band VI 16. Trans. Hulse, *Werther* 33.

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 within *Werther* – that is to say, her function as both 'nature' and love-object – David E. Wellbery suggests that this duality:

...exemplifies a characteristic expansion within the novel of the scope of sexuality, a tendency toward a certain pansexualism [which] ...in its Spinozist formulation, provides the paradigm of an absolute amorous relation. In particular, the Spinozist notion of *amor dei intellectualis*, in which the mind participates in divinity by loving God as God loves himself, seems to anticipate the structure of the infinite embrace...¹⁰⁵

Pantheism refers to the belief that God and 'Nature' are one. Pansexualism appears to denote a state in which the subject associates and perhaps even conflates his or her love-object with the 'All' of God/Nature. In this way Lotte functions as an object of both erotic, poetic 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: "Sie [Natur] allein ist unendlich reich, und sie allein bildet den großen Künstler" ("Only Nature has inexhaustible riches, and only Nature creates a great artist") writes Werther in his letter dated 26 May.¹⁰⁶ 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 self-same longing can be satisfied. In unifying himself with Lotte, Werther seems to imagine that 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 schwindelig vor allen Sinnen....Sie ist mir heilig. Alle Begier schweigt in ihrer Gegenwart. Ich weiß nie, wie mir ist, wenn ich bei ihr bin; es ist, als wenn die Seele sich mir in allen Nerven umkehrte. – Sie hat eine Melodie, die sie auf dem Klaviere spielt 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 Zauberkraft der alten Musik ist mir unwahrscheinlich. Wie mich der einfache Gesang angreift!¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ David E. Wellbery, 'Morphisms of the Phantasmatic Body: Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*', *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century* ed. Veronica Kelly and Dorothea von Mücke (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1994) 187. Brackets added.

¹⁰⁶ Goethe, *Werther HA* Band VI 15. Brackets added. Trans. Hulse, *Werther* 32.

¹⁰⁷ Goethe, *Werther HA* Band VI 38-39. Trans. Hulse, *Werther* 53.

Ah, how the thrill of it shoots through me if my finger happens to touch hers or our feet meet beneath the table! I recoil as if from fire, yet some secret force draws me on again – and my senses grow dizzy... She is sacred to me. All my desires are stilled in her presence. I never know what I am about when I am with her; it is as if my very soul were throbbing in every nerve. – There is a melody, a simple but moving air, which she plays on the piano, with angelic skill. It is her very favourite tune, and the moment she plays the first note I feel delivered of all my pain, confusion and brooding fancies. Every word they say about the magical power of ancient music strikes me as plausible. How that simple song enthrals me!

Werther is both horrified and excited by the reactions that contact with Lotte produces in him, and it is this kind of ambivalence which the German scholar of religion Rudolf Otto associates with daemonic experience:

The daemonic-divine object may appear to the mind an object of horror and dread, but at the same time it is no less something that allures with a potent charm, and the creature, who trembles before it, utterly cowed and cast down, has always at the same time the impulse to turn to it, nay even to make it somehow his own. The 'mystery' is for him not merely something to be wondered at but something that entrances him; and besides that in it which bewilders and confounds, he feels a something that captivates and transports him with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to a pitch of dizzy intoxication; it is the Dionysus element in numen.¹⁰⁸

It is not my intention to suggest that Goethe is attempting 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 which eventually reached its apotheosis, some twenty-one years after the publication of *Werther*, in Schiller's conception of the 'Ancients' as 'naïve'. At this point it is appropriate to repeat a key line from Schiller's essay 'Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung', a line which refers to 'objects of nature': "Sie sind, was wir waren; sie sind, was wir wieder werden sollen" ("They are what we were; they are what we should once again become"), says Schiller of flowers, birds and bees.¹⁰⁹ In this line we are given the key to what the term daemonic means with reference to *Werther*. The Daemonic is the mode or conduit through which the sentimental human longs to be naïve, to be *natural*. In being drawn to Lotte, Werther is drawn to an idealised and fictionalised 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

¹⁰⁸ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1977) 31.

¹⁰⁹ Schiller, *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung* 2. Trans. Elias, *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry, On the Sublime* 84-5.

own identity. Werther experiences this threat at different points in the narrative. In the letter dated May 10, 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 du 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 zugrunde, ich erliege unter der Gewalt der Herrlichkeit dieser Erscheinungen.¹¹⁰

...if it grows dusky then before my eyes, and the world about me and the heavens lie peaceful about me like a lover – then I am often filled with longing, and think; ah, if only you could express this, if only you could breathe onto the paper in all its fullness and warmth what is so alive in you, so that it would mirror your soul as your soul is the mirror of God in his infinity – My friend – But it will be the end of me. The glory of these visions, their power and magnificence, will be my undoing.

When Werther's obsession with nature is seen in this light, it becomes difficult to disagree with Schiller's 'diagnosis' of him as a "gefährliche Extrem des sentimentalischen Charakters" ("dangerous extreme of the sentimental personality").¹¹¹ Here sentimentality can be taken to mean something akin to sensitivity or *Empfindsamkeit* – which is effectively the opposite of rational, empirical cognition (*logos*), the mode of cognition concerned with reality or *Wirklichkeit*. But what is so 'dangerous' about Werther's sentimentality? Schiller gives us an indication of this danger, through a further description of the sentimental individual – a description in which the two terms with which we are concerned – *Empfindsamkeit* and *Wirklichkeit* (sensitivity and reality) appear once more. The sentimental individual is, according to Schiller, he who:

...mit glühender Empfindung ein Ideal umfaßt und die Wirklichkeit fliehet, um nach einem wesenlosen Unendlichen zu ringen...¹¹²

...embraces the ideal with burning feeling [*Empfindung*] and abandons actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] in order to contend with an insubstantial infinitude...

¹¹⁰ Goethe, *Werther* HA Band VI 9. Trans. Hulse, *Werther* 27.

¹¹¹ Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* 43. Trans. Elias, *Naive and Sentimental Poetry, On the Sublime* 137.

¹¹² Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* 42. Trans. Elias, *Naive and Sentimental Poetry, On the Sublime* 137. Brackets added to English translation.

The danger to which Schiller alludes is the loss of contact with reality or actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) which may occur when the subject pursues the insubstantial infinitude of the 'Idea' at all costs. But what is the 'insubstantial infinitude', the impossible *telos* which he seeks? Schiller fails to answer this question because his own literary *Weltanschauung* is shot through with the same myth or 'Idea' which haunts and eventually destroys Werther: the myth of the naïve poet as a daemonic 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 which predates *Werther* – namely, Herder's *Von der Ode (Treatise on the Ode)*, written in 1764. Earlier in this study we saw how the notion of *Affekt* (translated as emotion or feeling) is central to Herder's conception of the Ode as the mode of poetry which best approximates and harnesses the forces of nature. In *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung*, the same concept appears in relation to naïve poets. The *Affekt*, says Schiller:

...ist auch Natur, und die Regel der Anständigkeit ist etwas Künstliches; dennoch ist der Sieg des Affekts über die Anständigkeit nichts weniger als naïv. Siegt hingegen derselbe Affekt über die Künstelei, über die falsche Anständigkeit, über die Verstellung, so tragen wir kein Bedenken, es naïv zu nennen. Es wird also erfordert, daß die Natur nicht durch ihre blinde Gewalt als dynamische, sondern daß sie durch ihre Form als moralische Größe, kurz, daß sie nicht als Notdurft, sondern als innre Notwendigkeit über die Kunst triumphiere.¹¹³

...is also nature, and the rule of propriety is something artificial; yet the victory of the affect over propriety is anything but naïve. If, on the other hand, the same affect should triumph over artifice, over false modesty, over deceit, then we do not hesitate to call it naïve. Hence it is necessary that nature should triumph over art not by her blind violence as *dynamic greatness*, but by her form as *moral greatness*, in brief, not as *compulsion* but as *inner necessity*.

Schiller concurs with Herder's view that *Affekt* is an emotional force which has its origins in nature and which, 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 scrupulously avoids the suggestion that *Affekt* alone is sufficient to produce the naïve – in fact he explicitly states that "der Sieg des Affekts über die Anständigkeit [ist] nichts weniger als naïv" ("the victory of affect over propriety is anything but naïve"). This sentence shows us that Schiller is writing in a post-*Werther* age. Unlike the *Stürmer und Dränger*, he is not prepared to accept that the *force* of nature alone is sufficient to create naïve works of art. Nature, suggests Schiller, is not just force or *Kraft*: it also has its own in-built teleology – a teleology which he calls 'moralische Größe' ('moral greatness') but which may, when translated into an aesthetic vocabulary, be called 'form' or 'inner necessity'. In short, Schiller

¹¹³ Schiller, *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung* 6-7. Trans. Elias, *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry, On the Sublime* 90-91.

prefers to see nature as 'form' and not as 'blind violence', because blind violence destroys more than it creates.

But is it the blind violence of nature which destroys Werther? No – it is the violence of an aesthetic idea, the idea of the naïve poet, the daemonic genius – an idea which disrupts the boundaries of the human subject. Poets, writes Schiller, "werden entweder Natur sein, oder sie werden die verlorene suchen" ("will either *be* nature, or they will *seek* lost nature").¹¹⁴ Werther, like a true modern, wants to be the former, but is in fact the latter. In the letter of May 10, Werther announces that he has given up the project of art, of imitation, because *true* art should be lived, not abstractly constructed:

Eine wunderbare Heiterkeit hat meine ganze Seele eingenommen, gleich den süßen Frühlingsmorgen, die ich mit ganzem Herzen genieße. Ich bin allein, und freue mich meines Lebens in dieser Gegend, die für solche Seelen geschaffen ist wie die meine. Ich bin so glücklich, mein Bester, so ganz in dem Gefühle von ruhigem Dasein versunken, daß meine Kunst darunter leidet. Ich könnte jetzt nicht zeichnen, nicht einen Strich, und bin nie ein größerer Maler gewesen als in diesen Augenblicken.¹¹⁵

A wonderful serenity has taken possession of my entire soul, as these sweet spring mornings have, which I am enjoying with my whole heart. I am alone and rejoicing in my life in these parts, which were created just for souls like mine. I am so happy, dear friend, so absorbed in this feeling of peaceful existence, that my art is suffering. I could not draw, not a single line, and yet I have never been a greater painter than in these moments.

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:

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.¹¹⁶

The feeling of which we speak is...not that which the ancients possessed; it is rather identical with that which *we have for the ancients*.

¹¹⁴ Schiller, Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung 18. Trans. Elias, Naïve and Sentimental Poetry, On the Sublime 106.

¹¹⁵ Goethe, Werther HA Band VI 9. Trans. Hulse, Werther 26.

¹¹⁶ Schiller, Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung 17. Trans. Elias, Naïve and Sentimental Poetry, On the Sublime 105.

In essence, Schiller argues that our conception of the ancients can only be sentimental precisely because we are not the ancients, because we are modern. Our modernity, our sense of separation from nature, and our conceptualisation of nature as other than human, form the very condition of our concept of the naïve, and it is precisely because the naïve is a *concept* – one might even say a sentimental idealisation 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 which he finds in the sentimental. It becomes, in the Kantian sense, an 'Idea' which exceeds the boundaries of sensuous experience, an 'Idea' or "reine Form" ("pure form") in pursuit of which the poet may stand in danger of losing "allen Gehalt" ("the entire meaning"), not only of his poem, but also of himself, of his self-identity.¹¹⁷

In his book *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (1964), Angus Fletcher associates the Daemonic with the phenomenon of personification, a phenomenon 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...Daemons, as I shall define them, share this major characteristic of allegorical agents, the fact that they compartmentalize function. If we were to meet an allegorical character in real life, we would say of him that he was obsessed with only one idea, or that he had an absolutely one track mind...It would seem that he was driven by some hidden, private force....¹¹⁸

Although it would be untrue to suggest that Werther displays all of the characteristics which 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.

¹¹⁷ Schiller, *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung* 70. Trans. Elias, *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry, On the Sublime* 174.

¹¹⁸ Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* 39-40.

In this connection, it is useful briefly to consider the historical background to *Werther* offered by Gerhard Sauder in the *Münchener Ausgabe* of Goethe's *Sämtliche Werke*. Sauder refers to the *empfindsame Tendenz* (sensitive/sentimental tendency) which characterised European literature in the mid to late eighteenth century, particularly in Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), and especially in epistolary novels like Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748), and Rousseau's *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761).¹¹⁹ Speaking of this sensitive or sentimental tendency (the German *Empfindsamkeit* resonates with both of these words in English) Sauder observes:

Ihr ideengeschichtlicher Ursprung ist die in der englischen und schottischen Philosophie entwickelte und von anglikanischen liberalen Geistlichen verbreitete Theorie des 'Moral Sense'. Sie geht davon aus, daß jedem menschlichen Herzen ein 'natürliches Gesetz' des 'immediate feeling and finer internal sense' eingeschrieben sei. Der Mensch wird als ein von Natur mit 'benevolence' begabtes, geselliges Wesen verstanden, das sich den Affekten unter Mithilfe der Vernunft anvertrauen kann...In England, Frankreich und Deutschland war die Rezeption dieser Thesen sehr intensiv – kein Zweifel, daß auch die Autoren des Sturm und Drang damit vertraut waren. In Deutschland verstärkte die Emotionalisierung christlicher Lebenspraxis in der pietistischen Frömmigkeit die Aufnahme der empfindsamen Tendenz, die treffend als Genie zur Tugend bezeichnet wurde.¹²⁰

Its origin in the history of ideas is the theory, developed in English and Scottish philosophy and broadened by the anglican liberal soul, of 'Moral Sense'. It proceeds from the premise that every human heart has a 'natural law' inscribed by an 'immediate feeling and finer internal sense'. The human is understood as a sociable creature, endowed with 'benevolence' by nature, that can, with the assistance of reason, trust itself to the emotions...In England, France and Germany the reception of these theories was very intensive – and there is no doubt that the authors of the *Sturm und Drang* were familiar with them. In Germany the emotionality of Christian life-praxis in pietistic religiousness strengthened the reception of this sentimental trend, which was characterised felicitously as genius for virtue.

Keeping in mind Sauder's prescient analysis of the historical conditions which gave rise to *Werther*, while at the same time adding to it our own understanding of Leibniz's conception of the rational soul as a monad which strives for complete self-realisation – a conception which, as Dietrich Mahnke has

¹¹⁹ Speaking of the genre of the Epistolary Novel (*Briefroman*) Erich Trunz observes: "Durch diesen Prosastil war der Roman – ähnlich wie durch seinen Gehalt – in seiner Zeit etwas gänzlich Neues. Briefromane hatte es zahlreich auch schon vor *Werther* gegeben. Richardson hatte damit begonnen, Rousseau in seiner *Nouvelle Héloïse* war ihm gefolgt". ("Through this prose-style – just as through its content – the novel became, at this time, something completely new. There were already many epistolary novels before *Werther*. Richardson began this phenomenon, and Rousseau followed him in his *Nouvelle Héloïse*"). HA Band VI 551.

¹²⁰ Gerhard Sauder in: Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens (Münchener Ausgabe)* Karl Richter, Herbert G. Göpfert, Norbert Miller und Gerhard Sauder Hg. Band I.2 *Der Junge Goethe 1757-1775* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1987) 772.

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...¹²⁹

...the works of young Goethe represent a revolutionary peak of the European Enlightenment.

Here the genius is represented as 'true nature' – the torrent of creative force who rails against the cultivated 'false nature' of the aristocratic 'respectable gentlemen' who tend their highly structured and contrived gardens. Within this depiction, genius is associated with the transgression of limits, limits which the 'cool' (*gelassenen*) gentlemen – with their dams and channels – are at pains to defend. Implicit in this scene is the opposition which I characterised earlier as one of central themes of the nineteenth century European novel: that of the individual versus society. 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."¹³⁰ But in *Werther* there is very little cognisance of either social or psychological limits, and even when they are perceived by the novel's protagonist, they are normally viewed by him as obstacles to be overcome. One such limit 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.

In *Werther*, the differentiation between subject and object is problematised. 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. We have already seen the way in which the *Sturm und Drang* discourse on genius endeavours 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

¹²⁹ Lukács, *Goethe und seine Zeit* 21. Brackets added. Trans. Anchor, *Goethe and his Age* 39.

¹³⁰ Wellbery 'Morphisms of the Phantasmatic Body', 183-4.

structure. In short, the genius is akin to the daemonic individual, defined by Paul Fischer as the figure who behaves “unconsciously, unforced, not upon the grounds of consideration or decision, but rather like nature, like a child, like a savage.”¹³¹ 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 natural, external events:

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.¹³²

As Nature’s year declines into autumn, it is becoming autumn within me, and all about me. My leaves are yellowing. And already the leaves of nearby trees have fallen.

In the words of Jochen Schmidt, nature becomes, for Werther, a “Projektionsgrund seiner eigenen Gefühle” (“ground of projection for his own emotions”) and a “Spiegel der Subjektivität” (“mirror of subjectivity”).¹³³ As the speed of Werther’s psychological decline increases, he begins to see nature as “ein ewig verschlingendes, ewig wiederkäuendes Ungeheuer” (“a monster, forever devouring, regurgitating, chewing and gorging”).¹³⁴ Like the desert which threatens to limit, and eventually to extinguish, the flow of the streams (*Bäche*) in ‘Mahomets Gesang’, nature becomes, for Werther, the embodiment of everything that opposes and frustrates his project of self-expansion. On June 21 he writes:

Es ist wunderbar: wie ich hierher kam und vom Hügel in das schöne Tal 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 Täler! – 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 Armut, in unserer Eingeschränktheit, und unsere Seele lechzt nach entschlüpftem Labsale.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Paul Fischer, *Goethes Altersweisheit* 28. In German, Fischer writes: “Der dämonische Mensch handelt unbewußt, ungewollt, nicht auf Grund von Erwägung und Entschluß, sondern wie die Natur, das Kind, der Wilde.”

¹³² Goethe, *Werther HA* Band VI 76-77. Trans. Hulse, *Werther* 90.

¹³³ Schmidt, *Geschichte des Geniegedankens* Band I 323, 328.

¹³⁴ Goethe, *Werther HA* Band VI 53. Trans. Hulse, *Werther* 66.

¹³⁵ Goethe, *Werther HA* Band VI 29. Trans. Hulse, *Werther* 44.

When I first came here and looked down into that lovely valley from the hill, the way the entire scene charmed me was a marvel. – That little wood! – Ah, if only you might walk in its shade! – That mountain-top! – Ah, to view this vast landscape from there! – And the chain of hills, and the gentle valleys – Oh, to lose myself amongst them – And I hastened there, and returned without finding what I was hoping for...once we hasten onwards, and what lay ahead becomes the here and now, everything is just as it was, and there we are, as poor and confined as ever, our souls longing for the elusive balm.

Nature produces in Werther a feeling which, after the example of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs Du Mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*), we might call *spleen* – a feeling of restriction and containment, combined with boredom (*ennui*) and dissatisfaction. Spleen, writes Baudelaire, occurs when “low and sullen skies lie solid as a lid upon the groaning spirit”¹³⁶ – when the soul feels that nature is a prison, not a paradise. It is precisely this feeling of restriction (*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 threat or limit which impinges upon his subjectivity, so Lotte begins to be associated with this selfsame limit, a limit which functions on both psychological and sociological levels. On November 24, 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...¹³⁷

...if only I could describe it to you! – I resisted no longer, bent forward and vowed: Never shall I dare implant a kiss on these lips where the spirits of heaven dwell. – And yet – I want to – Ha! You see, it is like a barrier my soul has come against...

This *Scheidewand* (literally, separating-wall or barrier) represents both the social taboo of Werther's desire for a married woman, and the limit which 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 (*Seele*). Seen in this way, Lotte is not so much a love-object for Werther as she is

¹³⁶ Charles Baudelaire, 'Spleen', *The Flowers of Evil and Paris Spleen* trans. William H. Crosby (Rochester, N.Y.: Boa Editions, 1991) 141.

¹³⁷ Goethe, *Werther HA* Band VI 87. Trans. Hulse, *Werther* 101.

a symbol of the mode of existence which he cannot achieve: complete, unobstructed self-realisation (*Selbstverwirklichung*) or what Lukács calls 'free and universal' development. Jochen Schmidt concurs with this view by arguing that Werther's fixation with Lotte can be seen as an effect of the valorisation of subjectivity that arises from the *Sturm und Drang* theory of genius:

In Werthers Liebesgeschichte spitzt sich die Subjektivismus-Problematik dramatisch zu. Denn seine Leidenschaft zu Lotte gerät zum subjektivistischen Exzeß, in dem es nicht so sehr um die Frau als um die Selbstverwirklichung, ja um den Selbstgenuß des erregten Gefühls geht...¹³⁸

In Werther's love story the problematic of subjectivity comes to a dramatic climax. This is because his passion for Lotte turns into a subjective excess, an excess which is not so much concerned with the woman, as it is with the self-realisation, or even the self-gratification of heated emotions...

It is precisely this notion of a limit (*Grenze*) – a limit which 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 *Grenzsituation* (limit or boundary situation) during his later years in Weimar, after returning from Italy. Wiese writes:

Das Dämonische ist für Goethe eine Grenzsituation, Grenze seines eignen, durchlebten Daseins, gegen die er sich wehrt, soweit sie ihm den Goetheschen Einklang von irdischer und göttlicher Ordnung in Frage zu stellen droht, und die er doch anerkennt, weil er das Dämonische als das Zufällige, Unberechenbare, das sich der Ordnung entzieht, auf paradoxe Weise stets von neuem als einen Bestandteil eben dieser Ordnung selbst begreift.¹³⁹

The Daemonic is for Goethe a limit-situation, the limit of his own lived through existence, against which he fights, insofar as it brings into question for him the Goethean harmony between the earthly and divine orders, and which he nevertheless recognises, because he himself seeks to understand the Daemonic as the accidental and the unaccountable, as that which withdraws itself from all order, and which, in a paradoxical manner, always renews itself as an enduring element of this selfsame order.

At this point it is necessary to emphasise that the origin or locus of this limit, obstructing force, or *Grenzsituation* is ambivalent. On the one hand, Goethe's notion of the Daemonic often corresponds with an internal, personal law (*Gesetz*) referred to by Dietrich Mahnke as a *Schicksalsdämon*.¹⁴⁰ In

¹³⁸ Schmidt, *Geschichte des Geniegedankens* Band I 334.

¹³⁹ Benno von Wiese, *Das Dämonische in Goethes Weltbild und Dichtung* 4-5.

¹⁴⁰ See Dietrich Mahnke's comments to this effect on pages 16, 17 and 41 of *Leibniz und Goethe*.

Part Seven of our analysis, we will see how Goethe formalises this notion of the daemon in the poem 'Urworte. Orphisch' (1817-18) as the "Gesetz, wonach du angetreten" ("the law presiding at your birth") and as the "Geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt" ("The minted form that lives and living grows").¹⁴¹ On the other hand, we shall also discover, in parts Six and Seven, that for Goethe the Daemonic often seems to be something located *outside* of the subject, in the powers of the divine, or in nature. This duality in Goethe's conception of the Daemonic is alluded to in the following passage from Paul Fischer's study of Goethe, *Goethes Altersweisheit* (1921):

...das Dämonsiche [erscheint] für den tiefen Ernst des Dichters, des Psychologen, des Philosophen als eine hohe, ehrfurchtgebietende...dem Göttlichen verwandte Macht. Andererseits bemerken wir, daß Goethe das eine Mal vom Dämon so redet, wie wenn er ausschließlich eine dem inneren Wesen des Menschen einwohnende und von innen her ihn bestimmende Macht wäre; das andere Mal so, daß der Dämon als äußere Gewalt in den Gang der Dinge, den Lauf der Natur und der Geschichte des Einzel- und des Völkerlebens eingreift.¹⁴²

...the Daemonic [appears] for the deep seriousness of the poet, the psychologist, the philosopher, as a great, intimidating [*ehrfurchtgebietende*: literally, demanding of both respect and fear] power which is congenial of the divine. On the other hand, we notice that Goethe sometimes speaks of the daemon, as if it is exclusively a power which exists within the internal essence of the human, a power determining the human from within; at other times, as though the daemon intrudes upon the course of things, upon the workings of nature, and upon the life of the individual and of nations, as an external power.

Without, at this stage, attempting to resolve this duality in Goethe's conception of the Daemonic raised by Fischer, I merely wish to suggest that Goethe's later recognition of the notion of an obstructing principle or 'limit' – whether this notion be associated with the internal predispositions of the subject, or the external forces of God/Nature – can be seen to have arisen from the Leibnizian dynamics of subjectivity outlined in *Werther*.

The notion that God/Nature apportions certain capacities and capabilities to organisms is of course traceable to Aristotle's notion of the *entelechy* as the indwelling form or locus of animation characteristic of all living things. Seen in this way, nature does indeed limit us – we are limited by the capacities with which we are endowed. But as Dietrich Mahnke demonstrates in the following passage, Goethe came into contact with a highly individualistic interpretation of Aristotle's notion of the

¹⁴¹ Goethe, 'Urworte Orphisch', *HA* Band I 359. Translated by Christopher Middleton in *Goethe: Selected Poems* 231.

¹⁴² Fischer, *Goethes Altersweisheit* 28. Brackets added.

entelechy in its guise as the Leibnizian monad – a ‘windowless’, purportedly ‘rational’, indwelling soul, which is capable of mirroring the entire universe, and which strives for self-realisation at all costs:

Goethe hat es in den späteren Lebensjahren wiederholt...daß diese elementaren Tätigkeitsprinzipien, die auch er mit Leibniz Monaden und mit Aristoteles Entelechien nennt, bis ins Unendliche fortbestehen müssen...¹⁴³

Goethe repeated in the later years of his life...that these elemental principles of activity (*Tätigkeitsprinzipien*), which he also referred to as Leibnizian monads and Aristotelean *entelechies*, must continue into the infinite....

Leibniz held that the relationships between these monads or *Tätigkeitsprinzipien* (principles of activity) are regulated by an over-arching divine *logos*, the ‘principle of sufficient reason’, which ensures that the universe is harmonious and orderly. As a *mythos* or counter-narrative to Leibniz’s serenely rational world-view, *Werther* shows us what happens to the ‘windowless’ monadic soul, both sociologically and psychologically, when the principle of sufficient reason is absent, and when subjective, non-rational emotions refuse to recognise any limits. This is demonstrated most clearly when we follow Goethe’s metaphor for subjectivity – water – to its logical conclusion.

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned the sub-plot, in the section headed ‘Der Herausgeber an den Leser’ (‘The Editor to the Reader’), which Goethe added to *Werther* for the Göschen edition of his works, published in 1787. In this sub-plot, 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 behaviour 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 her. After hearing of 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 sub-plot is to further emphasise 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

¹⁴³ Mahnke, *Leibniz und Goethe* 14.

unable to distinguish clearly between his own situation and that of the farmhand. In fact, he seems to subjectively appropriate external events and relate them to his own condition – a sure sign that the barrier or *Scheidewand* between internal and external, between self and other, may be on the verge of breaking down completely.

This *Scheidewand* or barrier 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. Herder writes:

Ein leidendes Tier sowohl, als der Held Philoktet, wenn es der Schmerz anfällt, wird wimmern! wird ächzen! und wäre es gleich verlassen, auf einer wüsten Insel, ohne Anblick, Spur und Hoffnung eines hilfreichen Nebengeschöpfes. Es ist, als obs freier atmete, indem es dem brennenden, geängstigten Hauche Luft gibt: es ist, als obs einen Teil seines Schmerzes verseufzte und aus dem leeren Luftraum wenigstens neue Kräfte zum Verschmerzen in sich zöge, indem es die tauben Winde mit Ächzen füllet. So wenig hat uns die Natur als abgesonderte Steinfelsen, als egoistische Monaden geschaffen!¹⁴⁴

A suffering beast, no less than the hero Philoctetes in his agony, will wail and groan even if abandoned on a desert island where there is neither sight, nor trace, nor hope of help from a fellow creature. It seems that a creature breathes more freely when giving bent to the burning anguish of its mind, as if part of its pain escapes and it draws new strength from the empty air to bear the suffering while charging the deaf winds with its groans. Nature certainly did not create us as isolated rocks or egoistic monads!

The objection expressed by Herder to the purported 'windowlessness' or isolation of the Leibnizian monad is intimately connected with his theory of language. In Part Four, we saw 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 characterises the interactions between the self and nature as being positive, productive and indeed *necessary* for the development 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 which we will see, in

¹⁴⁴ Herder, *Abhandlung Werke* (Hanser) Band I 733. Trans. Barnard 117.

Part Six of our analysis, as being central to the scientific theories developed by Goethe following his journey to Italy between the years of 1786-1788.

In the character of Werther, however, the relationship of reciprocity, of kinship through *difference*, between subject and object invoked by Herder is radicalised 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 an entry also added by Goethe to the 1787 edition and dated December 12. In this entry, Werther reports to us yet another image of water:

Gestern abend mußte ich hinaus. Es war plötzlich Tauwetter eingefallen, ich hatte gehört, der Fluß sei übergetreten, alle Bäche geschwollen und von Wahlheim herunter mein liebes Tal überschwemmt! Nachts nach elfe rannte ich hinaus. Ein fürchterliches Schauspiel, vom Fels herunter die wühlenden Fluten in dem Mondlichte wirbeln zu sehen, über Äcker und Wiesen und Hecken und alles, und das weite Tal hinauf und hinab eine stürmende See im Sausen des Windes! Und wenn dann der Mond wieder hervortrat und über der schwarzen Wolke ruhte, und vor mir hinaus die Flut in fürchterlich herrlichem Widerschein rollte und klang: da überfiel mich ein Schauer, und wieder ein Sehnen! Ach, mit offenen Armen stand ich gegen den Abgrund und atmete hinab! hinab! und verlor mich in der Wonne, meine Qualen, meine Leiden hinabzustürmen! Dahinzubrausen wie die Wellen!¹⁴⁵

Yesterday evening I had to go out. A thaw had suddenly set in, I had heard that the river had burst its banks, all the streams were swollen, and all the way from Wahlheim my beloved valley was flooded! It was after eleven, and I ran out into the night. It was a fearful spectacle: the raging torrents were crashing down from the crags in the moonlight, flooding the fields and meadows and hedges, and the broad valley, upstream and down, was a turbulent lake whipped by a roaring wind! And when the moon appeared once more, peaceful above a sombre cloud, and the flood before me rolled and thundered and gleamed with awesome majesty, a shudder of horror shook me – and then longing seized me again! Ah, there I stood, arms outstretched, above the abyss, breathing: plunge! plunge! – and I was lost in the joyful prospect of ending my sufferings and sorrows by plunging, passing on with a crash like the waves!

In this passage Goethe exposes the water-as-daemon metaphor to a profound critique – a critique which 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 abyss (*Abgrund*) of nature. The pathological element in Werther's identification is then displayed by Goethe through the

¹⁴⁵ Goethe, Werther HA Band VI 98-99. Trans. Hulse, Werther 111-112.

imagery deployed in this passage. When the genius-stream becomes swollen (*geschwollen*) to such an extent that its subjectivity 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 describes this phenomenon by analysing a statement made by Goethe in Book Eight of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (and quoted earlier in this chapter), on the subject of religion:

Viele Jahre später, als er auf diese Werke seiner Jugend zurück sah, schrieb er in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, am Ende des 8. Buches über seine religiösen Anschauungen; die ganze Schöpfung sei *Abfallen und Zurückkehren zum Ursprünglichen*; Menschsein bestehe einerseits im Begrenztsein, Selbst-Sein, aber anderseits in der Möglichkeit und Hoffnung der Entgrenzung.... Und nun bildet Goethe hier die Wörter dafür: *Verselbsten* und *Entselbstigen*. Der Mensch, Emanation des Weltgeistes, wird erst Mensch durch das *Verselbsten*, aber er sehnt sich, wieder im Grenzenlosen aufzugehen.¹⁴⁶

Many years later, when he looked back at these works of his youth, Goethe wrote in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, at the end of *Book 8*, about his religious ideas; the whole of creation is *falling from and returning to the origin*; humanity consists on one side in being limited, being-self, but on the other side in the possibility and hope of unlimitation.... And now Goethe invents words for this phenomenon: self-creation (*Verselbsten*) and un-selfing (*Entselbstigen*). The human, an emanation of the world-soul, is firstly a human through self-creation, but at the same time he longs to once again merge with the limitless.

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* (un-selfing), 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. Thus, denied of its purported capacity for limitless *Selbstverwirklichung* (self-realisation), the 'windowless' Leibnizian subject cannot adjust its internal desires to external reality, and subsequently feels compelled to leave the world altogether.

¹⁴⁶ Erich Trunz, *HA* Band VI 542-3.

The December 12 entry added to the 1787 edition of *Werther* yields two crucial consequences with regard to our discussion of the novel. Firstly, it shows a clear separation between the consciousness of the novel's protagonist and the consciousness of its author, a separation which, as we have seen, is often overlooked in traditional, autobiographical accounts of the novel's 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 which Goethe made to *Werther* before its inclusion in the Göschen edition of his *Werke* in 1787. Secondly, if these changes suggest that in writing *Werther* Goethe sought to simultaneously depict and critique the *Sturm und Drang* theory of the daemonic genius, then the novel cannot simply be consigned to the basket of *Sturm und Drang* irrationalism. On the contrary, it appears to bring out precisely those 'inner contradictions' of the Enlightenment alluded to by Georg Lukács in his discussion of the novel.

5.8. *Werther* and the Enlightenment.

So what are these inner contradictions? For one, *Werther* shows us 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 *apriori* categories located *within* the subject, and that any concept of 'Nature' is therefore a subjective – and in *Werther*'s case a sentimental – construction. In his discussion of *Werther* in the *Hamburger Ausgabe* of Goethe's works, Erich Trunz makes this point succinctly by stating that:

Vor *Werther* waren Orthodoxie und Pietismus und Aufklärung; nach *Werther* entstand die Weltfrömmigkeit von Goethes, Schillers und Hölderlins Reifezeit und der damit verbundene philosophische Idealismus. Als man aus den alten Bindungen (Orthodoxie, Aufklärung) heraustrat... kam man in eine Leere, in der man sich nur auf das Gefühl verließ: dies ist die Empfindsamkeit; sie war eine Krisis.¹⁴⁷

Before *Werther* there was orthodoxy and Pietism and Enlightenment; after *Werther* the world-religiousness or world-piety [*Weltfrömmigkeit*] of Goethe's, Schiller's and Hölderlin's ripening came into being, and the philosophical idealism associated therewith. As one stepped out of the old attachments (orthodoxy, Enlightenment)... one came into a vacuum in which one relied only on the emotions: this was *Empfindsamkeit* [the cult of sensitivity/sentimentality]; it was a crisis.

Prior to Kant, and before the notion that reason is located within the subject, enlightenment philosophers like Leibniz relied upon God to be the divine *logos* or 'principle of sufficient reason', the universal law which would regulate the relationships between 'souls' or 'monads'. *Werther* 'enlightens' us insofar as he shows us that the individual has a large measure of subjective freedom to construe and interpret the world in whichever way he will, independently of any 'rational' divine order or any wider social order, 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 Spinoza and Leibniz) to be controlled and regulated by God's divine immanence.

In the above passage Trunz also invokes Goethe's notion of *Weltfrömmigkeit*, associating this concept with Goethe's philosophical development following *Werther*. Since the notion of *Weltfrömmigkeit* (translated as world-piety, or a sense of duty and reverence toward the world) will reappear in parts Six

¹⁴⁷ Trunz, *HA* Band VI 553. Brackets added to English translation.

and Seven of this study, 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 ins Weite setzen und nicht nur unsre Nächsten fördern, sondern zugleich die ganze Menschheit mitnehmen.¹⁴⁸

We do not wish to withdraw from homeliness [*Hausfrömmigkeit*, literally: respect or piety for the home] its due praise; upon this the safety of the individual is grounded, whereupon the strength and dignity of the whole finally rests; but this will no longer suffice, we must apprehend the concept of world-religiosity [*Weltfrömmigkeit*: world-piety, respect for the world, a sense of duty toward the world], must place our honest, human convictions in an expansive context, and not just promote that which is near to us, but at the same time take in the whole of humanity.

Goethe's later concept of *Weltfrömmigkeit* – the first draft of *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* was completed by Goethe in 1820-21¹⁴⁹ – seeks to place the individual desires, longings and fantasies of the Werther-style subject within a wider order: an order which is social, natural and ultimately cosmic. This order is not to be narcissistically construed by the subject in terms of his or her own sectional interests. Rather, it demands that the subject be cognisant of the wider interests of external objects and subjects, objects and subjects with which it must learn to live harmoniously.¹⁵⁰

When viewed as a counter-narrative (*mythos*) to the Leibnizian model of the subject as a 'rational' and 'windowless' monad, it becomes clear that 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*, which we

¹⁴⁸ Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* HA Band VIII 243. Brackets added to English translation.

¹⁴⁹ See Erich Trunz's discussion of the novel's composition. HA Band XIII 602-606.

¹⁵⁰ 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* (fulfillment of duty). 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 Band XIII 671-672. The closest term in English which 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', *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* 1182.

encountered in the philosophy of Plato, manifests itself once again in the confrontation between the rational-philosophical world-view of Leibniz, and the non-rational, sentimental world view of *Werther*. In this regard Goethe's novel shows us that there is a place for *mythos*, for non-rational, emotive and poetic discourse within the Enlightenment – if we understand the 'Enlightenment' to be, in a broader sense, a movement which is able to recognise both rational and non-rational modes of thought.

In fact *Werther* can be seen as an enlightenment text for two major reasons. Firstly, it shows us that an unrestrained longing for unity or coalescence with external objects (that is to say, with objects of nature, or love objects) can in fact endanger the discrete identity of the subject – the person or monad who longs. Secondly, *Werther* shows us that our very conceptions of external objects are, in themselves, subjective conceptions which may have more to do with the subject's longing, than with the actual *object* of longing. In *Werther*'s case, he fails to realise that the ideas for which he longs – 'Lotte' and 'Nature' – are in fact just that: ideas, his own highly emotional, mental conceptions, which may have only a tenuous connection with actual, external reality. In short, *Werther* shows us that Leibniz's purportedly 'rational' human subject or monad can be an eminently *non-rational* subject – a subject which can be prey to the emotional forces of *Empfindsamkeit* (sensitivity and sentimentality). *Werther* demonstrates that these emotional forces – forces which are not always benevolent or rational – play a large role in shaping our perceptions, and that therefore we can no longer rely upon God, or Leibniz's 'principle of sufficient reason', to endow the universe with order and harmony. Rather, reason can exist only within the subject, through a recognition of the limits of subjectivity.

In parts Six and Seven of this study we will explore these limits of subjectivity – and the later notion of the Daemonic which Goethe associates with them – in two guises. Earlier in this chapter, I referred to Paul Fischer's contention that the Daemonic manifests itself in Goethe's works in two fundamental senses.¹⁵¹ The first of these is Goethe's notion of the daemon, expressed in the poem 'Urworte. Orphisch', as one's *internal* 'personal law', *entelechy* or monadic endowment. It is this essentially Leibnizian notion of the daemon which, as we have seen in this chapter, informs the notion of genius in both 'Mahomets Gesang' and *Werther*. The second is Goethe's intuition of the Daemonic as an apparently *external* force – located in either God or nature – which obstructs the desires and projects of the subject. In Part Six of this study, this latter notion of the Daemonic will be seen – particularly within the context of Goethe's forays into science – as something akin to what Hans Blumenberg refers to as an "ungelöste Rest" ("unresolved remainder") in human experience: a remainder or excess which

¹⁵¹ Fischer, *Goethes Altersweisheit* 28.

escapes the confines of rational cognition or *logos*, and which is therefore only approachable in terms of narratives and images (*mythoi*).¹⁵²

5.9. Goethe's Early Romanticism and the Concept of the Limit (*Grenze*).

At this point in our discussion, it is apposite to return to two questions which I raised at the beginning of this chapter. The first of these questions is: Was the young Goethe a Romantic, and if so, what kind of a Romantic was he? Our answer, if we take 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, to at least partially secularise the ancient Platonic/Christian pattern of Paradise/Fall/Return by naturalising it. This is not to suggest that Goethe was a Platonist – indeed, his focus on the natural world suggests to us that he was not. But his Spinoza-inspired 'natural religion' nevertheless retains a central tenet of Platonism: the notion that one's life is a gradual process of emergence from, and returning to, the divine – a process of *Verselbsten* (self-creation or becoming-self) and *Entselbstigen* (unselfing). 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 secularisation, a movement which took place along side, and not necessarily in opposition to, the Enlightenment. As we have seen, this notion of returning to a divinely-infused nature runs through many of Goethe's early works: in particular, 'Mahomets Gesang' and *Werther*.

Our second question arises from a suggestion (alluded to earlier in this chapter) by Benno von Wiese regarding the temporal order of Goethe's notion of the Daemonic. Does the notion of the Daemonic – as a conduit between the secular and the divine – permeate Goethe's early *Sturm und Drang* works before he actually uses the term in later works like 'Mächtiges Überraschen', 'Urworte. Orphisch', *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and Eckermann's *Gespräche*?¹⁵³ 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

¹⁵² Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 437. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 401.

¹⁵³ See Benno von Wiese, 'Das Dämonische und seine Gegenkräfte in der Tragödie Goethes', *Die Deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel* 81. Wiese argues that the term 'daemonic' belongs to the old Goethe, whereas the experience of the Daemonic occurs most readily in Goethe's 'dithyrambic experience of the Genius' during the *Sturm und Drang* period.

Stoic notion of genius as an external guardian divinity was gradually replaced by an eminently 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.¹⁵⁴ 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* which 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 enormous 'All' from which we emanate and to which we return.

But with the attempt to return to nature, to fuse the subject with the natural world, new decidedly modern issues, issues which relate to subjectivity, come into focus. The genius, the prototype of the youthful artist who longs for nature (a prototype which, as we have seen, 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 '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 which I find in Goethe's early Romanticism: a Romanticism which focuses solely on the expansion of subjectivity through limitless longing. This kind of longing is expressed most clearly in 'Mahomets Gesang' and in *Werther*, both of which end in acts of *Entselbstigen* or 'un-selfing'. 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 which may actually be *absent* in the external world. In short, the quest for 'nature' may quickly become a solipsistic quest for the self: for a subjectively conceived, sentimentally constructed concept of nature that has little to do with external realities.

¹⁵⁴ See, in this connection, Kant's definition of genius as an inborn mental predisposition through which nature gives rules to art. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, § 46-50. Here we should note that although Kant's definition of genius emerges from earlier discourses on genius like those propagated by Edward Young, Alexander Gerard's *Essay on Genius* (1774), and the early *Sturm und Drang Genielehre* of Herder and Goethe, his notion of genius is also at the same time a departure from earlier discussions of the concept. Although Kant follows Young, Herder and Goethe by seeing genius as emerging from the sphere of nature (see *Kritik der Urteilskraft* §46) at the same time he insists that the artist must nevertheless subject the basic material (*Stoff*) of genius to the formal principles of educated talent (§47). Kant supplements this last statement with the proposition that pure creativity or imagination in isolation from taste (*Geschmack*) and judgement (*Urteilskraft*) produces only 'Unsinn' or 'nonsense'. Accordingly Kant asserts (§50) that "Der Geschmack ist, so wie die Urteilskraft überhaupt, die Disziplin (oder Zucht) des Genies" ("Taste, like the judgment in general, is the discipline (or training) of genius"). Kant, *Werke in Sechs Bänden Band V Kritik der Urteilskraft und Schriften zur Naturphilosophie* 421. Translated by J.H. Bernard in: Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (New York: Hafner Press, 1951) 163. For a discussion of the ways in which Kant's discussion genius develops earlier *Sturm und Drang* discussions of the term, see Blumberger, *Das Geheimnis des Schöpferischen* 65-71.

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 idealised concept of nature – the protagonist of unlimited Romanticism must come to recognise limits, boundaries or *Grenzen*. These obstructing forces or *Grenzen* – termed *Grenzsituationen* (limit or boundary situations) by Benno von Wiese – appear to be located both within and outside of the subject. It is to Goethe’s attempts to recognise and theorise these ‘daemonic’ *Grenzsituationen* – through his forays into science and his investigations of the Critical Philosophy of Kant – that we will turn in the following chapter.

6. Subjectivity within Limits: The Philosophical Origins of Goethe's Later Notion of the Daemonic.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the way in which Goethe develops a response to the problematic of unlimited subjectivity which I have characterised, in the previous section of this study, as being the hallmark of his early Romanticism. This variety or 'mode' of Romanticism is most readily found in Goethe's writings of the *Sturm und Drang* period, particularly in early lyrics like 'Mahomets Gesang' and 'Prometheus', and in *Werther*. The central characteristic of Goethe's early Romanticism is the concept of 'longing' – a concept which appears in Goethe's works under a constellation of different terms (*Sehnsucht, Verlangen, Streben*), and which has as its distant origin the longing or desire for the forms (*eide*) which we found, in Part Two of this study, in Plato's dialogues, particularly the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. We have already seen, in parts Four and Five of this study, the way in which Plato's understanding of the Daemonic as a mode of mediation between the material world and the divine realm of the forms, was crucially altered and immanentised by the thought of the *Stürmer und Dränger*, especially Herder and Goethe. The early works of both Herder and Goethe valorise an ancient concept in a decidedly modern way. The concept of genius, a concept originally ascribed to mythological, semi-divine intermediaries, spirits, or daemons, functions, for both Herder and Goethe, as a 'daemonic' link between human subjectivity and a divinely infused, pantheistic or panentheistic 'Nature'. By constructing an idealised image of ancient Greece as the epoch in which an absolute coalescence or unity between the human and natural took place, Herder, Goethe, and particularly Schiller define the age of modernity (for them, that of late eighteenth century Germany) as a period in which humanity alienates itself from nature by treating it as an abstract concept, thereby overlooking its essentially visceral, sensuous, and instinctive qualities. Only 'The Ancients', according to this aesthetic-historical narrative, were able to achieve an instinctive oneness with nature, a oneness which we moderns can only hope to imitate.

As a response to the task of re-approximating the supposed oneness with nature enjoyed by the Ancient Greeks, Goethe sets out to write a new, dithyrambic German poetry which seeks to 'daemonically' heal the split between the human and the natural. In this connection, 'Mahomets Gesang' displays the influence of Leibniz's *Monadology* upon the young Goethe. The poem depicts subjectivity as a surging, monadic, liquid force that longs to unify itself with external objects. For Goethe, as for Plato, this longing is both erotic and poetic, but its desired object is fundamentally different from Plato's *eide*. Both Mahomet, and after him, Werther, wish to unify themselves with external, natural objects: in

Mahomet's case, the landscape which surrounds him, and ultimately the Ocean, in Werther's case, the idyllic, innocent and naïve conception of nature embodied for him in the character of Lotte. But, as is demonstrated by the fate which eventually befalls Werther, the aesthetics of Goethe's early Romanticism emphasise subjective longing or striving at the expense of the discrete identities of external objects or nature. As a counter-narrative or *mythos* to the serenely rational world-view of Leibniz's *Monadology*, *Werther* shows us how the unlimited subjectivity found in Goethe's early Romanticism runs the risk of narcissistically constructing an idea of 'nature' which serves only to gratify the subjective yearnings or longings of the Leibnizian monadic subject, thereby obscuring 'real' nature, the nature of sensuous external objects. In this connection, *Werther* demonstrates that Leibniz's divine *logos* or 'principle of sufficient reason' cannot account for the desire of the modern subject to achieve absolute and complete self-realisation (*Selbstverwirklichung*).

The question, then, for Goethe, runs as follows. Is it possible to conceive of a form of subjective longing which functions within limits – that is to say, a longing which understands and celebrates a reciprocal kinship between the human and the natural, between human subjectivity and external objects – while at the same time avoiding the Wertherian trap of merely constructing a sentimental, fictional image of 'nature' which serves only to gratify the sectional projects and desires of human subjectivity? It will be suggested in this chapter that what traditional German scholarship has called Goethe's *Zeit der Klassik* is in fact a development of, and an explicit response to, his early Romanticism: the Romanticism of unlimited subjectivity which we found in both 'Mahomets Gesang' and *Werther*. This response will be seen to prepare the way for Goethe's later conception of the Daemonic as an ambivalent, non-rational force, located in God/Nature, which often serves to obstruct and limit the strivings of the subject – a force which cannot be purely accounted for in terms of reason or *logos*.

6.1. 'Objectivity' and the *Urpflanze* or 'Primal Plant'.

Goethe's immediate response to the problem of overweening subjectivity exemplified by *Werther* was to valorise 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 which he made to *Werther* for the Göschen edition of his works.¹ Of interest, for our purposes, is the way in which the contemporaneity of the *Italienische Reise* and Goethe's growing interest in 'objective' science can be seen as constituent elements of his nascent 'Classicism': a 'Classicism' which developed as a reaction against the dangerous extremes of subjectivity embodied for Goethe in the character of *Werther*. Although our purpose here is not literary biography, it is nevertheless useful to quote Nicholas Boyle's discussion of this problem in Goethe's literary/philosophical development. Speaking of the hopes of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, Boyle writes:

That generation, finding themselves in a book, in *Werther*, had trusted in the power of their own hearts, in the power of love, and, when this proved impotent to change the world, were destroyed by the dissolution of their unapplied emotions...Subjectivity cannot be left to destroy itself, or to die of inanition; the objective world must somehow, somewhere, come to meet it and bear it up.²

For Goethe, the 'objective world' effectively means 'nature': a concept which represents not only discrete, individual organisms, but also, after the examples of Spinoza and Leibniz, an overarching extra-subjective order, a divine *logos* which regulates the relationships between those organisms. *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. Accordingly, the post-*Werther* Goethe travels to Italy with this knowledge in his memory, and with a new program in mind: the 'objective' contemplation, observance, and recording of external objects, particularly plant life and geological formations. 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 which is not self-identical with one's subjectivity, but with which one can nevertheless feel a kinship, is aptly demonstrated by the following entry from the *Italiensiche Reise*, dated October 20:

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, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 407.

² Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 317.

Diesen heitern schönen Tag habe ich unter freiem Himmel zugebracht. Kaum nahe ich mich den Bergen, so werde ich schon wieder vom Gestein angezogen. Ich komme mir vor wie Antäus, der sich immer neu gestärkt fühlt, je kräftiger man ihn mit seiner Mutter Erde in Berührung bringt... Auf dem Wege fand ich schon ganze Felsen Fraueneis zu Tage anstehend, nachdem ich ein sandiges Tongebirg hinter mir gelassen hatte... Man glaubt zuerst, einen aufgeschwemmten Lehrhügel zu sehen, der vom Regen ausgewaschen wäre, doch konnte ich bei näherer Betrachtung von seiner Natur so viel entdecken: das feste Gestein, woraus dieser Teil des Gebirges besteht, ist ein sehr feinblättriger Schieferton, welcher mit Gips abwechselt. Das schiefrige Gestein ist so innig mit Schwefelkies gemischt, daß es, von Luft und Feuchtigkeit berührt, sich ganz und gar verändert. Es schwillt auf, die Lagen verlieren sich, es entsteht eine Art Letten, muschlig, zerbröckelt, auf den Flächen glänzend wie Steinkohlen.³

I spent the whole of this beautiful day in the open air. The moment I get near mountains, I become interested again in rocks and minerals. I seem to be an Antaeus who always feels new strength whenever he is brought into contact with his mother earth... On the way here, after leaving behind some sandstone hills, I came upon whole boulders of muscovite mica, sticking up out of the ground... At first I thought it was alluvial clay which had probably been washed down from the mountains by rain, but, on closer inspection, I found that its solid rock was a finely laminated schist, alternating with bands of gypsum. The schist is so mixed with iron pyrites that, in contact with air and moisture, it undergoes a complete change. It swells, the lamina disappear and a kind of clayey slate is formed, conchoidal and crumbley, with surfaces that glitter like bituminous coal.

Our interest here is not in the accuracy or otherwise of Goethe's geological notations. Rather, my aim is to show the shift that occurs in Goethe's descriptions of natural phenomena between the *Sturm und Drang* years of the early 1770's and the notes taken by Goethe in Italy between 1786 and 1788.⁴ Gone are the Wertherian days when the subject or soul was a mirror (*Spiegel*) of nature.⁵ In the above example, 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

³ Goethe, *Italienische Reise* HA Band XI 109-110. Translated by W.H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer in: Goethe, *Italian Journey 1786-1788* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970) 114.

⁴ It is necessary here to note that although Goethe's *Italienische Reise* records events in Goethe's life which took place between the years of 1786-1788, the actual book itself was only published under the title 'Italiensiche 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*. A third volume was then worked upon by Goethe 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 which Goethe wrote between the years of 1786-1788. In his commentary to the *Italienische Reise*, Herbert von Einem observes that we should regard the book more as an edited version (*Redaktion*) of earlier notes and letters, than as a completely new creation (*Neuschöpfung*) 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 we are 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." ("...the first part of the travel-journal follows very faithfully, and conveys very clearly, the exhilarated mood of those first weeks and months"). HA Band XI 592.

⁵ I refer here to passage dated May 10 which appears in *Werther*, and which is quoted on page 207 of *Part Five* of this study. In this passage Werther describes the soul as a mirror of God/Nature's infinity.

in line with his initial suspicion that it is a clay mound (*Lehmhügel*). Deeper, more detailed examination of the object then reveals a further, hitherto concealed level of information, which forces the subject to adjust and refine its initial understanding in order to accommodate the particularities of the object in question. Such an adjustment shows a level of reciprocity between subject and object which is absent in *Werther*. In that text the subject continually rushes toward interpretations of nature which always mirror his internal emotions. If Werther is happy, as he is in the entry dated July 24, nature is a paradise, but when he is depressed (see, for example, the entry dated August 18) nature becomes a 'monster' (*Ungeheuer*). By contrast, when Goethe does refer to himself in the above excerpt of the *Italienische Reise*, his reference shows a new understanding of the relationship between nature and human subjectivity.

Goethe compares himself to Antaeus, 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, which 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.⁶ Of interest for our purposes is the way in which Goethe's reference to this myth reflects his developing ideas about subjectivity. 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. 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 the *Italienische Reise* learns to adapt his subjectivity to external conditions, thereby strengthening his selfhood. The lesson which Goethe learns from the myth of Antaeus runs as follows: when one loses contact with nature as a collection of autonomous organisms 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 particularities of external phenomena, can there be reciprocity between subject and object.

The lessons of *Werther* and the *Italienische Reise* were also applied by Goethe in the field of aesthetics, most notably in the essay 'Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil' ('Simple Imitation, Manner, Style'), written in 1789 for Wieland's 'Der Teutsche Merkur'. In this connection it is necessary to note the following aesthetic warning outlined by Goethe in this essay, a warning which,

⁶ See Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* Volume II (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990) 146-7.

according to Herbert von Einem,⁷ can be seen as one of the effects of the turn to objectivity which characterises Goethe's later thinking:

Unterläßt ein...Künstler, sich an die Natur zu halten and an die Natur zu denken, so wird er sich immer mehr von der Grundfeste der Kunst entfernen, seine Manier wird immer leerer und unbedeutender werden, je weiter sie sich von der einfachen Nachahmung und von dem Stil entfernt.⁸

...if...an artist fails to adhere to and respect nature, he will move further away from the foundations of art, and his manner will become the more vacuous and insignificant the further he moves away from simple imitation and from style.

The artist, suggests Goethe, 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 'Manner' -- his subjective appropriation, perhaps even his distortion, of external objects -- then it is to the detriment of his art. We will reconsider this essay in more detail later in this chapter, in our discussion of Goethe's 'Classicism'. For now I wish merely 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 which he brings to scientific enterprises. Indeed, many of the ideas outlined in 'Einfache Nachahmung der Natur' and in the *Italienische Reise* seem to presage much of the content of a later essay by Goethe on the subject of cognitive theory as it applies to science: 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt' ('The Experiment as Mediator between Object and Subject'), written in April 1792. In the introductory paragraph to this essay, Goethe gives an outline of the Werther-style approach to the cognition of external objects -- an approach which, he suggests, must be abandoned if 'objective' scientific research is to take place:

Sobald der Mensch die Gegenstände um sich her gewahr wird, betrachtet er sie in Bezug auf sich selbst, und mit Recht. Denn es hängt sein ganzes Schicksal davon ab, ob sie ihm gefallen oder mißfallen, ob sie ihn anziehen oder abstoßen, ob sie ihm nutzen oder schaden. Diese ganz natürliche Art die Sachen anzusehen und zu beurteilen scheint so leicht zu sein als sie notwendig ist, und doch ist der Mensch dabei tausend Irrtümern ausgesetzt, die ihn oft beschämen und ihm das Leben verbittern. Ein weit schwereres Tagewerk übernehmen diejenigen, die durch den Trieb nach Kenntnis angefeuert die Gegenstände der Natur an sich selbst und in ihren Verhältnissen untereinander zu beobachten streben, von einer Seite verlieren sie den Maßstab der ihnen zu Hülfe kam, wenn sie als Menschen die Dinge in Bezug

⁷ See Herbert von Einem's commentary on this essay. HA Band XII 577.

⁸ Goethe, 'Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil', HA Band XII 34. Translated by Ellen von Nardroff and Ernest H. von Nardroff in: Goethe, 'Simple Imitation, Manner, Style', Goethe: The Collected Works Volume III: Essays on Art and Literature 73.

auf sich betrachteten. Eben den Maßstab des Gefallens und Mißfallens, des Anziehens und Abstoßens, des Nutzens und Schadens; diesem sollen sie ganz entsagen, sie sollen als gleichgültige und gleichsam göttliche Wesen suchen und untersuchen, was ist, und nicht, was behagt.⁹

As the human being becomes aware of objects in his environment, he will relate them to himself, and rightly so since his fate hinges on whether these objects please or displease him, attract or repel him, help or harm him. This natural way of seeing and judging things seems as easy as it is essential, although it can lead to a thousand errors – often the source of humiliation and bitterness in our life. A far more difficult task arises when a person's thirst for knowledge kindles in him a desire to view nature's objects in their own right and in relation to one another. On the one hand he loses the yardstick which came to his aid when he looked at things from the human standpoint: i.e., in relation to himself. This yardstick of pleasure and displeasure, attraction and repulsion, help and harm, he must now renounce absolutely; as a neutral, seemingly godlike being he must seek out and examine what is, not what pleases.

The process of relating all external objects to the self, to one's emotions, likes and dislikes, is – Goethe suggests – what leads us into 'a thousand errors'. This is due to the fact that objects – including human objects, like, for example, Lotte in Goethe's *Werther* – do not function as extensions of the subject's own will. Indeed, they may have an existence which 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. This, it seems, is the fate which befalls Werther.

There are two crucial terms in this passage which require our 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 which 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 which oppose, or even obstruct, our subjective desires. In the above passage Goethe interprets this sense of *Gegenstand* in a scientific context. Often the scientist has a hypothesis which, through an experiment, he seeks to demonstrate, usually through the manipulation of external objects under certain conditions. But in many cases, the objects (*Gegenstände*) of nature may oppose, or even contradict, the theories which scientists may project upon them, and this, according to Goethe, demonstrates "die Disproportion unseres Verstandes zu der Natur der Dinge" ("the disproportion between our intellect

⁹ Goethe, 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', HA Band XIII 10. Translated by Douglas Miller in: Goethe, 'The Experiment as Mediator between Object and Subject', *Goethe The Collected Works. Volume XII: Scientific Studies* ed. and trans. Douglas Miller (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994) 11.

and the nature of things...").¹⁰ The implicit suggestion of this passage is that our understanding of objects is deepened when the desires, wishes, or theories that we impose upon them are obstructed by the external conditions of concrete reality. Thus, we should always be cognisant of the gap between the idea and the thing, between concept and object, between 'rational' theories (*logoi*) and the world.

The significance of the second key term in this passage follows directly from our discussion of *Gegenstand*. If the objects of external nature turn out to contradict and oppose our wishes and theories, then we must be prepared to adjust, reformulate or even abandon these wishes and theories in order to accommodate ourselves to external reality. We must, says Goethe, practice *Entsagung* (renunciation). 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 which, later in this chapter, will become crucial to our interpretation of his later conception of the Daemonic: "das Leben weist uns bei jedem Schritte zurecht" ("life corrects us at every step").¹¹

At the conclusion of 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', Goethe summarises his comments by suggesting that if:

...die Einbildungskraft und der Witz ungeduldig manchmal vorseilen, so gibt die Verfahrensart selbst den Maßstab des Punktes an, wohin sie wieder zurückzukehren haben.¹²

...imagination and wit sometimes run impatiently ahead on the path, the method itself will fix the bounds to which they must return.

The imagination, the impulse to create, construct, theorise and project must, Goethe argues, be subjected to and secured by an empirical boundary (*Maßstab*), lest it float free from concrete reality altogether. It is this notion of the bounding line or limit which will become crucial in our later discussion of Goethe's Classicism.

¹⁰ Goethe, 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', *HA* Band XIII 18. Trans. Miller, *Goethe The Collected Works Volume XII: Scientific Studies* 16.

¹¹ Goethe, 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', *HA* Band XIII 11. Trans. Miller, *Goethe The Collected Works Volume XII: Scientific Studies* 12.

¹² Goethe, 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', *HA* Band XIII 20. Trans. Miller, *Goethe The Collected Works Volume XII: Scientific Studies* 17.

Here we can begin to understand how Goethe's turn toward 'objectivity' and science 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 in God/Nature. In 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', Goethe becomes aware of a gap which exists between the internally generated theories 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 a limitless sense of *Selbstverwirklichung* (self-realisation). On the contrary, Goethe intends to show in his essay that the subject and its attendant desires, projects and theories (*logoi*) are necessarily subjected to determination, limitation, and sometimes even obstruction, by external forces of which it often has little understanding – forces which are perhaps better understood within the inexact narrative mode of *mythos*.

For now it is necessary to examine another side of Goethe's approach to science, a side which suggests that he did not always follow the dicta laid down in 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt'. I am referring here to Goethe's desire to uncover a hidden universal key which might unlock and reveal the secrets of nature, a key which began as the *Urpflanze* (Primal Plant) and ended as the *Urphänomen* (Primal Phenomenon).

Goethe's notion of the *Urpflanze* or 'Primal Plant' is first touched upon in his *Italienische Reise*. In a letter written to Herder from Naples – dated May 17 1787– Goethe writes:

Ferner muß ich Dir vertrauen, daß ich dem Geheimnis der Pflanzenzeugung und –organisation ganz nahe bin und daß es das einfachste ist, was nur gedacht werden kann. Unter diesem Himmel kann man die schönsten Beobachtungen machen. Den Hauptpunkt, wo der Keim steckt, habe ich ganz klar und zweifellos gefunden; alles übrige seh' ich auch schon im ganzen, und nur noch einige Punkte müssen bestimmter werden. 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 ins 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.¹³

I must also tell you confidentially that I am very close to the secret of the reproduction and organization of plants, and that it is the simplest thing imaginable. This climate offers the best possible conditions for making observations. To the main question – where the germ is hidden – I am quite certain I have found the answer; to the others I already see a general solution, and only a few points will have to be formulated more precisely. The Primal Plant is going to be

¹³ Goethe, *Italienische Reise* HA Band XI 323-324. Trans. Auden and Mayer, *Italian Journey* 310-311.

the strangest creature in the world, which Nature herself shall envy me. With this model and the key to it, it will be possible to go on for ever inventing plants and know that their existence is logical; that is to say, if they do not actually exist, they could, for they are not the shadowy phantoms of a vain imagination, but possess an inner necessity and truth. The same law will be applicable to all other living organisms.

This passage demonstrates the extent to which Goethe's so-called 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 we saw from the geological notations quoted earlier in this chapter, Goethe was very much in the process of developing his skills of observation, skills which enabled him to adjust and fine-tune his initial subjective presentiments regarding external phenomena. But at the same time, Goethe's conception of the *Urpflanze* appears to contain all of the hubris and overweening ambition of his early Romanticism. Echoing 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 wunderbarste Geschöpf von der Welt' ('the strangest – or most wonderful – creature in the world'). Goethe intimates that he will not just observe nature – he will go beyond it by uncovering and harnessing its inner laws, inner laws which will enable him theoretically to demonstrate the possibility and 'inner necessity' (*innerliche Notwendigkeit*) of plants which go beyond the bounds of phenomenal experience – plants which *could* exist, as opposed to plants which *do* exist.

Seen in this light, Goethe's turn toward objectivity is not necessarily as 'objective' and 'sensuous' as it might first seem. This is due to the fact that, at least for the Goethe of the *Italienische Reise*, all natural objects were still considered 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 search for the *Urpflanze* arises out of the imposition of an eminently abstract and subjective idea – in effect, a kind of *logos* in the sense of essence or *ousia* – onto external reality.¹⁴ Goethe himself perceives this quite clearly when he writes, in an entry from the *Italienische Reise* dated March 25 1787, that his *Urpflanze* may be so 'sublimiert' (sublimated or abstracted) as to be useless as a model for understanding actual botanical objects,¹⁵ a self-critique which presages Schiller's later description of the *Urpflanze* as being akin to a Kantian 'idea'. Although, when attempting to uncover the

¹⁴ Here I use the term *logos* in the following sense outlined by F.E. Peters in his Greek Philosophical Terms. Peters observes that Plato sees the dialectician as "the one who can give an account (*logos*) of the true being (or essence, *ousia*) of something." See Plato, The Republic 534b. F.E. Peters, Greek Philosophical Terms 111.

¹⁵ Goethe, Italienische Reise HA Band XI 222.

Urpflanze, Goethe may wish to find the inner truths of nature, this search may in fact reflect a subjective desire to uncover his own inner truth or inner necessity: the *Keim* (perhaps better translated as sprout or root) which lies beneath, and drives, the trajectory of his own life.

6.2. *Bildung and Entelechy.*

The parallel connections between plant-life and human development were not yet clear to Goethe at this point in his philosophical development, although when he ends the above excerpt of the *Italienische Reise* with the grandiose suggestion that the 'same law [that of the *Urpflanze*] will be applicable to all living organisms', one presumes that he includes humans within such a broad category. This suggestion leads us to ask the following question: if something like the *Urpflanze* could be a principle of biological development within the sphere of human life, then what form would such a human *Keim* (sprout, root) take? 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: Morphology (*Morphologie*).¹⁶ Morphology, wrote Goethe in 1796:

Ruht auf der Überzeugung daß alles was sei sich auch andeuten und zeigen müsse... Das unorganische, das vegetative, das animale, das menschliche deutet sich alles selbst an, es erscheint als das was es ist unserm äußern [und] unserm inneren Sinn. Die Gestalt ist ein bewegliches, ein werdendes, ein vergehendes. Gestaltenlehre ist Verwandlungslehre. Die Lehre der Metamorphose ist der Schlüssel zu allen Zeichen der Natur...¹⁷

...rests on the conviction that everything that is must also manifest and show itself... The inorganic, the vegetable, the animal, the human, all manifests itself, appears as what it is, to our outer and inner sense. Form is something mobile, that comes into being and passes away. The science of form is the science of transformation. The doctrine of metamorphosis is the key to all of nature's signs...

¹⁶ Nicholas 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..." *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume II 459.

¹⁷ Goethe, 'Morphologie', *Goethe: Die Schriften zur Naturwissenschaft* bearbeitet von Dorothea Kuhn, Erste Abteilung Band X (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1964) 128. Brackets added. Translated by Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume II 459.

Goethe's attempt to apply his burgeoning 'science of transformation' within 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)*, published in 1780.¹⁸ 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".¹⁹ Goethe would eventually publish an essay on Blumenbach's theories titled 'Bildungstrieb' ('The Formative Impulse') in 1802.

Of more interest for our present purposes 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 Part Three of this study we saw how, for Aristotle, the *entelechy* functions as the organism's 'first actuality' – a kind of seed or kernel which is the cause of the organism's existence, and which holds within itself the biological prototype or imprint of the organism's full development. For Aristotle, then, the *entelechy* is the source of what Blumenbach and Goethe would 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 Aristotelean notion of *Bildung* as 'formation' or 'self-formation' from Aristotle, through figures as various as the sixteenth century Swiss natural philosopher Paracelsus (1493-1541), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), 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 Aristotelean-Stoic image of striving self-generation or 'putting into work' ..."²⁰ 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: "All simple substances or created Monads may be called Entelechies, because they have in themselves a certain perfection... There is in them a sufficiency which makes them the source of their internal activities."²¹ Likewise, a new "Platonised, aesthetic-humanistic"

¹⁸ Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume II 30.

¹⁹ E. Lichtenstein, 'Bildung', *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Band I 924. Lichtenstein observes of Goethe: "Er findet seit 1785 im Bildungsbegriff den Schlüssel zu den 'großen Gedanken' der Natur. Als 'das Höchste des Ausdrucks' nimmt er, wie Herder... Blumenbachs Begriff des Bildungstriebes (nisus formativus) auf". (924).

²⁰ "Eine dynamische Neuprägung im Sinne der aristotelisch-stoischen Vorstellung des strebenden Ins-Werk-Setzens..." Lichtenstein, 'Bildung', *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*: Band I 922.

²¹ Leibniz, *Monadology* § 18, 254-255.

interpretation of the term *Bildung* is attributed to early German translations of Shaftesbury's notion of 'inward form' as *innere Bildung*.²²

Apart from Herder, the most famous of Goethe's contemporaries to use this term was Wilhelm von Humboldt. *Bildung* Humboldt wrote, echoing Leibniz:

...hat ihren Ursprung allein in dem Inneren der Seele, und kann durch äussere Veranstaltungen nur veranlasst, nie hervorgebracht werden.

...has its origin only in the interior of the soul and can only be occasioned by external arrangements, never produced by them...²³

Humboldt's notion of *Bildung* or formation as self-generating and internal demonstrates the extent to which he remained confined to a Leibniz-based model of the soul. For Leibniz, we might recall, holds that the monad is 'isolated', 'windowless' and not susceptible of alteration by external sources. It is also this Leibnizian model of the soul which we found, in the previous section of this study, to underlie Goethe's *Sturm und Drang* works: in particular the poem 'Mahomets Gesang', and *Werther*. In 'Mahomets Gesang' Goethe presents us with an early model of the monadic genius-as-daemon. Mahomet, embodied in a stream which 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 which 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 (*mythos*), a critique which would influence Goethe for the remainder of his intellectual development and which arguably contributed 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 we saw earlier in this chapter, Goethe's initial response to this problem of overweening or excessive subjectivity was to turn toward 'objective' nature. But even this turn has its own internal problems – problems which Goethe himself

²² Lichtenstein, 'Bildung', *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Band I 923.

²³ Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Gesammelte Werke* Band VII (Berlin, 1841-52, repr. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988) 71. Translated by Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume II 30.

acknowledges. The scientific approach to nature always carries with it the risk of a fall back into abstraction, and therefore into error – a kind of drift away from sensuous nature. This is because, according to Goethe, at the very point of:

...Übergang von der Erfahrung zum Urteil, von der Erkenntnis zur Anwendung ist es, wo dem Menschen alle seine inneren Feinde auflauern, Einbildungskraft, die ihn schon da mit ihren Fittichen in Höhe hebt, wenn er noch immer den Erdboden zu berühren glaubt, Ungeduld, Vorsehnlichkeit, Selbstzufriedenheit, Steifheit, Gedankenform, vorgefaßte Meinung, Bequemlichkeit, Leichtsin, Veränderlichkeit, und wie die ganze Schar mit ihrem Gefolge heißen mag, alle liegen hier im Hinterhalte und überwältigen unversehens den handelnden, so auch den stillen, von allen Leidenschaften gesichert scheinenden Beobachter.²⁴

...transition from empirical evidence to judgment, cognition to application, all the inner enemies lie in wait: imagination, which sweeps him away on its wings while he still believes himself to touch the ground; impatience; haste; self-satisfaction; rigidity; formalistic thought; prejudice; ease; frivolity; fickleness – this whole throng and its retinue. Here they lie in ambush and surprise not only the active observer but also the contemplative one who appears safe from all passion.

The message of this passage is simply that absolute 'objectivity' is chimerical. To step outside of the self and its subjective passions and presentiments is, as Goethe acknowledges earlier in the same essay, to be Godlike: it is something towards which we can only strive. Goethe appears to have been aware at this point in his scientific studies and, indeed, in his life, that precisely *because* the self is not capable of Godlike objectivity, and in the absence of an external deity, divine *logos*, or Leibnizian 'principle of sufficient reason', there must be some kind of regulative idea or function, some kind of limit located within the subject: a limit which can prevent the Leibnizian monadic subject from descending into the boundless narcissism of a Werther.

²⁴ Goethe 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', *HA* Band XIII 14-15. Trans. Miller, *Goethe The Collected Works Volume XII: Scientific Studies* 14.

6.3. Science and the *Urphänomen* or 'Primal Phenomenon'.

Goethe's grand notion of applying the 'science of transformation' to human life continues in his notion of the *Urphänomen*, which is something like a broader adaptation or development of the same impulses which gave rise to the *Urpflanze*. Perhaps Goethe's clearest statement regarding the *Urphänomen* can be found in text published in 1810 – but a text which preoccupied Goethe between the years of 1790 and 1810 – his *Zur Farbenlehre* (*Theory of Colours*), in which he writes:

Ja wir möchten jene im allgemeinen ausgesprochene Haupterscheinung ein Grund- und Urphänomen nennen, und es sei uns erlaubt, hier, was wir darunter verstehen, sogleich beizubringen... Das, was wir in der Erfahrung gewahr werden, sind meistens nur Fälle, welche sich mit einiger Aufmerksamkeit unter allgemeine empirische Rubriken bringen lassen. Diese subordinieren sich abermals unter wissenschaftliche Rubriken, welche weiter hinaufdeuten, wobei uns gewisse unerläßliche Bedingungen des Erscheinenden näher bekannt werden. Von nun an fügt sich alles nach und nach unter höhere Regeln und Gesetze, die sich aber nicht durch Worte und Hypothesen dem Verstande, sondern gleichfalls durch Phänomene dem Anschauen offenbaren. Wir nennen sie Urphänomene, weil nichts in der Erscheinung über ihnen liegt, sie aber dagegen völlig geeignet sind, daß man stufenweise, wie wir vorhin hinaufgestiegen, von ihnen herab bis zu dem gemeinsten Falle der täglichen Erfahrung niedersteigen kann.²⁵

We venture, once for all, to call the leading appearance in question, as generally described in the foregoing pages, a primordial and elementary phenomenon; and we may here be permitted at once to state what we understand by the term... The circumstances which come under our notice in ordinary observation are, for the most part, cases which, with some attention, admit of being classed under general leading facts. These again arrange themselves under theoretical rubrics which are more comprehensive, and through which we become better acquainted with certain indispensable conditions of appearances in detail. From henceforth everything is gradually arranged under higher rules and laws, which, however, are not to be made intelligible by words and hypotheses to the understanding merely, but, at the same time, by real phenomena to the senses. We call these primordial phenomena, because nothing appreciable by the senses lies beyond them, on the contrary, they are perfectly fit to be considered as a fixed point to which we first ascend, step by step, and from which we may, in like manner, descend to the commonest of everyday experience.

In this passage the *Urphänomene* are clearly general principles which may be abstracted from the subject's experience of external objects. From our observations of sensuous nature, we derive empirical categories ("empirische Rubriken") which then lead us to understand the general "conditions of appearances" ("Bedingungen des Erscheinenden"). These conditions of appearances are the windows through which we experience phenomena, and in this regard they regulate and mark the limits of what

²⁵ Goethe, *Zur Farbenlehre* HA Band XIII 367-368. Translated by Charles Lock Eastlake in: Goethe, *Theory of Colours* (London: Frank Cass, 1967) 71-72.

can be known about the external world.²⁶ In fact, in a conversation with Eckermann regarding the *Farbenlehre* dated February 18 1829, Goethe describes the sense of astonishment which accompanies an intuition of the *Urphänomen* in precisely this way – that is to say, as a kind of limit:

‘Das Höchste, wozu der Mensch gelangen kann’, sagte Goethe... ‘ist das Erstaunen; und wenn ihn das Urphänomen in Erstaunen setzt, so sei er zufrieden; ein Höheres kann es ihm nicht gewähren, und ein Weiteres soll er nicht dahinter suchen; hier ist die Grenze.’²⁷

‘The highest that man can attain in these matters’ said Goethe, ‘is astonishment; if the primary phenomenon causes this, let him be satisfied; more it cannot bring; and he should forbear to seek for anything further behind it: here is the limit.’

Clearly, Goethe’s description of the *Urphänomen*, and his related discussion of the ‘conditions of appearances’, are derived, at least in part, from his exposure to Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*), the first or ‘A’ edition of which was published in 1781: some nine years before Goethe commenced work on the *Farbenlehre*. We will turn to Goethe’s understanding of Kant shortly. For now I wish to discuss the way in which 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 conditions, then our capacity to know nature is limited by these conditions – it cannot pass beyond them. In this way we are internally limited. If, moreover, these internal limits circumscribe and delineate exactly what we 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 which corresponds directly with the mode, the ‘conditions of appearances’, through which we apprehend 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 of existence which tells us something about the very essence of Being.

At this point, we can begin to speculate as to whether Goethe’s notion of the Daemonic might be seen as something akin to an existential principle or *Urphänomen*. The 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 fate which acts as a formal boundary for the subject, not unlike

²⁶ This is the view of T. Rebeck in his article ‘Phänomen’ in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Rebeck writes that for Goethe the *Urphänomen* “stellt...die äußerste Grenze menschlicher Erkenntnismöglichkeiten dar” (“represents the outermost boundary of the possibilities for human knowledge”). T. Rebeck, ‘Phänomen’, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Band VII 474.

²⁷ Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe* 244. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 296.

Aristotle's notion of the *entelechy*, is demonstrated by the following two passages. The first appears in a letter which Goethe wrote to Hegel on April 13 1821:

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 Tür zu bringen, überzeugt, daß er sie so gut wie ihre Geschwister behandeln wird.²⁸

Since you behaved in such a friendly manner towards the Primal Phenomenon, in fact granted myself a relationship with these daemonic beings, so I take the liberty to bring firstly a similar pair before the door of the philosopher, convinced that he will treat them as well as he did their siblings.

The second appears in Goethe's *Maximen und Reflexionen* (*Maxims and Reflections*):

Wenn ich mich beim Urphänomen zuletzt beruhige, so ist es doch auch nur Resignation; aber es bieibt ein großer Unterschied, ob ich mich an den Grenzen der Menschheit resigniere oder innerhalb einer hypothetischen Beschränktheit meines bornierten Individuums.²⁹

If the primordial phenomenon finally reassures me, it is but resignation in another form; however, it is very different if resignation comes at the frontier of human existence or within the hypothetical confines of my own narrow-minded individuality.

The letter to Hegel shows us nothing more than a thematic link between the *Urphänomen* and Goethe's idea of the Daemonic. The passage from *Maximen und Reflexionen*, on the other hand, tells us a great deal more. In this passage Goethe speculates as to whether the *Urphänomen* marks an objective limit beyond which human knowledge, the capacities of human *logos*, cannot penetrate – the 'Grenzen der Menschheit' ('limits of humanity')³⁰, so to speak – or whether, on a less grandiose scale, it simply represents the subjective limits of Goethe's own in-born capacities. Either way, Goethe seems to be saying that in dealing with the *Urphänomen* we are dealing with the limits of knowledge – whether these limits are general (applying to humanity in total) or personal (applying to Goethe alone).

²⁸ Goethe, 'An Hegel', Weimar den 13. April 1821, Briefe 1175 of *Goethes Briefe Hamburger Ausgabe* Band III 504.

²⁹ Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen* HA Band XII 367.

³⁰ Here I am referring to Goethe's poem 'Grenzen der Menschheit' ('Limits of Human Nature') written in 1781. This poem concludes with the following lines: "Ein kleiner Ring / Begrenzt unser Leben, / Und viele Geschlechter / Reihn sie dauernd / An ihres Daseins / Unendliche Kette." ("A little ring / Confines our life, / And many generations / Link up, enduring / On their existence's / Endless chain."). HA Band I 146-147. Translated by Vernon Watkins in: *Goethe Selected Poems* 83-85. In his commentary on the poem, Erich Trunz observes that the poem depicts "das Gefühl des Menschen, der unter einer göttlichen Wirkung steht" ("the feelings of the human, who stands under a divine influence"). HA Band I 536-537.

How, then, linking these sentiments back to Goethe's letter to Hegel, can we see the Daemonic as being an *Urphänomen*? The answer to this question, if we are to follow one of Goethe's many suggestions about the nature of the Daemonic which appear in Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, is that it exceeds and surpasses "Alles, was uns begrenzt" ("everything which limits us").³¹ That is to say, the Daemonic is an *Urphänomen* because the *Urphänomene* mark the very limits of human reason or *logos*, limits which 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 which seems to be the logical extension of Goethe's comments in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, can be found in an essay written by Walter Benjamin, an essay which takes as its subject a novel that Goethe published in 1809: *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (*Elective Affinities*). 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.³² 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. Towards the beginning of his essay, Benjamin makes the following remark:

...genau um die Zeit, da Kants Werk vollendet und die Wegekarte durch den kahlen Wald des Wirklichen entworfen war, begann das Goethesche Suchen nach den Samen ewigen Wachstums. Es kam jene Richtung des Klassizismus, welche weniger das Ethische und Historische zu erfassen suchte als das Mythische und Philologische. Nicht auf die werdenden Ideen, sondern auf die geformten Gehalte, wie sie Leben und Sprache verwahrten, ging ihr Denken. Nach Herder und Schiller nahmen Goethe und Wilhelm von Humboldt die Führung.³³

...at the exact moment when Kant's work was completed and a map through the bare woods of reality was sketched, the Goethean quest for the seeds of eternal growth began. There came that direction of Classicism which sought to grasp not so much the ethical and historical as the mythic and philological. Its thought did not bear on evolving ideas but on the formed contents preserved in life and language. After Herder and Schiller, it was Goethe and Wilhelm von Humboldt who took the lead.

This passage suggests to us that there is a connection between Goethe's quest for what Benjamin calls the "Samen ewigen Wachstums" ("seeds of eternal growth") and the advent of Kant's Critical

³¹ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band X 175.

³² For a discussion of the theme of the Daemonic in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, see: Gabrielle Bersier, 'Sinnliche Übermacht – übersinnliche Gegenmacht: die dämonische Verwandlung des Eros in der Epoche der *Wahlverwandtschaften*', *Verantwortung und Utopie: zur Literatur der Goethezeit* 404-418. I discuss Bersier's essay on pages 43-44 of *Part One*.

³³ Walter Benjamin, 'Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*', *Gesammelte Schriften* Band I.1 126-127. Trans. Comgold in: Walter Benjamin, 'Goethe's *Elective Affinities*', *Selected Writings Volume I 1913-1926* 298.

Philosophy, and that, moreover, we might find the key to this connection in the movement known as 'Classicism'. The relationships between 'Classicism', Goethean science and Kantianism will be discussed later. 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 content (*Gehalt*), at the expense of sensuous or material content (*Sachgehalt*).³⁴ It is this drift away from the sensuous (for Benjamin, *Sachgehalt*) to the abstract (*Gehalt*) which 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 which Benjamin locates in Goethe's notion of the *Urphänomen*. The motive behind Goethe's researches into nature, according to Benjamin:

...beruht auf bald naivem, bald auch wohl bedachterem Doppelsinn in dem Naturbegriff. Er bezeichnet nämlich bei Goethe sowohl die Sphäre der wahrnehmbaren Erscheinungen wie auch die der anschaulichen Urbilder. Niemals hat doch Goethe Rechenschaft von dieser Synthesis erbringen können. Vergebens suchen seine Forschungen statt philosophischer Ergründung den Erweis für die Identität der beiden Sphären empirisch durch Experimente zu führen. Da er die 'wahre' Natur nicht begrifflich bestimmte, ist er ins fruchtbare Zentrum einer Anschauung niemals gedrungen, die ihn die Gegenwart 'wahrer' Natur als Urphänomen in ihren Erscheinungen suchen hieß, wie er in den Kunstwerken sie voraussetzte.³⁵

...rests upon an ambiguity – sometimes naïve, sometimes doubtless mediated – in the concept of nature. For it designates in Goethe at once the sphere of perceptible phenomena and that of intuitable archetypes. At no time, however, was Goethe able to give an account of this synthesis. Instead of resorting to philosophical investigation, his studies seek in vain through experiments to furnish empirical evidence for the identity of both spheres. Since he did not define 'true' nature conceptually, he never penetrated to the fruitful center of an intuition that bade him seek the presence of 'true' nature as ur-phenomenon in its appearances – something which he presupposed in works of art.

Benjamin's contention is that Goethe's concept of nature is at once sensuous and abstract. The sensuous side of this equation, as we have seen in the *Italienische Reise*, exists in Goethe's increasing willingness, after 1786, to make minute observations of natural objects. By contrast, the abstract element inheres in the philosophical relevance which the concept called 'nature', and related concepts like the *Urpflanze* and the *Urphänomen*, hold for Goethe. The problem isolated in Benjamin's essay can be stated as follows: as soon as Goethe tries to bring his nature research within grander philosophical schemes – philosophical schemes which are suggested in his over-arching concepts or

³⁴ Benjamin, 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften' 127. Trans. Corngold, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' 299.

³⁵ Benjamin, 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften' 147. Trans. Corngold, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' 314.

logoi of the *Urpflanze* and the *Urphänomen* – the sensuousness or material content (*Sachgehalt*) of these researches is obscured, perhaps even obliterated. That is to say, instead of science we get art or philosophy. Thus, Benjamin continues that:

...im Bereich der Kunst allein die Urphänomene – als Ideale – sich der Anschauung darstellen, während in der Wissenschaft die Idee sie vertritt, die den Gegenstand der Wahrnehmung zu bestrahlen, doch in der Anschauung nie zu wandeln vermag. Die Urphänomene liegen der Kunst nicht vor, sie stehen in ihr.³⁶

...only in the domain of art do the ur-phenomena – as ideals – present themselves adequately to perception, whereas in science they are replaced by the idea, which is capable of illuminating the object of perception but never of transforming it in intuition. The ur-phenomena do not exist before art; they subsist within it.

Goethe is confronted, according to Benjamin, by an unbridgeable abyss which lies between sensuous nature – the particular and discrete existences of external objects as presented to the senses – and the theories or *logoi* which we construct 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 knowledge 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 which beckons to be filled with theories and surmises 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 which they attempt to explicate.

It is this abyss or gap between the real and the ideal, and between humans and Gods, according to Benjamin, which corresponds directly with what he describes as Goethe's notion of the Daemonic as the "Erfahrung unfaßbarer Naturzweideutigkeit" ("experience of the incomprehensible ambivalence in nature"), an experience which "begleitet Goethes Anschauung sein Leben lang" ("accompanies Goethe's vision all his life").³⁷ Faced with an irresolvable discontinuity between the idea 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" ("astrology as the canon of mythic thinking") – a canon which Benjamin finds in Goethe's last and most comprehensive poetic statement on the

³⁶ Benjamin, 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften' 148. Trans. Corngold, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' 315.

³⁷ Benjamin, 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften' 150. Trans. Corngold, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' 316.

concept of the Daemonic: the poem 'Urworte. Orphisch' ('Primal Words. Orphic'), written in 1817.³⁸ We 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 Part Seven of our analysis. For now, it is necessary for us to note that Benjamin's critique of Goethe's notions of the *Urpflanze* and the *Urphänomen* is deeply indebted to a similar critique proposed by Schiller as early as 1794. It is to Goethe's account of this critique, and to the collision that it occasioned between Goethe's sensuous understanding of nature and Kantian Idealism, that we will presently turn.

6.4. Goethe's Peculiar 'Kantianism'.

In an essay called 'Glückliches Ereignis' Goethe gives an account of a conversation that took place between him and Schiller on the subject of *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen* (*The Metamorphosis of Plants*). After a meeting of the Natural History Society in Jena, Goethe gave Schiller a summary of his hypothesis that individual plants might be understood as a totality when viewed from the perspective of metamorphosis, a notion which is, at the very least, suggestive of his more sharply defined and ambitious concept of the *Urpflanze*. Goethe reports that in response to this proposition Schiller:

...vernahm und schaute das alles mit großer Teilnahme, mit entschiedener Fassungskraft; als ich aber geendet, schüttelte er den Kopf und sagte: 'Das ist keine Erfahrung, das ist eine Idee.' Ich stutzte, verdrießlich einigermaßen: denn der Punkt, der uns trennte, war dadurch aufs strengste bezeichnet...der alte Groll wollte sich regen, ich nahm mich aber zusammen und versetzte: 'Das kann mir sehr lieb sein, daß ich Ideen habe ohne es zu wissen, und sie sogar mit Augen sehe.'³⁹

...listened and considered all this with great interest, certainly with definite comprehension. But when I had finished, he shook his head and said: "that's not an experience: that's an idea!" I stopped short, actually a bit annoyed; for the point that separated us was thereby brought into clear relief...I was about to give in to my usual animosity, but controlled myself and replied, I don't mind at all the fact that I have ideas without knowing it and can even see them with my eyes.

³⁸ Benjamin, 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften' 150. Trans. Corngold, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' 316-317.

³⁹ Goethe, 'Glückliches Ereignis', HA Band X 540-541. This translation comes from an essay by Hans-Georg Gadamer which can be found in: Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Goethe and Philosophy', *Literature and Philosophy in Dialogue* trans. Robert H. Paslick (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994) 9.

Schiller replied, says Goethe, as an 'educated Kantian' (*gebildeter Kantianer*). The *Urpflanze* was, in Schiller's opinion, an example of something akin to Kant's notion of the 'ideas' of pure reason. The function of these ideas is not, in Kant's view, to refer to actual, empirical objects, but rather:

...um ihm [dem Verstand] 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.⁴⁰

...to prescribe to the understanding its direction towards a certain unity of which it [the understanding] has itself no concept, and in such manner as to unite all the acts of the understanding, in respect of every object, into an absolute whole.

According to Ernst Cassirer, Goethe had at first imagined, during his *Italienische Reise*, that he might find the *Urpflanze* 'out there', in the world, as an empirical object:

Als er in Italien zuerst den Gedanken der Urpflanze faßte, da bedeutete ihm die Urpflanze etwas faktisch Vorhandenes, konkret Existierendes. Er suchte nach ihr – und er war überzeugt, daß er sie eines Tages finden würde...⁴¹

In Italy, when he first conceived the idea of the original plant, he thought of it as something actual, as a concrete existence. He looked for it – and he was convinced that he would one day discover it...

But Goethe himself contradicts this notion, albeit in a source the reliability of which is sometimes questionable: Eckermann's *Gespräche*. On the subject of Kant, Goethe says to Eckermann, in a conversation dated April 11, 1827:

... 'Kant hat nie von mir Notiz genommen, wiewohl ich aus eigener Natur einen ähnlichen Weg ging als er. Meine 'Metamorphose der Pflanzen' habe ich geschrieben, ehe ich etwas von Kant wußte, und doch ist sie ganz im Sinne seiner Lehre...'⁴²

⁴⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* B 384, A 327 Werke in Sechs Bänden Band II 331. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith, *Critique of Pure Reason* 318. Brackets added.

⁴¹ Ernst Cassirer, 'Goethe und die Kantische Philosophie', Rousseau, Kant, Goethe Rainer A. Bast Hg. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1991) 76. Translated by James Gutmann, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall in: Ernst Cassirer, 'Goethe and Kantian Philosophy', Rousseau, Kant and Goethe (New York: Harper and Row, 1945) 75.

⁴² Eckermann, Gespräche mit Goethe 188. Trans. Oxford, Conversations 191.

... 'Kant never took any notice of me, though from my own nature I went a way like his own. I wrote my *Metamorphosis of Plants* before I knew anything about Kant; and yet it is wholly in the spirit of his doctrine...'

Whether or not we accept Goethe's testimony that he was somehow Kantian before having read Kant, it still remains difficult to imagine that the sensuous, decidedly anti-metaphysical Goethe of the *Italienische Reise* would have seen the *Urpflanze* as being in any way similar to the following description given by Kant of the ideas of reason: "...der objektive Gebrauch der reinen Vernunftbegriffe [ist] jederzeit transzendent..." ("The objective employment of the pure concepts of reason is...always transcendent...") says Kant in the section of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* called the 'Transzendental-Dialektik'.⁴³ If the Goethe of the *Italienische Reise* was not Kantian, then the post 1794 Goethe – the Goethe whose activities were increasingly influenced by the thought of Friedrich Schiller – definitely was, albeit in a limited sense. Goethe's own retrospective view on this matter is quite unequivocal. In an essay called 'Einwirkung der neueren Philosophie' ('The Influence of Modern Philosophy') – an essay published in 1820, in which Goethe reflects upon the philosophical influences to which he was exposed in the 1790's – he writes:

[Ich]...gab allen Freunden vollkommen Beifall, die mit Kant behaupteten: wenn gleich alle unsere Erkenntnis mit der Erfahrung angehe, so entspringe sie darum doch nicht eben alle aus der Erfahrung. Die Erkenntnisse a priori ließ ich mir auch gefallen, so wie die synthetischen Urteile a priori...⁴⁴

I applauded my friends, who said with Kant: although all knowledge may be prompted by experience, it does not therefore follow that it arises wholly from experience. I liked the ideas of knowledge *a priori* and synthetic judgments *a priori*.

Goethe's interest in Kant is in fact a direct consequence of the turn towards so-called 'objective' nature as a kind of antidote to the unrestrained subjectivity which characterised the age of *Werther* and the cult of *Empfindsamkeit*. During the time that Goethe spent in Italy between 1786 and 1788, he occupied himself in observing sensuous nature – particularly, as we have seen, plants and geological formations. But simply making notations of particular objects was not enough for Goethe. He needed to synthesise his knowledge into an over-arching whole, a kind of grand theory or *logos* which – even if it remained provisional and theoretical in the spirit of Kant's ideas of pure reason – would

⁴³ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* B 384, A 327 *Werke in Sechs Bänden* Band II 331. Brackets added. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith, *Critique of Pure Reason* 318.

⁴⁴ Goethe, 'Einwirkung der neueren Philosophie', *HA* Band XIII 27. Brackets added. Translated by Douglas Miller in: Goethe 'The Influence of Modern Philosophy', *Goethe: The Collected Works Volume XII: Scientific Studies* 29.

nevertheless provide him with a teleological theory of nature. 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 titled '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 1795/6 and published in the volume *Zur Morphologie* 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 issue:

Die Ähnlichkeit der Tiere untereinander und mit dem Menschen ist in die Augen fallend und im allgemeinen anerkannt, im besondern schwerer zu bemerken, im einzelnen nicht immer sogleich darzutun, öfters verkannt und manchmal gar geleugnet. Die verschiedenen Meinungen der Beobachter sind daher schwer zu vereinigen. Denn es fehlt an einer Norm, an der man die verschiedenen Teile prüfen könnte, es fehlt an einer Folge von Grundsätzen, zu denen man sich bekennen müßte.⁴⁵

The similarity of animals between one another and with humans is clear to the eyes and generally acknowledged, in particular instances more difficult to demonstrate, in individual cases not always immediately noticeable, quite often overlooked and sometimes even denied. The different opinions of the observers are consequently difficult to unify. Because there is no norm against which one can test different parts, there is also no sequence of principles to which one must adhere.

The problems sketched here by Goethe are similar to those which preoccupied him in his search for the *Urpflanze*. Firstly, how does one construct a general theory of nature based upon isolated observations of its individual organisms? And secondly: how can one erect such a universal model or *logos* without overlooking, and therefore obscuring, the particular attributes of each organism in question? Goethe's answer to these questions is Kantian:

Die Erfahrung muß uns vorerst die Teile lehren, die allen Tieren gemein sind, und worin diese Teile verschieden sind. Die Idee muß über dem Ganzen walten und auf eine genetische Weise das allgemeine Bild abziehen. Ist ein solcher Typus auch nur zum Versuch aufgestellt, so können wir die bisher gebräuchlichen Vergleichungsarten zur Prüfung desselben sehr wohl benutzen.⁴⁶

Experience must firstly educate us as to the features which all animals have in common, and wherein these features differ. The idea must legislate over the whole and extract the universal

⁴⁵ Goethe, 'Erster Entwurf einer allgemeinen Einleitung in die vergleichende Anatomie, ausgehend von der Osteologie', *HA* Band XIII 171-172.

⁴⁶ Goethe, 'Erster Entwurf', *HA* Band XIII 172.

image in a genetic fashion. When such a type is also only presented as an experiment, we can very well use it in order to bring the hitherto commonly used methods of comparison under investigation.

In this passage Goethe draws attention to his methodological problem while at the same time failing to overcome it. Using scarcely veiled Kantian terminology, he begins with the proposition that all of our judgments about the world must begin with empirical experience (*Erfahrung*), or what Kant might call sensation or *Empfindung*.⁴⁷ This experience – the unprocessed matter of our observations which corresponds with the human capacity of Sense (*Sinnlichkeit*) – is then ordered according to what Goethe calls 'die Idee' (the idea), a concept which seems to be something akin to Kant's ideas of pure reason. 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 (*walten*) over our empirical observations? And finally, 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...⁴⁸

This impasse or *aporia* between the idea and the object, between the *logos* and nature, returns us to Benjamin's definition of Goethe's notion of the Daemonic as the "Erfahrung unfaßbarer Naturzweideutigkeit" ("the experience of the incomprehensible ambivalence in nature").⁴⁹ The question which confronts Goethe, if we are to proceed on the basis of Benjamin's analysis, appears to be roughly as follows: Is it possible to unify the multifarious phenomenon known broadly by Goethe as 'Nature' within a sequence of universal regulative 'keys', ideas or *logoi* – *logoi* which, in their speculative nature, are not unlike Kant's ideas of pure reason? Or is nature just, to use Benjamin's formulation of the Daemonic in Goethe, 'incomprehensibly ambivalent'? In sum, does nature resist all of science's attempts to achieve interpretative closure and certitude in relation to natural phenomena? In an essay written in January 1798 titled 'Erfahrung und Wissenschaft' ('Empirical Observation and

⁴⁷ See Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* B 33, 34, A19, 20 *Werke in Sechs Bänden* Band II 69. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith *Critique of Pure Reason* 65.

⁴⁸ Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume II 258.

⁴⁹ Benjamin, 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften' 150. Trans. Corngold, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' 316.

Science') 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. He begins his essay by addressing the cognitive dualism of particular and universal:

Die Phänomene, die wir andern auch wohl Facta nennen, sind gewiß und bestimmt ihrer Natur nach, hingegen oft unbestimmt und schwankend, insofern sie erscheinen. Der Naturforscher sucht das Bestimmte der Erscheinungen zu fassen und festzuhalten, er ist in einzelnen Fällen aufmerksam nicht allein, wie die Phänomene erscheinen, sondern auch, wie sie erscheinen sollten. Es gibt, wie ich besonders in dem Fache das ich bearbeite oft bemerken kann, viele empirische Brüche, die man wegwerfen muß um ein reines konstantes Phänomen zu erhalten; allein sobald ich mir das erlaube, so stelle ich schon eine Art von Ideal auf.⁵⁰

Phenomena, which others of us may call facts, are certain and definite by nature, but often uncertain and fluctuating insofar as they appear. The scientific researcher strives to grasp and keep the definite aspect of what he beholds; in each individual case he is careful to note not only how the phenomena appear, but also how they should appear. There are many empirical fractions which must be discarded if we are to arrive at a pure, constant phenomenon – as I can frequently note, especially in my present field of study. However the instant I allow myself this, I already establish a type of ideal.

At this point in Goethe's analysis we are on similar ground to that which we found in 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt'. In that essay Goethe drew our attention to the 'innere Feinde' ('inner enemies') which threaten the scientist at the point of transition from 'der Erfahrung zum Urteil' ('empirical evidence to judgment'). It is these inner enemies to which Goethe initially draws our attention in 'Erfahrung und Wissenschaft' when he notes the scientific temptation to arrive at a 'konstantes Phänomen' (constant phenomenon), and thus to define an ideal around which to organise and interpret one's empirical observations. But later in the essay, Goethe seems to regard the inner tendency toward an ideal model or *logos* 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 zulieb ganze Zahlen in die Brüche schlägt, oder ob man einen empirischen Bruch der Idee des reinen Phänomens aufopfert. Denn da der Beobachter nie das reine Phänomen mit Augen sieht, sondern vieles von seiner Geistesstimmung, von der Stimmung des Organs im Augenblick, von Licht, Luft, Witterung, Körpern, Behandlung und tausend andern Umständen abhängt; so ist ein Meer

⁵⁰ Goethe, 'Erfahrung und Wissenschaft', HA Band XIII 23-24. Translated by Douglas Miller in: Goethe, 'Empirical Observation and Science', Goethe The Collected Works Volume XII: Scientific Studies 24. I have altered Miller's translation.

auszutrinken, wenn man sich an Individualität des Phänomens halten und diese beobachten, messen, wägen und beschreiben will.⁵¹

...a great difference between someone like the theorist who turns whole numbers into fractions for the sake of a theory, and someone who sacrifices an empirical fraction for the idea of the pure phenomenon. For the observer never sees the pure phenomenon with his own eyes; rather, much depends on his mood, the state of his senses, the light, air, weather, the physical object, how it is handled, and a thousand other circumstances. Hence it is like trying to drink the sea dry if we try to stay with the individual aspect of the phenomenon, observe it, measure it, weigh it, and describe it.

While we might imagine that the hyper-sensuous Goethe of the *Italienische Reise* and 'Einfache Nachahmung der Natur' may have indeed attempted 'ein Meer auszutrinken' ('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.⁵² This decision appears to have arisen from a correspondence between Goethe and Schiller on the subject of cognitive theory during the first few months of 1798.

On January 10 1798, Goethe sent a copy of 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt' to Schiller for his consideration. Schiller's reply to Goethe's essay was initially congratulatory:

Ihr Aufsatz enthält eine treffliche Vorstellung und zugleich Rechenschaft Ihres naturhistorischen Verfahrens, und berührt die höchsten Angelegenheiten und Erfordernisse aller rationellen Empirie, in dem er nur einem einzelnen Geschäfte die Regel zu geben sucht.⁵³

Your essay contains a striking presentation along with the account of your scientific procedure, and it touches the highest problems and demands of all rational empiricism by trying to give a rule only to one single problem.

But later in the same letter, the disagreement between Goethe and Schiller on the role of Idealism in scientific methodology – a disagreement which originally manifested itself in their discussion about the *Urpflanze* – rears its head once more. Although Schiller initially applauds Goethe's insistence that the

⁵¹ Goethe, 'Erfahrung und Wissenschaft', *HA* Band XIII 24. Trans Miller, 'Empirical Observation and Science', *Goethe The Collected Works Volume XII: Scientific Studies* 24.

⁵² This view is supported by the commentary on this essay by Victor Lange, Hans J. Becker, Gerhard H. Müller, John Neubauer, Peter Schmidt and Edith Zehm, which appears in the *Münchener Ausgabe* of Goethe's works. Goethe, *MA* Band VI.2 1265-1267.

⁵³ Friedrich Schiller, 'An Goethe', Jena, 12. Januar 1798, Briefe 404 of Goethe, *Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche* Band XX 491. Translated by Liselotte Dieckmann in: *The Correspondence Between Goethe and Schiller 1794-1805* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994) 258. I have altered Dieckmann's translation.

scientist should pay attention to the minute, sensuous details of the object under investigation, this applause soon betrays its own internal ambivalence, an ambivalence which reveals to us Schiller's preference for the ideal or abstract, over and above the real or sensuous:

Ich wollte wünschen, es gefiel' Ihnen, den Hauptinhalt dieses Aufsatzes auch für sich selbst und unabhängig von der Untersuchung und Erfahrungen, denen er zu Einleitung dient, auszuführen. Sie würden auf eine strengere und reinere Scheidung des praktischen Verfahrens und des theoretischen Gebrauches bedeutende Fingerzeige geben, man würde dahin gebracht werden sich zu überzeugen, daß nur dadurch die Wissenschaft erweitert werden kann, daß man auf der einen Seite dem Phänomen ohne allen Anspruch auf eine hervorzubringende Einheit folgt, es von allen Seiten umgehert und bloß die Natur in ihrer Breite aufzufassen sucht – auf der andern Seite (und wenn jene erste nur in Sicherheit gebracht ist) die Freiheit der vorstellenden Kräfte begünstigt, das Kombinationsvermögen sich nach Lust daran versuchen läßt, mit dem Vorbehalt, daß die vorstellende Kraft auch nur in ihrer eignen Welt und nie in dem Faktum etwas zu konstituieren suche.⁵⁴

I wish you would choose to carry out the main content of the essay for itself, independent of investigations and experiences for which it serves as an introduction. You would give significant hints toward a stricter and purer distinction of practical procedure and theoretical usage. It would create the conviction that science can be enlarged only by following the phenomenon, on the one hand, without any claim of unity, walking around it on all sides and trying to catch nature in all its breadth. On the other hand (once this procedure is secured), one favours the freedom of the imaginative faculties, allowing the capacity for combination free reign – all of this with the reservation that the imaginative faculty tries to constitute itself only in its own world but never in fact.

Schiller's real position becomes all too clear in the above passage. The painstakingly sensuous methodology extolled by Goethe in 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt' was, in Schiller's view, a worthy undertaking, but an undertaking which was, at the same time, only a means to an end. That is to say, it was only a kind of preparatory activity, the aim of which was to secure some kind of empirical basis upon which to launch the 'imaginative faculties' ('vorstellenden Kräfte') and the capacity for combination ('Kombinationsvermögen') into the stratosphere occupied by Kant's speculative ideas of pure reason. 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, which led to a lack of common purpose in their respective cognitive approaches. Goethe replied to Schiller's letter with a sentence which, along with the essay 'Erfahrung und Wissenschaft', suggests that he may have been prepared to drop his

⁵⁴ Schiller, 'An Goethe', Jena 12. Januar 1798, Briefe 404 of Goethe, Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche Band XX 492. Trans. Dieckmann, The Correspondence Between Goethe and Schiller 1794-1805 258-259. I have altered Dieckmann's translation.

obsession with the particularities of sensuous objects and come round to Schiller's orthodox interpretation of Kant's ideas of pure reason:

Ich habe diese Tage, beim Zertrennen und Ordnen meiner Papiere, mit Zufriedenheit gesehen, wie ich, durch treues Vorschreiten und bescheidnes Aufmerken, von einem steifen Realism und einer stockenden Objektivität dahin gekommen bin, daß ich Ihren heutigen Brief als mein eignes Glaubensbekenntnis unterschreiben kann.⁵⁵

During recent days as I separated and organized my papers I saw with satisfaction how, by advancing steadfastly and paying modest attention, I progressed from a stiff realism and a stagnating objectivity to the point where I can subscribe to your letter as my own confession of faith.

But this confession of faith was, as it turns out, short lived. Although both the above letter and the essay 'Erfahrung und Wissenschaft' tend to contradict Hans Blumenberg's assertion that Goethe only looked at Kant as a gesture of respect (*Pietät*) toward Schiller,⁵⁶ the following comment made by Schiller as early as 1791 demonstrates the extent to which their respective versions of Kantianism were, from the very outset, poles apart:

Er [Goethe] war gestern bei uns, und das Gespräch kam bald auf Kant. Interessant ist's, wie er alles in seine eigene Art und Manier kleidet... Ihm ist die ganze Philosophie subjektivisch, und da hört denn Überzeugung und Streit zugleich auf. Seine Philosophie mag ich auch nicht ganz: sie holt zu viel aus der Sinnenwelt, wo ich aus der Seele hole. Überhaupt ist seine Vorstellungsart zu sinnlich und betastet mir zu viel.⁵⁷

He [Goethe] was with us yesterday, and the conversation soon turned to Kant. It is interesting, how he clothes everything in his own way and manner... For him the whole of philosophy is subjective, and the act of convincing and dispute both end there. I also do not completely like his philosophy: where I draw from the soul, it draws too much from the world of the senses. In general his mode of thinking is too sensuous and touches too much for my taste.

Schiller's account of Goethe's decidedly sensuous interpretation of Kant leads us to the central ambiguity in Goethe's so-called 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,

⁵⁵ Goethe, 'An Schiller', Jena 13. Januar 1798, Briefe 405 of Goethe, *Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche* Band XX 494. Trans. Dieckmann, *The Correspondence Between Goethe and Schiller 1794-1805* 259.

⁵⁶ Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 436. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 400.

⁵⁷ Flodoard Freiherr von Biedermann, *Goethes Gespräche* Wolfgang Herwig Hg. Band I (Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1965-1987) 497-498. Brackets added.

especially during the 1790's, simply latched on to those aspects of the Kantian philosophy which 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 minutely examine objects 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 – which 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', which 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 which might unlock universal keys to nature, keys or *logoi* not unlike Kant's ideas of pure reason. Goethe entertained the idea that such universal 'keys' might exist in his exploration of the *Urpflanze* (Primal Plant), in his work on Comparative Anatomy, and in his pursuit of the *Urphänomen* (Primal Phenomenon). But it was the last of these three projects which had a more lasting effect upon Goethe's attitude towards both Kant and nature.

While the *Urpflanze* eventually became, following Schiller's Kantian critique, 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* leads us to the limits of human knowledge, limits which we can only observe, to quote his words to Eckermann, with astonishment (*erstaunen*). It is these two interrelated feelings or images – the apprehension of a kind of obstructing or limiting force both within the subject and in nature, accompanied by an all-encompassing sense of astonishment, shock or surprise experienced by the subject when confronted with this force – that became central to Goethe's later

conception of the Daemonic, a conception which receives its most powerful poetic presentation in the sonnet 'Mächtiges Überraschen', which we will encounter in the next chapter of this study.

Thus, while Goethe was at times attracted, perhaps even momentarily seduced, by the suggestion that Kant's ideas of pure reason might offer a key with which to unlock the secrets of nature, it was essentially the critical aspect of Kantian philosophy which had a lasting effect upon his thinking. In the words of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Goethe, like Schelling, ultimately belonged: "zu denen, die mehr an Natur als an Freiheit glauben" ("to those who believe more in nature than in freedom").⁵⁸ In his essay 'Goethe und die Philosophie' (1947), Gadamer elaborates upon this point in the following way. Goethe, he argues, opposed:

...die abstrakte Spekulation seines Zeitalters...Im Sinne der Antike ist auch er Philosoph und ist den Ursprüngen näher als seine großen philosophischen Zeitgenossen. Denn er teilt nicht den Glauben seines Zeitalters an die Autonomie der Vernunft – er sieht ihre menschliche Bedingtheit. Entscheidend aber ist, daß er diese Bedingtheit nicht als eine Schranke der Wahrheit, sondern als den menschlichen Weg zur Weisheit begreift...Das stets und ständig Produktive, dessen sich Goethe als der Mitgift seiner genialen Natur bewußt war, ist auch für das allgemeine Weltverhältnis des Menschen charakteristisch. Nur für den Wirkenden und Gegenwirkung Erleidenden ist die Welt da. Wahrheit beruht auf einem Lebensverhältnis. Daher ist sie in einer innerlich notwendigen Weise mit dem Irrtum verknüpft, in dem sich das gleiche Verhältnis des Lebens auswirkt.⁵⁹

...the abstract speculation of his age...In the classical sense, he too is a philosopher and is closer to the origins than his great contemporaries in philosophy. For he does not share the faith of his age in the autonomy of reason – he sees its human conditionedness. It is, however, decisive that he does not see this conditionedness as a barrier to the attainment of truth; rather, he understands it as the human path to wisdom...The constant drive to be productive, which Goethe was aware of as the rich endowment of his genial nature, is also characteristic of all men's common experience of the world. The world is actually there only for the one who acts on the world and, in turn, suffers the world's reaction. Truth rests on a living relationship. Hence, it is necessarily linked with error, in which this vital relationship is realized.

Goethe's awareness of the 'menschliche Bedingtheit' ('human conditionedness') of reason or *logos* is, as we have seen, apparent in essays like 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt'. It is this very 'human conditionedness' which, in Goethe's opinion, may draw the scientist into 'a thousand errors' – errors which may, in Goethe's words, lead to 'humiliation and bitterness'. But it is precisely

⁵⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Goethe und die Philosophie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band IX (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1993) 66. Translated by Robert H. Paslick, 'Goethe and Philosophy', *Literature and Philosophy in Dialogue: Essays in German Literary Theory* 13.

⁵⁹ Gadamer, 'Goethe und die Philosophie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band IX 70-71. Trans. Paslick, 'Goethe and Philosophy' 18-19.

these errors – the blindspots in human thinking – which, in the opinions of both Goethe and Gadamer, may lead us to deeper truths, truths which teach us about the limits of human endeavour. Goethe seems to have known intuitively, if not intellectually, that any regulative idea of pure reason is merely a fragile construction when pitted against the overwhelming powers of nature, or natural fate, powers which can only be represented in the extra-rational realm of *mythos*. The individual who ‘suffers the world’s reaction’, 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, which would become central to Goethe’s later Classical 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*. It is to these sources that we shall shortly turn.

6.5. Excursus on Romanticism II: Romanticism, Science and Classicism.

At this point we are in a position to speculate as to whether the works by Goethe discussed in this chapter can be seen to be in any way continuous with, or a development of, the broad European movement known as Romanticism. 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 which we have seen 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 concerned with problems relating to subjectivity – problems which originate in the *Sturm und Drang* period’s valorisation of the concept of the ‘daemonic’ genius. More specifically, my contention is that Goethe’s Classical period 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 ‘Mächtiges Überraschen’, ‘Urworte. Orphisch’, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and certain passages in Eckermann’s *Gespräche*.

In the previous section of this study 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 secularise 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 cognise the objects of nature. The scientific writings by Goethe discussed in this section 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, especially in the absence of any Leibnizian 'principle of sufficient reason' which could regulate the relationship between the human 'monad' and its surroundings.

My questions, then, can be proposed as follows: Was Goethe's 'Classicism' simply a kind of reversion to the ancient Greek aesthetics outlined in Winckelmann's 1764 study of Classicism, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums (History of Ancient Art)*? Or was this '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' (1934) which appears in the book *Goethe und seine Zeit* (1947). Addressing the subject of the correspondence between Goethe and Schiller, Lukács makes the following observation:

Im Vordergrund dieser Auseinandersetzungen steht das *Problem der Form*. Deshalb und weil Goethe und Schiller das Vorbild und die Grundlage für die Lösung des Formproblems stets in der griechischen Kunst gesucht haben, wird ihre gemeinsame Wirksamkeit zumeist mit dem Terminus 'Klassizismus' bezeichnet. Wir werden aber in folgenden wiederholt sehen können, dass es sich bei Goethe und Schiller keineswegs um den Versuch einer einfachen Nachahmung der Antike handelt, sondern um die Erforschung ihrer Formgesetze und um die Anwendung dieser Formgesetze auf die Stoffe, die den Dichtern die moderne Zeit bietet.⁶⁰

At the fore of these discussions is the *problem of form*. For this reason, and because Goethe and Schiller constantly sought the model and the foundation for the solution to the problem of form in Greek art, their common activity is generally termed 'Classicism'. In what follows, however, we will see time and again that with Goethe and Schiller it is by no means a question of the attempt simply to imitate antiquity, but the attempt to study its laws of form and to apply them to the material which the modern age offers to its poets.

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 which

⁶⁰ Georg Lukács, 'Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe' (1934), *Goethe und seine Zeit* 56-57. Trans. Anchor, 'The Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe', *Goethe and His Age* 77-78.

this age offered to its poets, and the material which 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 or *logos*.⁶¹ 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" ("... urge to renunciation rooted in the recognition of necessity"). Gadamer argues that this 'urge to renunciation' occurs precisely because the poet's creative intensity knows no bounds, and that therefore it is forced to confront a "notwendigen Gehalt" ("necessary counterresistance") in order to limit and render formal, its "unbändige Lebenskraft und titanische Bildnerlust" ("excessive vitality and titanic desire to create").⁶² Thus, according to Gadamer, Goethe:

...ergänzt...diesen Aspekt dadurch, daß er das erkennende Wesen in die gleiche Betrachtung einbezieht. Die Seele breitet sich erkennend aus, indem sie beschränkt.⁶³

...enlarges on this aspect by including in his consideration the being endowed with the ability to know. Through the act of knowing the soul unfolds its powers by setting limits.

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 which we have seen in 'Mahomets Gesang' and in *Werther*, tended to valorise the subject's longing or striving at the expense of the discrete identities of external objects and external subjects. This valorisation of individual subjective desires and goals was the logical consequence of an aesthetics which saw the genius as a kind of gifted intermediary between the human sphere and a divinely infused conception of 'nature'. This genius was 'daemonic' in the sense that he promised, through the infinite longing of his art, to heal the split between the human and the natural.

⁶¹ In his essay 'Lukács in Weimar', Ferenc Fehér observes that Lukács's interest in Goethe's 'Classicism' stemmed from his (Lukács's) desire for an ethical democracy with a "pluralist structure". In this connection, Goethe is seen to have been for Lukács: "...the mentor of *modern* times, who himself pronounced the verdict so often quoted by Lukács: all men *together* constitute humanity." Ferenc Fehér, 'Lukács in Weimar', *Lukács Revalued* ed. Agnes Heller (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) 86.

⁶² Gadamer, 'Goethe und die Philosophie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band IX 59. Trans. Paslick, 'Goethe and Philosophy' 5.

⁶³ Gadamer, 'Goethe und die Philosophie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band IX 60. Trans. Paslick, 'Goethe and Philosophy' 6.

It was not uncommon for thinkers in the late eighteenth century to view the epoch of modernity as being characterised by a kind of illness, and it is perhaps on this basis that we can begin to reflect upon the following famous statement made by Goethe – a statement which appears in his *Maximen und Reflexionen*:

Klassisch ist das Gesunde, romantisch das Kranke.⁶⁴

Classicism is the healthy, Romanticism is the sick.

The aesthetic theories which led to this statement – a statement which was probably made by Goethe around 1829⁶⁵ – can be found as early as 1795 in Schiller's famous essay 'Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung'. Earlier in this study we saw how Schiller characterises the modern poet as being sentimental, in that he separates himself from nature by conceptualising nature as an abstract idea. His feeling for nature, according to Schiller, 'is like the feeling of an invalid for 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 the previous chapter of this study we encountered David S. Ferris's contention that:

...Hellenism has written the history of a promise and not a history of Greece.⁶⁶

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 which is completely at one with nature, an art which derives its rules and regulations, its forms and boundaries, from the perfection and necessity found in the natural world. Seen in this way, 'naïve',

⁶⁴ Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen* HA Band XII 487.

⁶⁵ Goethe makes the same remark to Eckermann on April 2, 1829: "Das Klassische nenne ich das Gesunde, und das Romantische das Kranke". Eckermann, *Gespräche* 253.

⁶⁶ David S. Ferris, *Silent Urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, Modernity* xiii.

Hellenistic art becomes the impossible – because fictional – yardstick against which modern art must measure itself. As Ferris points out:

...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.⁶⁷

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 a rarely read essay called 'Literarischer Sansculottismus', written in 1795, he addresses the question of a 'Classical' literature in Germany:

Wer mit den Worten, deren er sich im Sprechen oder Schreiben bedient, bestimmte Begriffe zu verbinden für eine unerläßliche Pflicht hält, wird die Ausdrücke: klassischer Autor, klassisches Werk höchst selten gebrauchen. Wann und wo entsteht ein klassischer Nationalautor? Wenn er in der Geschichte seiner Nation große Begebenheiten und ihre Folgen in einer glücklichen und bedeutenden Einheit vorfindet; wenn er in den Gesinnungen seiner Landsleute Größe, in ihren Empfindungen Tiefe und in ihren Handlungen Stärke und Konsequenz nicht vermißt; wenn er selbst, vom Nationalgeiste durchdrungen, durch ein einwohnendes Genie sich fähig fühlt, mit dem Vergangenen wie mit dem Gegenwärtigen zu sympathisieren....⁶⁸

Whoever considers it an essential duty to combine precise concepts with the words which he uses will rarely use the expressions classical author, classical work. When and where does a classical national author appear? When he finds in the history of his nation a harmonious and meaningful unity of great events and their effects; when he does not search in vain for greatness in the spirit of his countrymen, profundity in their sentiments, strength and value in their deeds; when he himself, filled with the spirit of the nation, feels capable of sympathizing, through an indwelling genius, both with the past and the present...

It is no coincidence that Goethe invokes the concept of 'Genius' in this passage. 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.⁶⁹ That Herder's impossible demand required a German genius who could effectively unify the German landscape with the German language was a lesson learnt by Goethe in the 1770's. By 1795, however,

⁶⁷ Ferris, *Silent Urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, Modernity* 2.

⁶⁸ Goethe, 'Literarischer Sansculottismus', *HA* Band XII 240. This translation by Robert Anchor is taken from Georg Lukács, *Goethe and His Age* 78.

⁶⁹ 'Literarischer Sansculottismus' was written in response to an article by Pastor D. Jenisch, in which the author bemoaned the lack of 'Classical' works in German Literature. See Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume II 273.

Goethe was far less inclined to believe that the discovery of such a 'naïve' genius was possible, or even desirable in Germany. Accordingly, he concludes in 'Literarischer Sansculottismus' that:

Wir wollen die Umwälzungen nicht wünschen, die in Deutschland klassische Werke vorbereiten könnten.⁷⁰

We would not wish for the revolutions which could prepare for classical works in Germany.

While the word *Umwälzung* (upheaval, revolution or radical change) along with the 'Sansculottism' referred to in the title of Goethe's essay suggest that Goethe may have been dwelling upon the potential for a political revolution in Germany, the real import of his essay appears to be that the political and cultural unity which he sees as the primary condition for the production of 'Classical' works would simply be impossible to establish in late eighteenth century Germany.⁷¹ In the words of Nicholas Boyle, Goethe uses the term 'Sansculottism' to describe:

...the excessive demand for perfection which demoralizes those engaged in gradual and limited reform.⁷²

So if Goethe repudiated the call for a German 'Classical' literature – 'Classical' meaning, in this context, something which 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'? On the one hand, Goethe seems to have been aware that the valorisation of subjectivity which characterised 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 which rendered any notion of a unified 'national' German literature problematic was also a danger, not only to the health of the nation, but

⁷⁰ Goethe, 'Literarischer Sansculottismus', *HA* Band XII 241. Trans. Anchor: Lukács, *Goethe and His Age* 79.

⁷¹ In *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, Ernst Robert Curtius concurs with this view when he states: "Die nationalstaatliche Verwurzelung der französischen Klassik hatte Goethe im Auge, als er 1795 seine bedeutsamen Äußerungen über das Wesen der Klassik tat, die er in Deutschland für unmöglich hielt." ("Goethe had in mind the fact that French Classicism was rooted in the national state when he made his significant observations on the nature of Classicism (1795), which he regarded as impossible in Germany"). Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (1948; Bern: Francke Verlag, 1961) 271. Translated by Willard R. Trask in: Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York: Bollingen, 1953) 266.

⁷² Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume II 274.

also to the health of the modern subject. As Goethe puts it in a letter to Zelter dated October 19 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 longing or yearning (*sehnen*) for subjectively conceived ideals which are essentially impossible to fulfill:

Die Gegenwart hat wirklich etwas Absurdes; man meint, das wär' es nun, man sehe, man fühle sich, darauf ruht man; was aber aus solchen Augenblicken zu gewinnen sei, darüber kommt man nicht zur Besinnung. Wir wollen uns hierüber so ausdrücken: der Abwesende ist eine ideale Person, die Gegenwärtigen kommen sich einander ganz trivial vor. Es ist ein närrisch Ding, daß durchs Reale das Ideelle gleichsam aufgehoben wird; daher mag denn wohl kommen, daß den Modernen ihr Ideelles nur als Sehnsucht erscheint.⁷³

The present really has something absurd about it; one thinks, just as though one sees and one feels, and there one rests; as to what is to be gained from such moments, this never comes to consciousness. We want to say this about it: the absent person is an ideal person, while the present ones regard each other as completely trivial. It is a foolish thing, that through the real the ideational is, so to speak, sublated; it may well be because of this, that to the Moderns their ideational appears only as longing.

In our discussion of *Werther*, we saw how the 'ideational images' of both 'nature' and 'Lotte' which are constructed by the novel's eponymous main character lead to his downfall.⁷⁴ When Werther finds that these internally generated, eminently subjective 'ideational images' are in fact absent in reality, he cannot adjust his desires accordingly – in fact it is precisely these 'ideational images', and the insatiable desires connected to them, which consume him. Although it is not possible to draw a direct link between *Werther* and the following statement made by Goethe in his *Maximen und Reflexionen*, the similarities between the events in that novel and the relationship which Goethe finds at work between the ideational and the real should not be overlooked:

Alles Ideelle, sobald es vom Realem gefordert wird, zehrt endlich dieses und sich selbst auf.⁷⁵

Everything ideational, as soon as reality makes demands of it, finally consumes it [that is to say, reality] and also itself.

⁷³ Goethe, 'An Zelter', 19 Oct. 1829, Briefe 695 of *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Zelter 1799-1832* Max Hecker Hg. Band III (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1987) 222.

⁷⁴ The term 'ideational' meaning 'non-material' or 'relating to ideas' (OED), is the closest term in English to the German 'ideell' used by Goethe in the aforementioned aphorism.

⁷⁵ Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen* HA Band XII 444. Brackets added to English translation.

The implicit message of the above statement and of *Werther* is that the subject who pursues internally generated ideational images or goals – ideational images or goals which may quite often have only a tenuous connection with actual external conditions or ‘reality’ – is a subject without limits, a subject which projects its selfhood onto the external world and thereby loses touch with that external world. This is the ‘illness’ that Goethe associates with the ‘Romantic’ – the soul who, like Werther, cannot reconcile his ideational images with reality. If the pursuit of ideational images (*das Ideelle*) without sufficient cognisance of reality is ‘illness’, then ‘health’ might be the ability to adjust one’s internally generated ideational images – perhaps even one’s speculative theories, universal models or *logoi* – to reality, by remaining sensuously in contact with reality. 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 abstract, and therefore it strays from the 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 gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (*Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*) of 1794-95, that the world is posited by a primary *Tathandlung* or ‘deed-action’ performed by the self.⁷⁶

When we look back upon the aesthetic and scientific theories generated by Goethe during the late 1780’s and the early 1790’s, while also keeping in mind our present discussion 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*.

⁷⁶ See Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre Sämtliche Werke* J.H. Fichte Hg. Band I (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 October 28 1794. Schiller writes: “Nach den mündlichen Äußerungen Fichtes, denn in seinem Buch war noch nicht davon die Rede, ist das Ich auch durch seine Vorstellung erschaffend, und alle Realität ist nur in dem Ich. Die Welt ist ihm nur ein Ball, denn das ich geworfen hat und den es bei der Reflexion wieder fängt!! Sonach hatte er seine Gottheit wirklich deklariert, wie wir neulich erwarteten”. (“According to Fichte’s utterances, as in his book this has not yet been discussed, the I is created through its own imagination and all reality exists only in the I. The world is for him merely a ball, which the I has thrown and which it once again catches through reflection. In this way he has actually declared his divinity, as we recently expected”). Schiller, ‘An Goethe’, Oktober 28 1794, Briefe 21 of *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe* S. Seidel Hg. Band I (München: C.H. Beck, 1984) 34. A similar critique of Fichte is offered by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria*. Fichte’s philosophy, according to Coleridge: “was to add the key-stone of the arch [to the Kantian philosophy] ... and by commencing with an *act*, instead of a *thing* or *substance*, Fichte assuredly gave the first mortal blow to Spinozism... and supplied the *idea* of a system truly metaphysical... But this fundamental idea he overbuilt with a heavy mass of mere *notions*, and psychological acts of arbitrary reflection. Thus his theory degenerated into a crude *egoismus*, a boastful and hyperstoic hostility to NATURE, as lifeless, godless, and altogether unholy.” Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* ed. J. Shawcross Volume I (1907; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958) 101-102. Brackets added.

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 'care and diligence' ('Treue und Fleiß'). This is due to the fact that, for Goethe, the simple imitation of nature operates as a counter-balance against the artist's 'Manner' ('Manier') – his tendency to subjectively appropriate, perhaps even to distort, external objects. The fusion or 'sublation' of imitation and manner may then occur in style (*Stil*). It is, says Goethe, 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 objects (*Gegenstände*) of imitation which – at least according to Goethe – form the foundation of all art. Thus imitation, or objectivity, keeps manner (subjectivity) within appropriate bounds. In fact this dualism between imitation and manner is (in the Hegelian sense of the term) 'sublated' (*aufgehoben*), in style ('Stil'), as style involves both the basic sense perception connected with imitation, and the trained artist's knowledge of the "Wesen der Dinge" ("essence of things")⁷⁷ – a knowledge which he can then bring to his representations of external objects, thereby attaining in these representations an even higher level of truth and sophistication.⁷⁸

Likewise, in our reading of 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt' (1792), we saw how it is precisely those objects (*Gegenstände*) of nature celebrated in 'Einfache Nachahmung, Manier, Stil', which 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 in 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" ("in the idea than in the thing")⁷⁹ that empirical evidence is required in order to bring researchers back to "den rechten Weg" ("the right road").⁸⁰ Thus Goethe concludes 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt' with the assertion that the collection of empirical evidence:

⁷⁷ Goethe, 'Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil', *HA* Band XII 32. Trans. Ellen von Nardroff and Ernest H. von Nardroff in: Goethe, 'Simple Imitation, Manner, Style', *Goethe: The Collected Works Volume III: Essays on Art and Literature* 72.

⁷⁸ Goethe, 'Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil', *HA* Band XII 30-34. 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', *Miscellanea Musicologica* 11(1980): 49-65.

⁷⁹ Goethe, 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', *HA* Band XIII 15. Trans. Miller, *Goethe The Collected Works Volume XII: Scientific Studies* 14.

⁸⁰ Goethe, 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', *HA* Band XIII 12. Trans. Miller, *Goethe The Collected Works Volume XII: Scientific Studies* 12.

...kann nicht sorgfältig, emsig, streng, ja pedantisch genug vorgenommen werden; denn sie wird für Welt und Nachwelt unternommen.⁸¹

...cannot be carried out diligently, strictly, even pedantically enough, because it is undertaken for the sake of this world and the world of the future.

But what exactly is the *Nachwelt* ('world of the future') of which Goethe speaks in this passage? We might begin to understand the significance of this 'future' (and perhaps also of a 'future' in a broader sense of the term than that used in the above passage) when we consider the temporal relationship between eminently subjective Romanticism of the *Sturm und Drang* period which was discussed in the previous chapter of this study, and Goethe's turn toward 'Science' and 'objectivity' during the latter stages of the 1780's, and most of the 1790's. Within this discussion we might also begin to see the role which Goethe's later – at this point still nascent and untheorised – notion of the Daemonic has in the process of transition from the eminently subjective mode of cognition peculiar to the *Sturm und Drang* period, and the later notion of subjectivity-in-limitation, a notion which is one of the hallmarks of Goethe's Classicism.

M.H. Abrams, in his book *Natural Supernaturalism*, makes the following remarks concerning the relationship between Christian thought, and a phenomenon which he calls 'Romantic philosophy':

In its central tradition Christian thought had posited three primary elements: God, nature, and the soul; with God of course utterly prepotent, as the creator and controller of the two others and as the end, the telos, of all natural processes and endeavor. The tendency in innovative Romantic thought (manifested in proportion as the thinker is or is not a Christian theist) is greatly to diminish, and at the extreme to eliminate, the role of God, leaving as prime agencies 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....In this grandiose enterprise, however, it is the subject, mind, or spirit which is primary and takes over the initiative and the functions which had once been the prerogatives of deity; that is why we justifiably call Romantic philosophy, in its diverse forms, by the generic term 'Idealism'.⁸²

In this passage Abrams isolates the key features of the process known as secularisation: a process which, in the previous section of this study, was deemed to be one of the hallmarks of the broad movement of European Romanticism, particularly in Germany and Britain. While this process of

⁸¹ Goethe, 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', *HA* Band XIII 20.

⁸² Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* 91.

secularisation was, on the one hand, a phenomenon which 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 cognised in a purely 'objective' fashion was nonsensical. We only encounter the world insofar as we are subjects within that world, and our encounters or perceptions are always indelibly marked with our 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 which was initially filled by the overweening Romantic subject, the subject who wishes to reconceive the world solely on his or her own subjective terms. In the absence of any traditional religious cosmology, any divine *logos*, which could limit or control the modern subject or 'monad', such a subject threatened to expand to the point of fragmentation.

Thus, one of the central issues arising out of Romanticism became *the problem of form as it relates to subjectivity*, and it is no coincidence that Georg Lukács finds this problem at the core of the 'Classicism' espoused by both Goethe and Schiller. Lukács observes that, for Goethe and Schiller:

Das Studium der Antike, die Entdeckung und Anwendung der Kunstgesetze der Praxis der Antike soll im Gegenteil dazu dienen, durch künstlerische Bewusstheit, durch volle Klarheit über die Gesetze der Formgebung die künstlerische Problematik der modernen Zeit zu überwinden...Hierin und nicht in dem Zurückgehen auf die Antike liegt ein gewisser klassizistischer Zug der Ästhetik Goethes und Schillers.⁸³

...the study of antiquity, the discovery and application of the aesthetic precepts of ancient art was supposed to serve to overcome the problematical character of art in the modern age by engendering an awareness, a perfectly clear understanding of the laws governing form...It is in this, and not in a return to antiquity, that a certain classicist feature in the aesthetics of Goethe and Schiller manifests itself.

⁸³ Lukács, 'Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe' 62-63. Trans. Anchor, 'The Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe' 84.

It is extremely significant that Lukács sees the struggle for artistic form engaged in by both Goethe and Schiller as being, at the same time, a struggle with Romanticism. Lukács writes:

Der Kampf mit der Romantik ist zugleich der Kampf um die dichterische Bewältigung der neuen Lebensformen.⁸⁴

The struggle with Romanticism was at the same time the struggle for poetic mastery of the new forms of life.

The question as to precisely what this 'struggle' turned out to be is then left unanswered by Lukács, although he does point out that the 'old Goethe' only categorically rejected "die reaktionär-obskurantistisch gewordene deutsche Romantik" ("German Romanticism, which had become reactionary and obscurantist"), and not the broader European Romantic movement *per se*.⁸⁵ What then, to follow Lukács's suggestion, is this struggle with Romanticism?

As I have suggested earlier, this struggle – a struggle undertaken by Goethe in the aesthetic and scientific theories of the late 1780's and the 1790's – was a struggle against the aesthetics of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, an aesthetics which 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 have seen in the previous chapter of this study, in the aesthetics of the age of *Werther*, this notion of the daemonic 'genius' or individual was secularised. 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 which could reconcile the sentimental with the naïve, and which could heal the split between the human and natural.

That Goethe eventually saw such an aesthetic programme as being at best Utopian, at worst a danger to the boundaries of the subject which threatened to distort the objects of nature by seeing them only in terms of internally generated – and therefore inherently speculative – ideas of 'pure reason', became

⁸⁴ Lukács, 'Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe' 60. Trans. Anchor, 'The Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe' 82.

⁸⁵ Lukács, 'Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe' 62. Trans. Anchor, 'The Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe' 83.

clear in the late 1780's and especially in the 1790's. Thus, Goethe's '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 which tended to formalise 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.

It is in this context that we can once again invoke Goethe's notion of *Weltfrömmigkeit*, a term which has no direct equivalent in English, but which may nevertheless be approximated by the following formulations: *world-piety, respect for the world, a sense of duty towards the world*. As we saw in Part Five of our analysis, when we examined the notion of *Weltfrömmigkeit* as it appears in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, Goethe takes care to distinguish this term 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 which 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 which inhabit it, into account.

This aspect of Goethe's Classicism is also seized upon by Hans-Georg Gadamer. It is, in Gadamer's opinion, Goethe's opposition to the modern tendency toward the ideal, the abstract, the formulaic, and the excessively logical that endows him with "etwas Antikes" ("a sense of antiquity").⁸⁶ Far from being regressive or purely nostalgic in its formulation, this 'Classicism' is in fact *developmental and progressive*, in that it seeks, via the Critical Philosophy of Kant, to grapple with the problem of unimpeded subjectivity which had arisen through the daemonic aesthetics of 'Genius' propounded during the *Sturm und Drang* period. Thus, I am in agreement with Georg Lukács when he writes that:

...die Grundlinie der Erforschung der Gesetze der Kunst durch das Studium der Antike bei Goethe und Schiller [ist] immer auf eine Theorie der spezifisch modernen Kunst gerichtet oder ist wenigstens...mit den Problemen der modernen Kunst verbunden.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Gadamer, 'Goethe und die Philosophie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band IX 70.

⁸⁷ Lukács, 'Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe' 73. Brackets added. Trans. Anchor, 'The Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe' 95.

In Goethe and Schiller the basic line of inquiry into the laws of art through the study of antiquity is always aimed at a theory of specifically modern art, or at least closely related to the formal problems of modern art...

As we shall see in the following chapter of this study, Goethe's 'solution' to what Lukács calls the 'formal problems of modern art' is to pit the modern subject – the abstract, speculative subject of Kantian Idealism – against the sensuous and, to use Walter Benjamin's phrase, 'incomprehensibly ambivalent' forces of a wider cosmic order, an order which is perhaps best described in Spinoza's notion of 'God or Nature'. Goethe seems to have suspected that through this confrontation – 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 these limits can also be associated with Goethe's later, 'Classical' conception of the Daemonic will be addressed in our next chapter. That this later conception of the Daemonic would owe as much to the inheritors of Kantian Idealism – in particular to Friedrich Schelling – as it did to Classical philosophy is suggested by the following remarks made by Goethe some time between 1794 and 1800, remarks which are recounted by H.E.G Paulus. Speaking of Goethe's philosophical and cognitive tendencies, Paulus reports that:

Zu allen diesen Tendenzen kam in Goethe fortwährend, aber mehr wie eine problematische Unterhaltung und nicht eigentlich als Beschäftigung, eine gegen hyperphysische Selbsttäuschung des damals gerpriesenen 'absoluten Spekulierens' sehr behutsame Aufmerksamkeit hinzu... "Wie jenes Übersinnliche gleichsam von oben her mit unserer Natur and Naturphilosophie zusammenhängt, dies" – rief er mir einmal zu – "ist die Frage"... Goethe sagte oft wünschend und hoffend: "Je mehr man sich an dem Speculiren über das Übermenschliche trotz aller Warnungen Kant's vergeblich abgemüht haben wird, desto vielseitiger wird dereinst das Philosophiren zuletzt auf das Menschliche, auf das geistig und körperlich Erkennbare der Natur gerichtet und dadurch eine wahrhaft so zu benennende Naturphilosophie erfaßt werden."⁸⁸

Of all these tendencies there came forth in Goethe persistently, but more as a problematic entertainment than as an actual occupation, a very cautious attentiveness against the hyper-physical self deception of the, at that time much celebrated, 'absolute speculation'... "How this supersensuous fits together with our Nature and philosophy of Nature, 'his" – he once exclaimed – "is the question". Goethe often said longingly and hopefully: "The more we have laboured in vain, and in spite of all Kant's warnings, on the speculations about the superhuman, the more diversely will philosophising in time be finally directed towards the human, towards that which is intellectually and physically knowable about nature, and thereby will something that we can truly call a philosophy of nature have been comprehended."

⁸⁸ Flodoard Freiherr von Biedermann, *Goethes Gespräche* Wolfgang Herwig Hg. Band I 777-778.

It is to the question of a so-called *Naturphilosophie* or Philosophy of Nature, and its connections with Goethe's later, consciously theorised conception of the Daemonic, that we will turn in the following chapter.

7. Goethe's Conscious 'Theorisation' of the Daemonic.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss several key works by Goethe which deal explicitly and consciously with the phenomenon that he chose to name the Daemonic (*das Dämonische*) during the early decades of the nineteenth century. This theme is first touched upon in a philosophical context in the poem 'Mächtiges Überraschen' ('Immense Astonishment'), which belongs to the cycle of sonnets composed by Goethe in 1807 and 1808. Goethe then revisits the theme of the Daemonic, firstly in 1813 – while writing Book Twenty of his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* – and then subsequently in the philosophical poem 'Urworte. Orphisch' ('Primal Words. Orphic'), composed in late 1817. Finally, the latter stages of this chapter will consider Goethe's own interpretation of 'Urworte. Orphisch', in which he makes further comments regarding his notion of the Daemonic, this time in relation to the 'divine voice' or *daimonion* experienced by Socrates.

In the previous chapter of this study we investigated the degree to which, during the period following Goethe's completion of his revisions to *Werther* in 1786 and his first journey to Italy from 1786-1788, he attempted to counteract, if not completely to overcome, the excessive subjectivity which characterised the *Sturm und Drang* period of the 1770's, and which arguably reached its apotheosis in the character of Werther. The concept of subjective 'longing' – a concept which, as we saw earlier in this study, was constitutive of *Sturm und Drang* works like 'Mahomets Gesang' and *Werther*, was gradually surmounted by a new turn towards 'objectivity' which manifested itself in aesthetic writings like 'Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil' (1789) and in scientific essays like 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt' (1792) and 'Erfahrung und Wissenschaft' (1798).

But this turn toward so-called 'objectivity' gave rise to further complications in Goethe's thinking. As we saw in the concluding stages of the previous chapter, Goethe's focus upon 'objectivity' came to be characterised by a deep-seated ambiguity which arose from a collision between Goethe's own *Weltanschauung* and the cognitive theories of no less a figure than Immanuel Kant. This ambiguity threatened to undermine not only Goethe's conception of scientific research, but also the thought of Kant – the leading figure in the late eighteenth century German Enlightenment.

The ambiguity which arose in Goethe's thinking, partly as a result of inner contradictions in his own methodology, and partly as a response to the Critical Philosophy of Kant, can perhaps be sketched out in the following way. On the one hand, the 'critical' aspect of Kantian philosophy accorded well with Goethe's increasing focus upon empirical research as a kind of guard against the narcissistic

subjectivity which he 'diagnosed' in the case of Werther. When Kant stated, in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, that the systematic unity suggested by the ideas of pure reason can only ever be teleological, theoretical, and therefore beyond the realm of phenomenal or sensuous experience, Goethe found confirmation of his contention, outlined in the essay 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', that any scientific theory regarding external phenomena will always fall short of accounting for the minute particularities of natural objects.¹ At the same time, however, the abyss between the idea and the object or Kantian 'thing in itself', the existence of which was philosophically confirmed for Goethe in the 'critical' aspect of Kant's thought and in Schiller's Kantian critique of the *Urpflanze*, served to inspire, and also to frustrate, Goethe's grandiose scientific exertions more and more, as it was these exertions which still carried traces of the overweening hubris and limitless longing of his early Romanticism: a variety of Romanticism, exemplified by the character of Werther, which refuses to recognise limits to subjectivity. As a result, the almost absurdly ambitious scientific projects conceived by Goethe – projects like the *Urpflanze* and the work on Comparative Anatomy – foundered in the abyss between the idea and the object, between universal and particular.

It is, however, from the shattered remains of these projects that we can begin to understand Goethe's later, eminently mythic, notion of the Daemonic, particularly if we follow Walter Benjamin's suggestion that this notion arises from an intuition of the 'incomprehensible ambivalence of nature'. In the previous section of this study I suggested, following Benjamin, that this 'incomprehensible ambivalence' is most obviously apparent in Goethe's notion of the *Urphänomen* – as it is the *Urphänomen* which, in Goethe's opinion, leads us to the limits of what can be known about nature, limits which produce in the observer as sense of astonishment (*Erstaunen*) and resignation (*Resignation*).² The central contention of this chapter, then, is that Goethe sees the Daemonic as an *Urphänomen* or 'primal phenomenon'. The *Urphänomene* alert us to what Benjamin calls the 'incomprehensible ambivalence of nature', by announcing a barrier beyond which human knowledge, and particularly human reason, cannot pass. This limit, a limit to which Goethe became alerted as a

¹ Kant writes: "Ich verstehe unter der Idee einen notwendigen Vernunftbegriff, dem kein kongruierender Gegenstand in den Sinnen gegeben werden kann." ("I understand by idea a necessary concept of reason to which no corresponding object can be given in sense-experience"). *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* 'Von den Transzendenten Ideen', B384 A 327.328 *Werke in Sechs Bänden* Band II 331. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith, *Critique of Pure Reason* 318. Here we should note that this particular aspect of Goethe's interpretation of Kant is not in strict accordance with Kant's own understanding of the ideas of pure reason. This is due to the fact that Kant did not believe the ideas of pure reason to be susceptible of *contradiction* by the existence of particular objects, precisely because these objects are essentially unknowable as 'things in themselves' – that is to say, independently of the *apriori* categories or *Grundsätze* through which we perceive them.

² Here I am paraphrasing Goethe's comments on the *Urphänomen* in Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe* and in his *Maximen und Reflexionen*. See Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe* 244. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 296. And Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen* HA Band XII 367.

direct result of his adoption of a Kantian methodology in his scientific endeavors, is both internal and external. Its internal or subjective manifestation corresponds with the limited extent to which humans can understand the objects of nature, while its exterior or objective manifestation inheres in the objects of nature themselves, objects which may appear to be 'incomprehensibly ambivalent' to the limited cognitive capacities of the human subject.

Thus, if we are prepared to accept that Goethe failed in his grandiose attempts to synthesise his scientific researches within the scope of universal 'Ideas' like the *Urpflanze*, and if, as a direct result of these failures, Goethe was forced to abandon or at the very least to alter his idiosyncratic interpretation of Kantian methodology as a means to develop a new approach to nature, then we must seek to investigate the sources upon which he drew in order to develop this new approach. One such source exists in the early philosophy of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854).

The importance of Schelling's early philosophy for this chapter lies chiefly in two areas: the first being his efforts to critique and eventually to surpass Kant's Critical Philosophy, the second his revival of the Neo-Platonic conception of the world-soul or *Weltseele*. As we shall see in this chapter, 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 Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, as these attempts mirror Goethe's efforts to discard his own quasi-Kantian methodology. In this connection, I will suggest – in the opening stages of this chapter – that the new approaches to both the subject and to nature adopted by Schelling in his *Naturphilosophie* can be seen to exert a considerable influence upon Goethe's notion of the Daemonic as representing 'the incomprehensible ambivalence of nature'.

In the concluding stages of this chapter, I will, with the assistance of Hans Blumenberg's *Arbeit am Mythos*, argue that Goethe saw this 'incomprehensible ambivalence' as being best approximated not by logical concepts, ideas of pure reason or *logoi*, but through narratives and images (*mythoi*). In fact, Goethe's use of *mythoi* in situations where reason can apparently no longer suffice will be seen, in the final section of this chapter, to underline his affinity with Classical philosophy – in particular his affinity with Plato's Socrates.

But before we turn to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* it is necessary to observe, in advance of the forthcoming analysis of Goethe's 'consciously theorised', notion of the Daemonic, that such a 'theorisation' – in the systematic sense of the term – can simply not be deduced from all of Goethe's statements on the subject. On the one hand, the presentations of the notion of the Daemonic in poems

like 'Mächtiges Überraschen' and 'Urworte. Orphisch' do lend themselves to something resembling a structured philosophical exposition. At the same time, however, it will become abundantly clear when we turn to the comments which Goethe makes regarding the notion of the Daemonic in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* that there is a sense in which, as Hans Blumenberg observes, the term 'daemonic' comes to denote "der ungelöste Rest seiner Erfahrung" ("the unresolved remainder of his experience")³: that is to say, it becomes something more akin to a rhetorical *topos* than to a philosophical concept.

7.1. Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*.

Goethe was first acquainted with the thought of Schelling in 1797. In this connection, Nicholas Boyle reports that Goethe:

...already thought of him [Schelling] in 1797 as a possible catch and one of his first acts after his return home in November was to get himself a copy of Schelling's most recent publication, *Ideas towards a Philosophy of Nature*, a first proposal for the extension of Idealism into the detailed study of the natural sciences...The viability of the proposal was confirmed for Goethe by Schelling's first systematic essay in the new *Naturphilosophie*, his treatise *On the World-Soul*, published in June 1798, of which he bought a copy shortly after they first met in Jena at the end of May.⁴

Before we begin our exposition of the influence which Schelling's *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (*Ideas towards a Philosophy of Nature*) and his *Von der Weltseele* (*On the World Soul*) had upon Goethe's thinking, it is necessary to address an issue which I alluded to in the opening paragraphs of this chapter: namely, Schelling's response to the Critical Philosophy of Kant.

The eminent Schelling scholar Manfred Frank writes that the young Schelling's aim was quite simply to critique, and eventually to overcome, Kant's philosophy. Schelling's impulse, writes Frank: "...war zweifellos, jede Seite seines Textes manifestiert diesen Ehrgeiz –, Kant zu überbieten." ("...was without doubt, every page of his text manifests this ambition – to outbid Kant").⁵

³ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 437. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 401.

⁴ Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume II 593. Brackets added.

⁵ Manfred Frank, *Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985) 25.

This attempted 'outbidding' of Kant commenced, according to Frank, with a series of texts written by Schelling in the early to mid 1790's: *Über die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt* (*On the Possibility of a Form of all Philosophy*), which appeared in 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*), published in 1795. It is the latter of these texts that I wish to presently consider.

In *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie*, Schelling endeavours to attack the very ground of Kant's philosophy: his 'Transcendental Unity of Apperception', otherwise known as the Kantian 'I' or 'subject'. In a section of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* titled 'Von der Ursprünglich-Synthetischen Einheit der Apperzeption' ('The Original Synthetic Unity of Apperception'), Kant erects the so-called 'Transcendental Unity of Apperception' as the 'highest point' of his philosophy. This transcendental unity corresponds, for Kant, with his insistence that it must be possible for the "Ich denke" ("I think") to accompany all human representations (*Vorstellungen*).⁶ 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 which unites and synthesises sensory phenomena according to the *apriori* 'categories' or *Grundsätze*. Even if this unified 'subject' or 'self-consciousness' is not susceptible of phenomenal experience as an object in itself, we can only conclude, says Kant, that it nevertheless exists as a condition of experience *per se*. In fact, it is precisely this unconditional (*unbedingt*) aspect of the unified subject which confers upon it its so-called 'transcendental' status.

Schelling attacks Kant's 'Transcendental Unity of Apperception' by arguing that since the 'I' or 'Transcendental Unity of Apperception' is unconditional, it can:

...weder im Ding überhaupt, noch auch in dem, was zum Ding werden kann, im Subjekt, also nur in dem, was gar kein Ding werden kann, d.h. wenn es ein absolutes ICH giebt, nur im absoluten liegen...Daß Ich, wenn es unbedingt seyn soll, muß ausser aller Sphäre objektiver Beweißbarkeit liegen.⁷

...lie neither in a thing as such, nor in anything that can become a thing, that is, not in the subject. It can lie only in that which cannot become a thing at all; that is, if there is an absolute

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* §16 B132 *Werke in Sechs Bänden* Band II 136. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith, *Critique of Pure Reason* 152.

⁷ F.W.J Schelling, *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie* Werke Hartmut Buchner und Jörg Jantzen Hg. Band II (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980) 90. Translated by Fritz Marti in: Schelling, *Of the I as Principle of Philosophy, The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays (1794-1796)* Trans. Fritz Marti (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980) 74-75.

I, it can lie only in the absolute *I*...The *I*, if it is to be unconditional, must be outside the sphere of objective proof...

At this point, Schelling has not made any major departure from Kant's own argument, as Kant himself would agree that any 'thing' which 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 critique follows as a direct consequence of his contention that Kant's absolute 'I' exists beyond the 'sphere of objective truth'. In his book *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* (1993), Andrew Bowie concludes that the real import of Schelling's critique of Kant lies in his realisation that: "...the ground of nature and consciousness could not appear in philosophical reflection."⁸

That nebulous, originary ground, the ground upon which Kant founded his 'Transcendental Unity of Apperception' is radicalised by Schelling as a broader absolute 'I' which encompasses not only the subject or individual consciousness, but is, at the same time, a pre-conceptual, preconscious, absolute or infinite subject of which the individual subject is only a small part. This preconscious subject or absolute 'I' 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, and here Schelling directly addresses the reader of his *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*:

Ihr müßt zu einer prästabilierten Harmonie eure Zuflucht nehmen, müßt annehmen, daß in den Dingen außer euch selbst ein Geist herrsche, der dem eurigen analog ist. Denn nur in einem Geiste von schöpferischem Vermögen kann Begriff und Wirklichkeit, Ideales und Reales, so sich durchdringen und vereinigen, daß zwischen beyden keine Trennung möglich ist. Ich kann nicht anders denken, als daß Leibniz unter der substantiellen Form sich einen den organisirten Wesen *inwohnenden* regierenden Geist dachte.⁹

You have to take refuge in a pre-established harmony...have to assume that a mind, analogous to your own, reigns in the very things outside you. For only in a mind able to create can concept and actuality, ideal and real, so interpenetrate and unite that no separation is possible between them. I cannot think otherwise than that Leibniz understood by substantial form a mind inhering in and regulating the organized being.

⁸ Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993) 10.

⁹ F.W.J. Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* Werke Manfred Durner und Walter Schieche Hg. Band V (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1994) 99. Translated by Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath in: Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 35. The text translated by Harris and Heath is the second edition of the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, published in 1803. The German text edited by Durner and Schieche is the original 1797 version. The introduction to both versions is, however, substantially the same.

Schelling's reference to Leibniz gives us an insight into the sources of his *Naturphilosophie*, as he shares with the latter an affinity with the thought of Benedict de Spinoza. In Part Three of this study we saw how Spinoza conflates God with 'Nature' in his famous statement *Deus sive Natura* (God or Nature). Leibniz then follows Spinoza by proposing a system of nature or Substance that is rationally ordered by an indwelling intelligence or God. This intelligence or 'principle of sufficient reason' 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 *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, 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 categorised themselves under the generic term for post-Kantian German philosophy of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Idealism), Schelling subsequently endeavoured 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 *Naturphilosophie* and the Correct Way to Solve its Problems'), Schelling boldly claims that there are in fact two versions of Idealism: an 'original' or primary Idealism which he describes as the Idealism of nature, and a secondary, derivative version which he terms the Idealism of the 'I' or subject. Schelling places his *Naturphilosophie* within the first category, and Fichte's thought within the second.¹⁰ 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 'I', as in the philosophy of Fichte. For Schelling, the enormous emphasis which such a radical Idealism places on the primary activity of the 'I' threatened to overwhelm the autonomous existence of external objects, while at the same time failing to recognise nature's role in shaping human subjectivity.¹¹ Rather, the human 'I' or 'self' is understood by Schelling to have emerged from a greater absolute subject, encompassing both the self

¹⁰ Schelling writes: "Es gibt einen Idealismus der Natur, und einen Idealismus des Ichs. Jener ist mir der ursprünglicher, dieser der abgeleitete." ("There exists an Idealism of nature and an Idealism of the I. The former is for me the original, the latter the derivative"). Schelling, 'Über den wahren Begriff der Naturphilosophie und die richtige Art ihre Probleme aufzulösen', *Werke* Manfred Schröter Hg. Band II (1927. München: C.H. Beck, 1958) 718.

¹¹ Here I am paraphrasing the views of Andrew Bowie in *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*. Bowie observes (on page 28) that Schelling's importance lies in the ways in which he fought against "the 'Fichtean' attempt to subdue nature in the name of the subject." According to Bowie, Fichte's Idealism represented to Schelling the threat that "the subject would swallow the object" (28).

and nature, which functions as the very condition of human consciousness. Thus, although Schelling did not explicitly develop 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.¹² 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 which lies at the heart of his early *Naturphilosophie*:

Der erste, der Geist und Materie als Eines, Gedanke und Ausdehnung nur als Modifikationen desselben Principis ansah, war Spinoza. Sein System war der erste kühne Entwurf einer schöpferischen Einbildungskraft, die vom Unendlichen in der Idee zum Endlichen in der Anschauung überging.¹³

The first who, with complete clarity, saw mind and matter as one, thought and extension simply as modifications of the same principle, was Spinoza. His system was the first bold outline of a creative imagination, which conceived the finite immediately in the idea of the infinite, purely as such, and recognized the former only in the latter...

The implicit contention of Schelling's valorisation 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 the external world. The point of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* is essentially to overcome that initial separation:

Sobald der Mensch sich selbst mit der äußeren Welt in Widerspruch setzt...ist der erste Schritt zur Philosophie geschehen. Mit jener Trennung zuerst beginnt *Spekulation*, von nun trennt er, was die Natur auf immer vereinigt hatte, trennt den Gegenstand von der Anschauung, den Begriff vom Bilde, endlich, (in dem er sein eignes Objekt wird,) sich selbst von sich selbst...Die bloße Spekulation also ist eine Geisteskrankheit des Menschen...Sie macht jene Trennung zwischen dem Menschen und der Welt *permanent*, indem sie die letzte als ein *Ding an sich* betrachtet, das weder Anschauung noch Einbildungskraft, weder Verstand noch Vernunft zu erreichen vermag.¹⁴

¹² For further discussions of Schelling's departure from Fichtean Idealism, see: Manfred Frank, 'Die naturphilosophische Abkehr von Fichte', *Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie* 104-117; and Wilhelm G. Jacobs 'Schelling im Deutschen Idealismus: Interaktionen und Kontroversen', *F.W.J. Schelling* Hans Jörg Sandkühler Hg. (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1988) 66-81. See, in particular, pages 73-77.

¹³ Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur Werke* Band V 76-77. Trans. Harris and Heath, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* 15.

¹⁴ Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur Werke* Band V 71-72. Trans. Harris and Heath, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* 10-11. Heath and Harris translate *Spekulation* as 'reflection'. I have altered their translation to 'speculation'. We should keep in mind, however, that Schelling is in fact referring to reflection, or subjective, speculative thought, in that he suggests that such a mode of thought arises when the human mind perceives itself as an entity which is separate from nature and which can therefore reflect upon nature from the perspective of that separation.

As soon as man sets himself in opposition to the external world... the first step to philosophy has been taken. With that separation, *speculation* first begins; he separates from now on what Nature has always united, separates the object from the intuition, the concept from the image, finally (in that he becomes his own object) himself from himself... Mere speculation, therefore, is a spiritual sickness in mankind... It makes that separation between man and the world *permanent*, because it treats the latter as a *thing in itself*, which neither intuition nor imagination, neither understanding nor reason, can reach.

It is at this point that 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 we saw 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, says the Kant of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, is to deploy the faculty of reason as a means to understanding nature or external objects, while at the same time recognising that the ideas of pure reason are just that – ideas – teleological theories which can never achieve an absolute coincidence with the material objects which they attempt to explicate. Schelling, on the other hand, assumes that there is a preconscious, pre-conceptual unity between the human mind and the external world, and that the role of philosophy is merely to *demonstrate* this pre-existing unity, and not to impose an internally generated 'idea of pure reason' onto nature.¹⁵ This assumption becomes apparent when we read the following passage from the Preface to the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, in which the author states that:

...mein Zweck nicht ist, Philosophie auf Naturlehre *anzuwenden*. Ich kann mir kein betrübteres Tagelöhnergewerbe denken, als eine solche Anwendung abstrakter Principien auf eine bereits vorhandene empirische Wissenschaft. Mein Zweck ist vielmehr: die Naturwissenschaft selbst erst philosophisch *entstehen* zu lassen, und meine Philosophie ist selbst nichts anders, als Naturwissenschaft.¹⁶

...my purpose is not to apply philosophy to natural science. I can think of no more pitiful, workaday occupation that such an application of abstract principles to an already existing empirical science. My object, rather, is to allow natural science to arise philosophically, and my philosophy is itself nothing else than natural science.

¹⁵ Andrew Bowie observes, in this connection, that Schelling proposes a "genetic theory of subjectivity... [through which]...subjectivity emerges from nature and develops to the point where it has the ability to grasp nature theoretically." Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* 34. Brackets added.

¹⁶ Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur Werke Band V* 64. Trans. Harris and Heath, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* 5.

Thus Schelling's philosophy does not seek to impose a purposiveness onto nature, but rather to uncover a pre-existing purposiveness which reveals an underlying connection between the human subject and the external world. This intention is revealed in the following statement, taken from the Introduction to the *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*:

...Philosophie also muß annehmen...es gebe eine Stufenfolge des Lebens in der Natur...Diese Idee ist so alt, und hat sich bis jetzt unter den mannichfaltigsten Formen, bis auf den heutigen Tag so standhaft erhalten – (in den ältesten Zeiten schon ließ man die ganze Welt von einem belebenden Princip, Weltseele genannt, durchdrungen werden, und das spätere Zeitalter Leibnizens gab jeder Pflanze ihre Seele) – daß man wohl zum voraus vermuthen kann, es müsse irgend ein Grund dieses Naturglaubens im menschlichen Geiste selbst liegen.¹⁷

...philosophy must accept... that there is a hierarchy of life in Nature....This idea is so old, and has hitherto persisted so constantly in the most varied forms, right up to the present day – (already in the most ancient times it was believed that the whole world was pervaded by an animating principle, called the world-soul, and the later period of Leibniz gave every plant its soul) – that one may very well surmise from the beginning that there must be some reason latent in the human mind for this natural belief.

This passage leads us to the second sphere of importance occupied by Schelling within the scope of this study: namely, his adoption of a Neo-Platonic concept or *topos* in his text *Von der Weltseele – eine Hypothese der höhern Physik zur Erklärung des allgemeinen Organismus* (1798). The notion of the *Weltseele* or world-soul, a concept which originates in Plato's *Timaeus*, is deployed by Schelling in the context of his *Naturphilosophie*, in what amounts to something like an immanentised version of the traditional Platonic narrative structure outlined in Part Two of this study. This Platonic narrative begins with a scene of catastrophic creation which occasions a fall from a first stage of perfection, timelessness and unity (Being) into a second stage of fragmentation, alienation and temporality (Becoming), followed by a third stage which involves a return to perfection and unity by way of philosophical contemplation or *anamnesis* (the recollection of a divine memory).¹⁸ Schelling's history of philosophy or, in a broader sense, his 'history of human consciousness' corresponds in part with this

¹⁷ Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, *Werke* Band V 99. Trans. Harris and Heath, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, 35.

¹⁸ The relevant passage from Plato's *Timaeus* occurs at 34 b-34c: "This was the plan of the eternal god when he gave to the god about to come into existence a smooth and unbroken surface, equidistant in every direction from the centre, and made it a physical body whole and complete, whose components were also complete physical bodies. And he put soul in the centre and diffused it through the whole and enclosed the body in it. So he established a single spherical universe in circular motion, alone but because of its excellence needing no company other than itself, and satisfied to be its own acquaintance and friend. His creation, then, for all these reasons, was a blessed god. God did not of course contrive the soul later than the body, as it has appeared in the narrative we are giving; for when he put them together he would never allow the older to be controlled by the younger...god created the soul before the body and gave it precedence both in time and value, and made it the dominating and controlling partner." Plato, *Timaeus* (Lee) 45-46.

tripartite Platonic structure, while at the same time remaining – in contradistinction to Plato – confined to the plane of immanence. In fact Schelling himself uses Plato's notion of *anamnesis* in connection with his *Naturphilosophie*. "Die platonische Idee" ("The Platonic idea"), he writes, in his *Allgemeine Deduktion des Dynamischen Prozesses oder der Kategorien der Physik* (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.¹⁹

...that all philosophy is remembering, is in this sense true; all philosophising consists in a memory of the condition, in which we were one with nature.

In Part Two of this study we saw how Plato regards the material world as a fallen copy of the divine realm of the forms or *eide*. In his *Timaeus*, Plato is at pains to point out that the world-soul takes precedence over the physical world in terms of both its metaphysical status and its temporality. Thus, as we have also seen in Part Two, Plato's notion of the Daemonic functions as a mode or conduit which announces the possibility of bridging the split between the material world and the world of the forms.

Schelling, on the other hand, endeavours completely to side-step Plato's distinction between immanence and transcendence, between becoming and Being. As the Schelling scholar Dale E. Snow observes, it appears:

...as though Schelling has attempted to replace Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura* with an immanent living absolute which would serve as an ultimate highest ground from which all other levels of being could be explained.²⁰

In the previous section of this study we saw how Goethe was led, as a result of his scientific endeavors, to posit the existence of a concept or notion which 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 themselves. As we have seen, when Goethe described the *Urphänomen* as being something which leads us to a kind of

¹⁹ Schelling, *Allgemeine Deduktion des Dynamischen Prozesses oder der Kategorien der Physik* Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schellings sämtliche Werke K.F.A. Schelling Hg. Band IV (Stuttgart und Augsburg: J Cotta, 1856-1861) 77. Quoted in Odo Marquard, *Transzendentaler Idealismus, Romantische Naturphilosophie, Psychoanalyse* (Köln: Verlag für Philosophie Jürgen Dinter, 1987) 158.

²⁰ Dale E. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1996) 85-86.

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 in Goethe as that which represents the so-called 'incomprehensible ambivalence of nature'.

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 which occurs the philosophy of Plato and in Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* – 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 purpose. 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 Platonic/Kantian abyss between the object and the idea, 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, which serves to reconnect the human mind 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" ("Nature should be mind made visible, mind the invisible Nature").²¹

But Goethe's initial reaction to Schelling's philosophy was predictably ambivalent. A letter to Schiller dated January 6, 1798 shows us that Goethe greeted the first edition of the *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* with qualified praise:

Bei Gelegenheit des Schellingischen Buches habe ich auch wieder verschiedene Gedanken gehabt, über die wir umständlicher sprechen müssen. Ich gebe gern zu, daß es nicht die Natur ist, die wir erkennen, sondern daß sie nur nach gewissen Formen and Fähigkeiten unsers Geistes von uns aufgenommen wird. Von dem Appetit eines Kindes zum Apfel am Baume bis zum Falle desselben, der in Newton die Idee zu seiner Theorie erweckt haben soll, mag es freilich sehr viele Stufen des Anschauens geben, und es wäre wohl zu wünschen, daß man uns diese einmal recht deutlich vorlegte und zugleich begreiflich machte, was man für die höchste

²¹ Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur Werke* Band V 107. Trans. Harris and Heath, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* 42.

hält. Der transcendente Idealist glaubt nun freilich ganz oben zu stehen; eins will mir aber nicht an ihm gefallen, daß er mit den Vorstellungsarten streitet, denn man kann eigentlich mit keiner Vorstellungsart streiten. Wer will gewissen Menschen die Zweckmäßigkeit der organischen Naturen nach außen ausreden, da die Erfahrungen selbst täglich diese Lehre auszusprechen scheinen und man mit einer scheinbaren Erklärung der schwersten Phänomene so leicht wekommt. Sie wissen, wie sehr ich am Begriff der Zweckmäßigkeit der organischen Naturen nach innen hänge, und doch läßt sich ja eine Bestimmung von außen und ein Verhältnis nach außen nicht leugnen, wodurch man mehr oder weniger sich jener Vorstellungsart sich wieder nähert, so wie man sie im Vortrag als Redensart nicht entbehren kann. Ebenso mag sich der Idealist gegen die Dinge an sich wehren, wie er will, er stößt doch, eher er sich's versieht, an die Dinge außer ihm. . . Mir will immer dünken, daß, wenn die eine Partei von außen hinein den Geist niemals erreichen kann, die andere von innen heraus wohl schwerlich zu den Körpern gelangen wird, und daß man also immer wohltut, in dem philosophischen Naturstande zu bleiben und von seiner ungetrennten Existenz den besten möglichen Gebrauch zu machen, bis die Philosophen einmal übereinkommen, wie das, was sie nun einmal getrennt haben, wieder zu vereinigen sein möchte.²²

In connection with Schelling's book I had several ideas about which we must talk at length. I gladly concede that what we perceive is not nature, but that it is only received according to certain forms and capabilities of our mind. From the appetite of a child for an apple on a tree until its fall, which is said to have stimulated in Newton the idea of his theory, there must be a great many stages of perception, and it would be right to wish that one present these very carefully, while at the same time explaining which stage one regards as the highest. The transcendental idealist believes himself, of course, to stand right on top; but there is one thing that I do not like about him, namely, that he is arguing with modes of perception, because one cannot really argue with any kind of perception. Who wants to talk certain people out of the purposiveness of organic natures towards the exterior, when experience seems to prove this doctrine daily, and one gets by easily with an apparent explanation of the most difficult phenomena. You know how attached I am to the notion of organic nature's internal purposiveness, and yet one cannot deny the determination from the outside and a relationship to the outside, through which one must once again approach, more or less, the former mode of apprehension, just as one cannot avoid it as a manner of speaking in lectures. In the same way, while the idealist likes to be on guard against the things in themselves, as is his wont, he still, without expecting it, runs into things outside himself. . . It always seems to me that, if one party can never reach the mind from the outside, the other will hardly reach the bodies from the inside, and that therefore one always does well to remain in the philosophical state of nature, and to make the best possible use of his unseparated existence until the philosophers some day agree upon how they want to reunite what they themselves have separated.

Goethe's first objection to Schelling appears to arise as a result of the latter's 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 or organism is 'windowless' and thus not susceptible of alteration by external sources. Leibniz maintained, according to Schelling:

²² Goethe, 'An Schiller', Weimar den 6. Januar 1798, Briefe 676 of *Goethes Briefe Hamburger Ausgabe* Band II 324-325.

...die absolute Unmöglichkeit, daß eine äußere Ursache auf das Innere eines Geistes wirke; behauptete, daß sonach alle Veränderungen, aller Wechsel von Perceptionen und Vorstellungen in einem Geiste nur aus einem innern Princip hervorgehen könne.²³

...the absolute impossibility that an external cause could produce an effect upon the inwardness of a mind; he asserted, accordingly, that all alterations, all change of perceptions and presentations in a mind, could proceed only from an inner principle.

Schelling is inclined to agree with this proposition, because it suggests to him that the mind and nature are originally one, and that consequently any change which 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 which is present at the birth of the mind and which persists despite any so-called influence of the external causes upon it. Thus, all changes to the individual mind are, for Schelling, pre-programmed by virtue of its original oneness or 'pre-established harmony' with nature – they are mere effects of the world-soul and its operations. As we have seen in the previous section of this study, 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 which can function as a microcosmic 'mirror' of the whole of nature.²⁴ *Werther*, the monadic subject *par excellence*, demonstrated to Goethe that humans must acknowledge a 'Bestimmung von außen' ('determination from the outside') lest the subject and its 'inwardness of mind' lose touch with external reality altogether.

Secondly, Goethe appears to argue, contra Schelling, that we can only ever cognise nature from within the confines of our own subjectivity: a subjectivity which 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 relationship (*Verhältnis*). According to Goethe, this subject/object distinction is so deeply imbedded in human consciousness and linguistic structures that it is literally impossible to overcome.

²³ Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, Werke Band V 77. Trans. Harris and Heath, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* 16.

²⁴ See Leibniz, *Monadology* §56.

Finally, while Goethe applauds the antipathy which the Kantian 'idealist' feels toward the proposition that one can know 'things in themselves',²⁵ he also insists that nature still has the capacity to surprise, shock, and contradict the mental formulations of the most scrupulously critical of Kantian thinkers, as even they can 'run into' (*stoßen*) its infinite complexity. In fact, Goethe seems to detect a certain 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 – it appears, ironically – that one should remain in the 'unseparated existence' of the state of nature, 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 nature, not abstractly but physically, sensuously. There is, he suggests, no chance of us 'reaching the bodies' of nature through subjective reflection, through the creation of the *idea* of a *Naturphilosophie*. 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' ('determination from the outside') and would therefore also constitute a 'Verhältnis nach außen' ('relationship with the outside').

It is precisely the issue of the abstract generalisations contained in the *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* and the question of their actual relationship with the particular objects of nature, which characterises a later comment by Goethe to Schiller on the subject of Schelling. In a letter dated February 21 1798, Goethe writes to Schiller:

In Schellings *Ideen* habe ich wieder etwas gelesen und es ist immer merkwürdig sich mit ihm zu unterhalten; doch glaube ich zu finden daß er das, was den Vorstellungsarten die er in Gang bringen möchte widerspricht, gar bedächtig verschweigt, und was habe ich denn an einer Idee die mich rötigt meinen Vorrat von Phänomenen zu verkümmern.²⁶

I have once again read some of Schelling's *Ideas*, and it is always remarkable to converse with him; but I believe I have discovered that he deliberately conceals the very things which contradict the modes of perception that he wants to bring into operation, and therefore what use to me is an idea which compels me to diminish my stock of phenomena.

²⁵ It is necessary for us to recall in this connection that Goethe is writing to Schiller, an orthodox Kantian. In fact, Goethe himself also made a 'confession of faith' to Schiller's orthodox Kantianism just one week after the letter quoted above. See Goethe's letter to Schiller dated January 13, 1798, quoted on page 260 of Part Six this study.

²⁶ Goethe, 'An Schiller', Weimar 21. Februar 1798, Briefe 683 of Goethes Briefe Hamburger Ausgabe Band II 332-333.

In this passage Goethe characterises Schelling as being akin to the scientist in 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', the scientist who is not so much interested in 'what is', but in 'what pleases' – what fits with the theory being proposed. 'Natural phenomena will always exceed the ability of any one theory to account for them' – this appears to be the dictum with which Goethe critiques Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*.

7.2. Schelling and the 'Incomprehensible Ambivalence of Nature'.

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" ("who believe more in nature than in freedom"). In this respect, Gadamer observes that Goethe shows "eine natürliche Verwandtschaft mit der Lehre Schellings" ("a natural affinity with the teaching of Schelling.")²⁷ This natural 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 'I' is merely an individuated element of a greater 'absolute I' or world-soul, he is at the same time arguing that human subjectivity, and therefore also human reason, are conditioned by nature. As Odo Marquard observes in his book *Transzendentaler Idealismus, Romantische Naturphilosophie, Psychoanalyse* (1987), the aim of Schelling's early *Naturphilosophie* is to recognise "die Natur als Basis der Vernunft" ("nature as the basis of reason").²⁸ From the proposition that human subjectivity and human reason are conditioned by nature, it necessarily follows that there must be something in nature which exceeds the capacity of the rational subject to cognise 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"²⁹ precisely because the locus of reason – the human subject – is itself inescapably situated in nature.

²⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Goethe und die Philosophie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band IX 66. Trans. Paslick, 'Goethe and Philosophy' 13.

²⁸ Marquard, *Transzendentaler Idealismus, Romantische Naturphilosophie, Psychoanalyse* 153.

²⁹ Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* 2.

Thus, there must exist an aspect of nature which resists reason's capacity to explain it, and given that, according to Schelling, the subject itself is part of nature, it must also necessarily follow that there is an aspect of the *self* which exists beneath or beyond Kant's 'Transcendental Unity of Apperception' and which operates outside of the barriers of reason. Odo Marquard describes this aspect of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* as leading to a *Depotenzierung* (depotentialisation, or a reduction of potential) of the rational capacities of the transcendental subject.³⁰ This 'depotentialisation' 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 categorise 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, *unbewußt* (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.³¹

Accordingly, the so-called 'incomprehensible ambivalence of nature' which Benjamin sees as approximating Goethe's conception of the Daemonic, is an ambivalence which exists both within the subject (in that element of the subject which is 'unconscious' or 'natural'), and also outside of the subject (in those aspects of nature which are beyond the rational comprehension of the subject). This is why, according to Benjamin:

Den Umgang der dämonischen Kräfte erkaufte die mythische Menschheit mit Angst. Sie hat aus Goethe oft unverkennbar gesprochen. Ihre Manifestationen sind aus der anekdotischen Vereinzelnung, 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...³²

Mythic humanity pays with fear for intercourse with daemonic forces. In Goethe, such fear often spoke out unmistakably. Its manifestations are to be taken out of the anecdotal isolation in which they are recollected, almost reluctantly, by the biographers and are to be put into the

³⁰ Marquard, *Transzendentaler Idealismus, Romantische Naturphilosophie, Psychoanalyse* 156.

³¹ Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* 48.

³² Walter Benjamin, 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften', *Gesammelte Schriften* Band I.1 151. Trans. Corngold, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities', *Selected Writings Volume I* 317.

light of a reflection that of course shows terribly clearly the power of primeval forces in the life of this man...

Benjamin's discussion of the 'power of primeval forces' in Goethe's life can be analysed in slightly more sober tones, in terms of the relationship between subject and object, a relationship which extends back to the beginning of our analysis of the Daemonic in the philosophy of Plato.

In Plato, the Daemonic was seen to exist in the gap between the material world and the realm of the *eide* or Ideas. 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 *eide* 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 which dissuades Socrates from certain actions at crucial points in his life, and which may possibly be seen, within an ethical context, as a kind of 'conscience'. I will return to this suggestion in Part Eight of our analysis. For now, we merely need 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 an *Urphänomen* or 'primal phenomenon'. The *Urphänomen* alerts us to what Benjamin calls both the 'power of primeval forces' and the 'incomprehensible ambivalence of nature', 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 which 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 motivated by unconscious or invisible motivations. Within the realm of science, Goethe refers to these unconscious motivations as the 'internal enemies' (*innere Feinde*) which exist in the transition from 'empirical evidence to judgment', and which guarantee that no perception of nature is purely objective or comprehensive.³³ 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 which 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

³³ See 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt', *HA* Band XIII 14-15.

Naturphilosophie must – like Kant's 'ideas of pure reason' – be subject to its own 'inner enemies', 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* which accords with his own intuition of the Daemonic as an external obstructing force or limit in nature. Since, according to Schelling, our own subjective 'I' is imbedded within a greater absolute 'I' which 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 inexorably situated within it. Thus the Daemonic also designates the excessiveness of nature with respect to the capacities of the human subject, in that it denotes the extent to which nature always runs ahead of our capacity to understand it. This is why, in the later Goethe of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the Daemonic represents what Hans Blumenberg calls the 'unresolved remainder' of Goethe's experience, as this 'unresolved remainder' often exemplifies the excessiveness of nature in relation to the subject, an excessiveness which is described by Goethe in a conversation with Eckermann as the "unergründlichen Tiefe" (unfathomable depth) of nature's secrets (*Geheimnisse*).³⁴

The poem 'Mächtiges Überraschen' ('Powerful Astonishment') introduces us to Goethe's first poetic/philosophical exposition of the Daemonic as a phenomenon which arises out of the subject's encounters with nature or external objects. It is to this exposition that we will presently turn.

³⁴ Eckermann, *Gespräche* 575.

7.3. Water as Subjectivity III: 'Mächtiges Überraschen'.

Perhaps Goethe's most comprehensive poetic statement on his later, consciously theorised notion of the Daemonic, the poem 'Mächtiges Überraschen' belongs to a series of sonnets which he composed in late 1807 and early 1808.³⁵ As is noted by Erich Trunz in his commentary on the sonnets, these poems are:

...sehr verschieden von allen anderen Goetheschen Gedichtkreisen, schon äußerlich durch die Sonettform, sodann innerlich durch Bewußtheit und Abstand.³⁶

...very different from all the other Goethean poem-cycles, both outwardly, through the Sonnet-form, and inwardly, through their self-awareness and distance.

'Mächtiges Überraschen' is, in this context, often compared and contrasted with an earlier poem that we have already examined in this study: namely, 'Mahomets Gesang'. In 'Mahomets Gesang' we were introduced to one of Goethe's favorite metaphors for subjectivity: water.³⁷ But this metaphor for subjectivity is, of course, not exclusive to Goethe's *oeuvre*. As was noted in Part Five of this study, the image of 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 lyrics functions on two intertwined levels: the aesthetic and the philosophical. As Trunz observes of the sonnet-genre: "Dem Gestaltungsprinzip des Sturm und Drang war diese strenge Form ganz entgegengesetzt gewesen." ("This strict form was completely opposed to the creative-principle of the Storm and Stress.")³⁸ This creative or 'formal' principle is clearly observable in 'Mahomets Gesang', a poem which typifies the aesthetics of genius which abounded during the *Sturm und Drang* period. In that poem we found all of the hallmarks of Goethe's early Romanticism: 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

³⁵ In a letter to Zelter dated December 16 1807, Goethe announces: "ich bin ins Sonette-Machen hineingekommen" ("I have entered into the production of my sonnets"). See Erich Trunz's commentary on the composition of Goethe's sonnets. Goethes Briefe Hamburger Ausgabe Band I 634.

³⁶ Trunz, HA Band I 632.

³⁷ See, in this connection, Ernst Loeb: Die Symbolik des Wasserzyklus bei Goethe (1967).

³⁸ Trunz, HA Band I 633. Karl Otto Conrady agrees with Trunz's view of the sonnets, observing that in 'Mahomets Gesang' we encounter "eine überschäumende, fortdrängende Bewegung, der sich die freimetrischen Verse überlassen..." ("...an overflowing, onward-pressing movement to which the free metric verses abandon themselves") while in 'Mächtiges Überraschen' we find "alles eingefügt in strenge, klare Gesetzmäßigkeit" ("everything inserted into strict, clear, regularity"). Karl Otto Conrady, Goethe Leben und Werk Band II (Königstein: Athenäum Verlag, 1985) 341.

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 which values content – emotion and inspiration – over form and contour.

Likewise, when we examined the *topos* of water-as-subjectivity in the revised (1787) edition of *Werther*, the formal aspects of Goethe's prose in the section of the novel dated December 12 – in which Werther sees the "wühlenden Fluten" (raging torrents) of a swollen river flooding the valley of his beloved Wahlheim – are not unlike those which we find 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 (*Abgrund*) 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 genius-stream in 'Mahomets Gesang' longs to merge itself with the Father/Ocean, while Werther seeks a consummation with his 'idea' of Lotte, who functions as a metonym for the pantheistic All of God/Nature, in his imagination.

The difference, however, between 'Mahomets Gesang' and the 1787 version of *Werther* – the version of *Werther* which includes the new section 'Der Herausgeber an den Leser', in which the narrator's voice distances itself from the the psychological perspective of the novel's protagonist – can be uncovered in two qualities which Trunz finds in Goethe's deployment of the sonnet form: self-awareness and distance. While in 'Mahomets Gesang' we found that Goethe was still in the grip of his early Romanticism of unlimited subjective longing, by the 1787 edition of *Werther*, we saw that he was 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.

It is here that we are faced, once again, with the problem of situating Goethe within aesthetic/philosophical schemata. On the one hand some critics – like Erich Trunz – see Goethe's sonnets as the end point of his *Klassik* (Classical) period,³⁹ while others, like Friedrich Gundolf, suggest that we might find in them a species of Romantic irony. Given that this study seeks to suggest that Goethe's later Classical works can be seen to address issues which arise out of his early Romanticism of the *Sturm und Drang* period, I am particularly interested in Gundolf's view of the sonnets. Gundolf begins his analysis of the sonnets by arguing that they can be seen to occupy a

³⁹ Trunz, *HA* Band I 635.

“second grade or layer” (“zweiten Grades, zweiter Schicht”) in Goethe’s *oeuvre*.⁴⁰ By this he means that the sonnets are a kind of literary play for Goethe, rather than being works of central importance to his late artistic development.⁴¹ But the sonnets are then seen by Gundolf to occupy an ambiguous position in terms of their aesthetic qualities. On the one hand, Gundolf argues that they can be seen as prototypical “Klassizistische Einzelleistungen” (“isolated Classical achievements”), while at the same time he maintains that they display elements of Romantic irony. The sonnets, he says:

...sind Gedichte über das Dichten, ja über das Sonettieren selbst, allenfalls über den empfindsamen Ursprung, den liebenswerten Anlaß ihrer selbst, doch immer mit dem Bewußtsein, oft mit dem ausgesprochenen Hinweis im Gedicht, daß es ‘Dichten’ ist, daß hier ein Erlebnis reimweis glossiert wird. Sie machen sich (und darin sind sie Muster der ‘romantischen Ironie’) über sich selbst diskret lustig...⁴²

...are poems about poetic composition, indeed about the act of writing sonnets itself, at the most about the sensitive origin, the lovable cause itself, but always with self-awareness, and often with an outspoken advice within the poem, that this is just poetry, that here an experience is glossed over by rhyme. They discretely make fun of themselves (and in this regard they are models of ‘Romantic irony’)...

While my analysis of ‘Mächtiges Überraschen’ will attempt to disprove Gundolf’s contention that the sonnets are of marginal importance within the scope of Goethe’s total artistic output, I also intend to argue – this time in agreement with Gundolf – that at least one of the sonnets (‘Mächtiges Überraschen’) can be seen, not unlike the 1787 version of *Werther*, to offer a retrospective critique of Goethe’s early Romanticism, the Romanticism of limitless subjective longing or ‘unlimited subjectivity’.

Goethe’s most recent biographer, 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 *anagnorisis*. This term refers to an act of recognition, particularly in the context of the *dénouement* in Classical drama. Boyle understands the term literally to refer to an act of temporal re-cognition – that is to say, a moment in which the past is reflected upon, re-examined and understood in a way which is directly relevant to the present. “Life”, says Boyle:

⁴⁰ Friedrich Gundolf, *Goethe* 577.

⁴¹ They are, he says: “...bloß technische Meisterstücke ohne dichterisch seelischen Wert, artistische Musterbeispiele.” (“...mere technical masterpieces without poetic-spiritual worth, artistic model-examples”). Gundolf, *Goethe* 578.

⁴² Gundolf, *Goethe* 578.

...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.⁴³

Although our purpose here is not literary biography, it is appropriate, in the context of our discussion of *anagnorisis*, to examine a psychological self-portrait ('Selbstschilderung') that Goethe sketched in August 1797, and which also appears to suggest to the reader the theme of conscious reflection upon previous desires, efforts and longings:

Immer tätiger, nach innen und außen fortwirkender poetischer Bildungstrieb macht den Mittelpunkt und die Base seiner Existenz... Da dieser Trieb rastlos ist, so muß er, um sich nicht stofflos selbst zu verzehren, sich nach außen wenden und, da er nicht beschauend sondern nur praktisch ist, nach außen ihrer Richtung entgegen wirken. Daher die vielen falschen Tendenzen zur bildenden Kunst zu der er kein Organ, zum tätigen Leben wozu er keine Biagsamkeit, zu den Wissenschaften wozu er nicht genug Beharrlichkeit hat. Da er sich aber gegen alle drei bildend verhält, auf Realität des Stoffs und Gehalts und auf Einheit und Schicklichkeit der Form überall dringen muß, so sind selbst diese falschen Richtungen des Strebens nicht unfruchtbar... Seitdem er hat einsehen lernen, daß es bei den Wissenschaften mehr auf die Bildung des Geists der sie behandelt, als auf die Gegenstände selbst ankommt, seitdem hat er das, was sonst nur ein zufälliges unbestimmtes Streben war, hat er dieser Geistestätigkeit nicht entsagt, sondern sie nur mehr reguliert... leider hat sich seine Natur sowohl dem Stoff als der Form nach durch viele Hindernisse und Schwierigkeiten ausgebildet und kann erst spät mit einigem Bewußtsein wirken, indes die Zeit der größten Energie vorüber ist.⁴⁴

An ever active poetical formative drive, permanently at work on the inner and the outer world, constitutes the centre and basis of his existence... Since this drive never rests, in order not to consume itself without substance, it has to turn outwards, and since it is not observant but only practical, it must work its direction towards the exterior. Hence his many false tendencies: to the visual arts for which he has no gift; to the active life for which he does not have the flexibility; to the sciences for which he does not have enough persistence. But since he has a formative relation to all three and everywhere has to attain reality in content and substance, and unity and propriety in form, even these misdirections of his strivings are not unfruitful... Since the time that he learned to observe that in the case of the sciences it depends more on the development of the mind which handles them, rather than on the objects themselves, he has not renounced the mental activity which was once only an arbitrary and undefined striving, but only regulated it more... unfortunately his nature has, in its substance as well as its form, developed itself through many obstacles and difficulties, and has become able to operate with conscious deliberation only of late, when the time of the greatest energy is past.

⁴³ Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume II 423.

⁴⁴ Goethe, 'Selbstschilderung (I)', *HA* Band X 529-530. Part of the translation of this text is by Nicholas Boyle (*Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume II 547-8) the remainder of the translation is my own.

In this passage, Goethe outlines a temporal model of cognition which, I intend to argue, can be applied to the pair of poems under our consideration: 'Mahomets Gesang' and 'Mächtiges Überraschen'. While the first poem depicts something resembling a 'zufälliges unbestimmtes Streben' ('arbitrary and undefined striving') I will contend that the second appears to demonstrate a regulated recollection of this striving – a recollection which takes into account the phenomenon of the Daemonic as representing the 'incomprehensible ambivalence of nature'. 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 spanning the revision of *Werther* and the first journey to Italy (1786-8), up until 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 which 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.⁴⁵ But as Karl Otto Conrady comments:

Niemand vermag nachzuweisen, was und wieviel von den Begegnungen der Zeit in die Dichtungen eingegangen ist...Zurechnungsversuche wären törichter Biographismus.⁴⁶

No one is able to prove, which and how many of the encounters of the times have influenced the poetry...Such attempts at assignment would be foolish biographism.

Thus, in contradistinction to the biographical approaches noted above, I wish to offer a reading of 'Mächtiges Überraschen' which 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, which lead to an understanding of Goethe's later, consciously theorised concept of the Daemonic as representing an 'incomprehensible ambivalence', confronted by the striving subject, in the forces of nature.

⁴⁵ This has been the view of Heinrich Viehoff, *Goethes Gedichte* (Stuttgart, 1876), Paul Hankamer, *Spiel der Mächte. Ein Kapitel aus Goethes Leben und Goethes Welt* (1947) and Emil Staiger, *J.W. Goethe: Gedichte* (Zürich, 1949). See Hans-Jürgen Schlüter's commentary on the reception history of 'Mächtiges Überraschen' in: *Goethes Sonette: Anregung, Entstehung, Intention* (Bad Homburg: Verlag Gehlen, 1969) 111-115.

⁴⁶ Karl Otto Conrady, *Goethe: Leben und Werk* Band II 339.

Such a reading must also acknowledge the tradition of twentieth century German literary criticism, alluded to in Part One of this study, which has exposed Goethe's writing's to a new level of textual and philosophical analysis, by showing a willingness to move away from strictly biographical interpretations of Goethe's works. In this connection, Walter Benjamin's essay 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften' (1924), Hans-Georg Gadamer's essay 'Goethe und die Philosophie' (1947), Georg Lukács's *Goethe und seine Zeit* (1947), Hans Blumenberg's *Arbeit am Mythos* (1979) and Walter F. Veit's recent essay 'Selbstverwirklichung, Entsagung und der Orient' (2000) are key resources. Likewise, Nicholas Boyle's biography *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* (1991-2000), is also of crucial importance, in that it manages to situate and interpret Goethe's works in connection with the philosophical issues of his time, particularly as they are raised in the respective philosophies of Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant and Schelling, among others. Keeping this background in mind, it is necessary, at this point, to quote Goethe's sonnet in full.

MÄCHTIGES ÜBERRASCHEN

Ein Strom entauscht umwölktem Felsensaale,
Dem Ozean sich eilig zu verbinden;
Was auch sich spiegeln mag von Grund zu Gründen,
Er wandelt unaufhaltsam fort zu Tale.

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 and staunt zurück und weicht
Und schwillt bergan, sich immer selbst zu trinken;
Gehemmt ist nun zum Vater hin das Streben.

Sie schwankt und ruht, zum See zurückgedeicht;
Gestirne, spiegelnd sich, beschaun das Blinken
Des Wellenschlags am Fels, ein neues Leben.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Goethe, 'Mächtiges Überraschen', HA Band I 294. The above translation by Christopher Middleton is taken from: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Selected Poems 177. In Middleton's translation line one of the second stanza reads: 'But with abrupt demoniacal force'. I have changed this to: 'But with abrupt daemonic force'.

IMMENSE ASTONISHMENT

A river from a cloud-wrapped chamber gone,
 Of rock, and roaring to be one with ocean,
 Much it reflects from deep to deep, its motion
 Never relenting valleyward on and on.

But with abrupt daemonic force,
 By forest, mountain, whirling wind pursued,
 Oreas tumbles down into quietude,
 And there she brims the bowl, impedes the course.

The wave breaks into spray, astonished, back
 Uphill it washes, drinking itself always;
 Its urge to join the father hindered, too,

It rolls and rests, is dammed into a lake;
 The constellations, mirrored, fix their gaze:
 The flash of wave on rock, a life made new.

The first stanza of the sonnet invites a direct comparison with the opening lines of 'Mahomets Gesang'. In the earlier poem a 'Felsenquell' (mountain spring) 'dances' out of clouds ('Tanzt... aus der Wolke'), and races into a valley below. In 'Mächtiges Überraschen', however, the protagonist-stream emerges from a 'Felsensaale' (literally, 'chamber of rock') – an origin which, 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 which we found in our discussion of Goethe's early Romanticism: the subject's desire to unify itself with the ocean is described, in the third stanza, as a 'Streben' ('striving' or 'longing'), a desire for complete self-realisation or *Selbstverwirklichung*.

In the second stanza, this striving is abruptly halted by Oreas, a mountain nymph who belongs to a broader category of demi-Gods known as the Oreads.⁴⁸ Oreas confronts the subject-stream with a 'daemonic' counter-force. This counter-force is depicted in the image of the subject-stream's dashing (*stürzen*) against the powers of nature, powers which the figure of Oreas personifies in a mythic form. Here 'daemonic' appears to denote those forces in nature, or perhaps even in the cosmos, which cannot be anticipated by the subject, and which therefore have the capacity to shock and surprise (*Überraschen*) the subject into a state of recognition.

⁴⁸ 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, N.C.: McFarland, 1997) 364.

This moment of recognition is then transformed, in the poem's third stanza, into the protagonist-stream's awareness of a new existential situation – a situation of subjectivity-in-limitation or *Begrenzung*. Initially, the protagonist-stream makes another attempt to overcome the obstacle which 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, 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 world-view, 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 realise that it is merely a small part of an all-powerful cosmic order which is depicted in the image of the constellations (*Gestirne*) which it reflects, and an order which cannot fully be cognised in rational terms, but which must nevertheless be respected.

In depicting a narrative in which a striving subject is obstructed by a natural or even cosmic 'daemonic' force, an obstruction which 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* (polarity and intensification or ascent). Goethe attributes this notion to his reading of Kant, but he would also have encountered it in the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling.⁴⁹ In his *Campagne in Frankreich* – Goethe's reflection upon his experiences in the years immediately following the French Revolution (published in 1822) – he writes:

Ich hatte mir aus Kants Naturwissenschaft nicht entgehen lassen, daß Anziehungs- und Zurückstoßungskraft zum Wesen der Materie gehören und keine von der andern im Begriff der Materie getrennt werden könne; daraus ging mir die Urpolarität aller Wesen hervor, welche die unendliche Mannigfalt der Erscheinungen durchdringt und belebt.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ In his *Von der Weltseele*, Schelling writes: "Es ist erstes Princip einer philosophischen Naturlehre, in der ganzen Natur auf Polarität und Dualismus auszugehen." ("It is the first principle of a philosophical theory of nature, to proceed on the basis of polarity and dualism in the whole of nature"). Quoted in P. Probst, 'Polarität', *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Band XII 1026-1029.

⁵⁰ Goethe, *Campagne in Frankreich* HA Band X 314. In a letter to Kanzler von Müller dated May 24, 1828 (some twenty years after the composition of 'Mächtiges Überraschen') Goethe uses these concepts in order to clarify the Fragment 'Die Natur', first published in 1784 and now thought to be the work of Georg Christoph Tobler. Goethe writes of the fragment:

From Kant's scientific knowledge I did not allow to escape from me, that the forces of attraction and repulsion belong to the existence of matter, and cannot be separated from one another in the concept of matter; out of this there came to me the primal polarity of all existence, which penetrates and animates the infinite diversity of appearances.

Goethe contends that out of the attraction and collision of opposites, a kind of ascent is achieved, through which the two hitherto divided principles are momentarily united on a higher level. But according to P. Probst, in his article 'Polarität' in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Goethe's notion of *Polarität und Steigerung* is not so much concerned with a constant drive toward an overcoming of opposites through unity, à la the dialectic of Hegel, but rather with "die lebendige Spannung zwischen den Polen" ("the living tension between the poles").⁵¹ As we shall discover in our reading of 'Mächtiges Überraschen', Goethe is interested in the *productive relationship of opposition* between the subject and nature, an endless tension which leads the subject to both new discoveries and further obstacles, and a tension which cannot be surmounted or completely cognised through any overriding theory akin to Hegel's dialectic.

Keeping this notion of *Polarität* in mind during our discussion, we need to ask the following questions: How should we understand 'Mächtiges Überraschen'? What is the significance of the apparently 'daemonic' Oreas? And if, as I have suggested, Oreas can be seen to embody nature, what are the implications of this contention for Goethe's later theorisation of the Daemonic? In order to answer these questions, we need to review Goethe's philosophical development during the period between the revised *Werther* of 1786/7, and the composition of 'Mächtiges Überraschen' itself in 1807/8.

"Die Erfüllung aber, die ihm fehlt, ist die Anschauung der zwei großen Triebräder aller Natur: der Begriff von Polarität und von Steigerung, jene der Materie, insofern wir sie materiell, diese ihr dagegen, insofern wir sie geistig denken, angehörig; jene ist in immerwährendem Anziehen und Abstoßen, diese in immerstrebendem Aufsteigen. Weil aber die Materie nie ohne Geist, der Geist nie ohne Materie existiert und wirksam sein kann, so vermag auch die Materie sich zu steigern, so wie sich der Geist nicht nehmen läßt, anzuziehen und abzustoßen; wie derjenige nur allein zu denken vermag, der genugsam getrennt hat, um zu verbinden, genugsam verbunden hat, um wieder trennen zu mögen." ("The missing fulfillment is the perception of the two great driving forces in all nature: the concepts of polarity and intensification, the former a property of matter insofar as we think of it as material, the latter insofar as we think of it as spiritual. Polarity is a state of constant attraction and repulsion, while intensification is a state of ever-striving ascent. Since, however, matter can never exist and act without spirit, nor spirit without matter, matter is also capable of undergoing intensification, and spirit cannot be denied its attraction and repulsion. Similarly the capacity to think is given only to someone who has made sufficient divisions to bring about a union, and who has united sufficiently to seek further divisions"). Goethe, 'Erläuterung zu dem aphoristischen Fragment Die Natur', *HA* Band XIII 48. Trans. Douglas Miller, 'A Commentary on the Aphoristic Essay Nature', *Goethe The Collected Works* Volume XII 6.

⁵¹ P. Probst, 'Polarität', *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Band XII 1027. Recent accounts of Goethe's notion of polarity substantiate Probst's claim. In *Goethe's History of Science*, Karl J. Fink writes that Goethe considered polarity to be a "primary term...used to describe the primal acts of nature, such as the negative and positive of electricity." Karl J. Fink, *Goethe's History of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 45. In his essay 'Horns, Hooves, Spots and Stripes', Mark Riegner observes that Goethe's study of science: "led to the recognition that the principle fundamental to the organization of natural phenomena was that of polarity... To Goethe, nature's creations were engaged in ceaseless motion as

From 'Mahomets Gesang', through *Werther*, to the *Italienische Reise* of 1787 onward, Goethe's philosophical development was primarily concerned with the relationship between the subject – the perceiving 'I' – and the objects (*Gegenstände*) of nature. On this level, the *Streben* 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 of the *Sturm und Drang* which we examined in Parts Four and Five of this study, beginning with Herder's *Fragmente einer Abhandlung über die Ode* (1764) and Goethe's own early meditations on the subject of genius in essays like 'Von Deutscher Baukunst' (1772), and ending, after the *Sturm und Drang* period, with Schiller's famous essay *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (1795) and Schelling's *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1797). The broad aesthetic/philosophical credo which 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 which are imbedded in the self. Seen in this way, 'Mächtiges Überraschen' may depict a poetic subject that wishes to unify itself with nature as its lost 'other'. At the same time, however, 'Mächtiges Überraschen' may also constitute a reflection on Goethe's later theoretical attitude to nature, an attitude expressed and developed in essays like 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt' (1792) and 'Erfahrung und Wissenschaft' (1798). 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 which attempt to synthesise disparate natural phenomena within general schemata not unlike Kant's 'ideas of pure reason'.

It is submitted that, in all of the above cases, we can detect the driving force which Goethe himself finds, in his 'Selbstschilderung' of 1797, at the core of his being: namely a proto-Leibnizian 'fortwirkender poetischer Bildungstrieb' ('active poetical formative drive') which works its way outwards to an understanding of, or at the very least a kind of contact with, the objects of nature.

In Part Four of this study we saw how Plato's original concept of the Daemonic as an intermediary mode or conduit between the material world and the *eide* or forms was crucially immanentised via the philosophy of Spinoza. 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 Edward

they metamorphosed between polarities." Riegner's essay appears in: *Goethe's Way of Science: A Phenomenology of Nature* ed. David Seamon and Arthur Zajonc (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998) 179.

Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759) and 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 productivity which 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 which characterised the *Sturm und Drang* period, and the aforementioned notion of the 'daemonic' genius which 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 synthesise the particular objects of nature within universal models – models which, 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, synthesising spirit.

But the influence of Schiller's Kantianism and the Critical Philosophy of Kant itself, combined with Goethe's own deep-seated suspicion in relation to abstract models of any kind, eventually produced in Goethe the realisation that the objects (*Gegenstände*) of nature would always resist (literally stand 'gegen' or against, perhaps even in polar opposition to) any universal model which 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 which we simply have to uncover and reveal through the adoption of a *Naturphilosophie*, Goethe objects. This is due to the fact that Goethe had realised, long before he read Schelling – and perhaps even during the revisions which 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, in effect, be subjected to a determination from the outside (*Bestimmung von außen*) through which it is forced to account for the minute particulars of individual organisms. At this point it is apposite to revisit the beginning of the second stanza of the sonnet:

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.

But with abrupt daemonic force,
 By forest, mountain, whirling wind pursued,
 Oreas tumbles down into quietude,
 And there she brims the bowl, impedes the course.

It is here where Goethe gives a poetic representation of his belief that the infinite variety of natural objects will always work against, and ultimately undo, any philosophy which would attempt to encompass the whole of nature within the scope of a universal 'Idea' or aesthetic theory. Oreas, then, is 'daemonic' in that she represents what Benjamin has called 'the incomprehensible ambivalence of nature': the sense in which nature will always exceed and therefore also disrupt – run up against (*stürzen*), ob-ject to – our ability to contain it within complete philosophical systems. Seen in this light, the 'daemonic' Oreas may turn out to be the figure through which nature – or in a broader sense – reality, intrudes upon the subject and its internal conceptions, theories and fantasies. In the words of Hans Blumenberg, reality might be, for Goethe:

...das, was in ein ästhetisch konzipiertes Leben ausschließlich innerer Konsistenz, in ein selbstgeschaffenes Leben prometheischen Anspruchs, von außen als Fremdes hereinbricht.⁵²

...that which, in an aesthetically conceived life of exclusively internal consistency – a self-created life with Promethean pretensions – breaks in, as something foreign, from outside.

At this point we need to address the question as to whether this 'daemonic' Oreas embodies a *pantheistic* or a *panentheistic* understanding of nature on Goethe's behalf. Many people are familiar with the following famous statement, found in Goethe's *Maximen und Reflexionen*:

Wir sind naturforschend Pantheisten, dichtend Polytheisten, sittlich Monotheisten.⁵³

Researching into nature we are pantheists, writing poetry we are polytheists, morally we are monotheists.

⁵² Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 533. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 490.

⁵³ Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen HA* Band XII 372. Trans. Stopp, *Maxims and Reflections* 109.

Here Goethe implies – perhaps ironically – that we can simply divide our religious beliefs into separate categories from which we can then make a choice, depending upon which field of inquiry we wish to enter into. But Goethe seems, at the same time, to have been aware that in reality we can never separate moral issues, nor issues relating to composition (*Dichten*), from our scientific or indeed our philosophical endeavours. Thus, while the Pantheism of Spinoza may have produced in the young Schelling a confidence that nature could be understood within the rubric of a *Naturphilosophie*, Goethe took from Schelling the belief that there is always what Hans Blumenberg calls an ‘unresolved remainder’ in (and perhaps even beyond) nature, a remainder which always escapes any philosophy which confines itself to purely rational analysis, and which also exists *within the subject itself* as an unconscious (*unbewußt*) element. Thus, Goethe’s notion of the Daemonic as it is presented in ‘Mächtiges Überraschen’ is possibly suggestive of both *Pantheism* – the notion that God and ‘Nature’ are effectively one – and *Panentheism*: the doctrine that the world is contained in, and therefore also conditioned and exceeded by, God. In this connection I am in agreement with Walter F. Veit when he argues that, in ‘Mächtiges Überraschen’:

Dämonisch will heißen der Rationalität unzugänglich und durch nichts Menschliches zu meistern.⁵⁴

Daemonic refers to that which is inaccessible through rationality and that which cannot be mastered through human means.

Veit’s comments suggest that the Daemonic in ‘Mächtiges Überraschen’ is a phenomenon which is not susceptible of clarification or resolution through purely scientific or human endeavors. Rather, it marks a boundary beyond which human knowledge of both nature, and perhaps even of existence *per se*, cannot pass: a boundary which is an *Urphänomen*, producing in the subject feelings of astonishment (*Staunen*) and resignation (*Resignation*). This formulation accords with Goethe’s later contention, outlined in book twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, that the Daemonic is that which is able to exceed “Alles, was uns begrenzt” (everything which limits us). Veit goes on to observe that Goethe:

...in seiner Vorstellung der *Weltfrömmigkeit* in fortschreitendem Maße eine Ontologie der Immanenz einer onto-theologischen Transzendenz gegenübergestellt hat.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Walter F. Veit, ‘Selbstverwirklichung, Entsagung und der Orient’, *Westöstlicher und Nordsüdlicher Divan: Goethe in interkultureller Perspektive* Ortrud Gutjahr Hg. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000) 101.

⁵⁵ Veit, ‘Selbstverwirklichung, Entsagung und der Orient’ 101.

...in his idea of world-religiousness (*Weltfrömmigkeit*), opposed, in progressive measures, the notion of onto-theological transcendence with an ontology of immanence.

Veit's contention suggests that 'Mächtiges Überraschen' does seem to have been conceived within the spirit of an immanentist *Weltfrömmigkeit*. As we saw in Part Six of our analysis, Goethe's notion of *Weltfrömmigkeit* invokes the following ideas: world-piety, respect for the world, a sense of duty towards the world. This notion places the individual's subjective desires within the context of a wider social, natural and cosmic order which cannot be fully understood on a rational basis and which is therefore to be feared and respected. It appears, then, that the notion of a cosmic order suggested by Goethe's concept of *Weltfrömmigkeit* stands upon the boundary between Pantheism and Panentheism, in that it refers to an innerworldly power, but a power which is not susceptible of clarification or explication through secular or scientific means. In this context, the 'daemonic' power which disrupts the trajectory of the subject-stream in 'Mächtiges Überraschen' seems to be suggestive of Paul Fischer's definition of the Goethean Daemonic as "eine hohe, ehrfurchtgebietende...dem Göttlichen verwandte Macht" ("a great, intimidating [*ehrfurchtgebietende*: literally, demanding of respect and fear] power which is congenial of the divine").⁵⁶

It is also 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 proto-Leibnizian 'poetical formative drive' which strives for expansion or *Selbstverwirklichung* (self-realisation) at all costs. As we saw in both 'Mahomets Gesang' and *Werther*, this demand for total self-realisation 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 *anagnorisis* alluded to by Nicholas Boyle: a sense of temporality which 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 which hinders (*hemmen*) and renders formal (*begrenzt*), 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 which is broken, transformed into spray, and finally forced to drink itself ('sich

⁵⁶ Paul Fischer, *Goethes Altersweisheit* 28. Brackets added to English translation.

immer selbst zu trinken'), we are at the same time confronted with a subject which has, through circumstances beyond its control or understanding, been coerced into self-awareness.⁵⁷

Does the self-awareness, the apparent reflection upon longing presented in 'Mächtiges Überraschen' amount to Romantic irony, as is suggested by Gundolf? It is submitted here that such a formulation fails to understand the philosophical critique attempted by Goethe in the poem – a critique which, according to Walter F. Veit, addresses the key philosophical issues of Goethe's time as they are expressed by both Leibniz and Kant.⁵⁸ In the case of Leibniz, 'Mächtiges Überraschen' demonstrates that the monad is in fact not windowless – that its fate can be determined by external factors and obstacles which are 'daemonic' in the sense that they cannot be anticipated or understood within the confines of rational analysis. With respect to Kant, 'Mächtiges Überraschen' depicts a narrative in which the subject's expectations or theories regarding nature are also jettisoned by nature's 'incomprehensible ambivalence' – an ambivalence which exists not only in external objects or 'things in themselves', but also within the 'natural' subject itself. Thus, while Gundolf finds in the poem a kind of Romantic irony, my own contention is that 'Mächtiges Überraschen' concerns itself with that aspect of Goethe's Classicism isolated by Georg Lukács: namely, its preoccupation with form, and in particular, the question of form as it relates to subjectivity. While this preoccupation with form and limitation is in fact one of the hallmarks of Goethe's Classicism,⁵⁹ it is also, at the same time, a response to the problematic of subjectivity as it appears in the transgressive Romanticism of the *Sturm und Drang* period, and particularly in *Werther*. Thus, I wish, following Lukács, to suggest that the Classicism found in 'Mächtiges Überraschen' represents a retrospective reflection upon the fate of the Romantic subject from a position of temporal distance.

The concluding stanza of the poem, in which the subject-stream, after its initial astonishment, finds in its situation of subjectivity-in-limitation 'ein neues Leben' ('a new life'), is susceptible of a number of interpretations. On the one hand, Hans Georg Gadamer observes that Goethe's intuition of a harmonious coexistence between the human subject and the opposing forces of nature can be seen as

⁵⁷ This particular reading of 'Mächtiges Überraschen' has been most recently proposed by Arjan van Dijk in his essay 'Das Dämonische als moderne Rezeptionskategorie', *Neophilologus* 83.3 (1999): 427-443. Van Dijk argues that the 'daemonic' force represented by Oreas leads the subject to a new state of "Stabilität, Selbsterkenntnis und Individualität" ("stability, self-knowledge and individuality") 428.

⁵⁸ Veit, 'Selbstverwirklichung, Entsagung und der Orient' 100.

⁵⁹ Veit, 'Selbstverwirklichung, Entsagung und der Orient' 103. In this connection, Veit observes that "Erziehung zur Selbstbegrenzung in Rücksicht auf den Mitmenschen ist deshalb das Ziel der klassischen Bildungstheorie" ("Development towards self-limitation, in consideration of one's fellow human beings, is thus the goal of the Classical theory of education").

proto-Hegelian.⁶⁰ In this context, 'Mächtiges Überraschen' can be seen to portray Goethe's notion of *Polarität*: a 'dialectical' movement from the initial autonomous existence of the subject-stream, to its apprehension, via an encounter with its 'antithesis' or opposing principle (the 'daemonic' Oreas), of a 'new life' of subjectivity-in-limitation. But Gadamer himself tempers this suggestion by observing that "die radikale Beweisenergie der Hegelschen Dialektik mußte ihm [Goethe] verdächtig sein" ("the radical energy of proof in Hegel's dialectic could seem only suspect to him [Goethe]").⁶¹

Thus, if Goethe's notion of *Polarität* does lead to a kind of unity of opposites, this unity is only momentarily realised. Goethe himself points out, in the 'Didaktischer Teil' of his *Zur Farbenlehre* (*Theory of Colour*), that the process of *Polarität und Steigerung* is endless – yielding momentary fusions or 'sublations' which are then subject to further divisions:

Das Geeinte zu entzweien, das Entzweite zu einigen, ist das Leben der Natur; dies ist die ewige Systole und Diastole....das Ein- und Ausatmen der Welt, in der wir leben....⁶²

To divide the unified, to unify the divided, is the life of nature: this is the eternal systole and diastole....the inhaling and exhaling of the world in which we live....

This notion of *Polarität und Steigerung* would appear to place more emphasis on the powers of nature than upon the progress of any Hegelian world-spirit. Of more interest, in terms of our discussion of the Daemonic as a notion which originates in the philosophy of ancient Greece and particularly in the thought of Plato, is Gadamer's sense of "etwas Antikes" ("something ancient") in Goethe's thought: his sense that Goethe's Classicism moves close to the origin of philosophy, not only in Greece, but also in Rome.⁶³

⁶⁰ Gadamer writes: "Goethe [vermag] in Hegels Philosophie die gediegene Ausarbeitung der ihm so verwandten Identität von Realem und Idealem zu finden." ("Goethe is able to find in Hegel's philosophy the true, and for him the more congenial, elaboration of the identity of the real and ideal"). Gadamer, 'Goethe und die Philosophie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band IX 67. Brackets added. Trans. Paslick, 'Goethe and Philosophy' 14.

⁶¹ Gadamer, 'Goethe und die Philosophie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band IX 67. Trans. Paslick, 'Goethe and Philosophy' 15. Brackets added.

⁶² Goethe, *Zur Farbenlehre. Didaktische Teil* §739 HA Band XIII 488. Goethe's *Zur Farbenlehre* was first published in 1810.

⁶³ Gadamer, 'Goethe und die Philosophie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band IX 70. Trans. Paslick, 'Goethe and Philosophy' 18.

In this sense, the notion of a two-part division of thought being overcome or 'fused' in the final stanza cannot exclusively be seen as Hegelian, as it is also a hallmark of the Classical form of the sonnet itself, a form which Goethe learned from his readings of Petrarch.⁶⁴

At the same time, however, the sonnet's depiction of a striving subject which is obstructed by natural forces of which it can have little rational understanding seems, most of all, to be reminiscent of Schelling's *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*. This is the view of Ernst Loeb when he observes, in relation to Goethe's notion of the Daemonic, that Goethe eventually came to the realisation that:

...ohne Begrenzung – oder, nach Schelling, 'contrahierende Urkraft' – kein Raum denkbar ist...⁶⁵

...without limitation – or, according Schelling, a 'contracting primal power', space itself is inconceivable...

Thus it was – perhaps more than anyone else – Schelling who assisted Goethe in his recognition of what Hans-Georg Gadamer has called the 'conditionedness' of human reason⁶⁶: the extent to which reason can never completely understand or encompass nature's 'incomprehensible ambivalence' precisely because reason itself is inescapably imbedded in the natural world.

Throughout 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*. The first, *untheorised* sense is derived from the Platonic notion of the daemon as an intermediary between the temporal human world and the realm of the *eide* or forms. During the period of the *Sturm und Drang*, this notion was adapted, secularised and finally manifested in the figure of the 'daemonic genius': the artist who – through his indwelling, organic, creative powers – is supposedly able to bridge the gap between the human and the natural, between culture and nature. In Part Six of this study, we saw how, during and after the composition of *Werther*, Goethe began to critique this notion of the 'daemonic genius' through a turn toward science and objectivity. Eventually, Goethe came to argue that the subject's attempts to reconnect itself with nature by uncovering nature's purported indwelling, universal laws – laws not

⁶⁴ See, in this connection, T.V.F. Brogan, Lawrence J. Zillman and Clive Scott, 'Sonnet', *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* 1168. Erich Trunz comments that Goethe's sonnets were, in their conception, closely related to the Classical form of the genre in the works of Petrarch. (HA Band I 633).

⁶⁵ Ernst Loeb, 'Das Dämonische', *Die Symbolik des Wasserzyklus bei Goethe* 70.

⁶⁶ Gadamer, 'Goethe und die Philosophie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band IX 70. Trans. Paslick, 'Goethe and Philosophy' 18.

unlike Goethe's notion of the *Urpflanze* – are always frustrated and obstructed by an abyss or limit which he termed the *Urphänomen*. The *Urphänomen* came to embody a kind of double limit for Goethe, in that it designated both the *internal* limits of the subject's capacity to understand nature's secrets, as well as an *external* obstructing force or limit in nature itself. In this way, the *Urphänomen* designates the extent to which there exists in nature an 'incomprehensible ambivalence' and an 'unresolved remainder' which exceeds the cognitive capacities of the subject, a remainder which Goethe consciously chose, at certain times, to call 'daemonic'. This, then, is the second *conscious* sense in which the notion of the Daemonic manifests itself in Goethe's writings: as an existential principle or *Urphänomen*.

'Mächtiges Überraschen' is the first text in Goethe's *oeuvre* which begins to show how these two senses of the Daemonic interact with one another. The sonnet depicts a striving subject which wishes to unify itself with nature: a subject which is a later version of the genius-stream which was discussed, in Part Five of our analysis, in the poem 'Mahomets Gesang'. This stream is 'daemonic' in the first sense of the term, in that it represents the Leibnizian monadic subject which wishes to expand at all costs, to fuse itself with the external world. In 'Mächtiges Überraschen', this 'daemonic genius' or striving subject is represented by Goethe in a retrospective or *anagnoristic* mode. Writing in 1807-8, some twenty-five years after the height of the *Sturm und Drang* period and the composition of 'Mahomets Gesang' (1772-3), Goethe is able to show how the trajectory of this daemonic genius is obstructed and diverted by an apparently *external* 'daemonic' force, mythically embodied in the figure of Oreas. Here the adjective 'daemonic', now consciously used by Goethe, designates an incomprehensible ambivalence in nature which disrupts the aims, goals, desires and theories of the subject, thereby producing in the subject a new sense of self-awareness and self-limitation.

From a theoretical perspective, Schelling's early *Naturphilosophie* plays a crucial role in demonstrating to us the fundamental connection between the two senses in which the Daemonic manifests itself in Goethe's works. By arguing that human beings are ineluctably situated within nature, Schelling demonstrates that the human capacity to understand nature as a totality through the deployment of reason or *logos* is conditioned and limited by the extent to which the rational subject is also a *natural* subject: a subject prone to unconscious, non-rational influences and drives.

In fact, Schelling's role in the history and development of the concept of the unconscious is well documented. Odo Marquard argues that Schelling's *Depotenzierung* ('depotentialisation') of the transcendental subject amounts to one of the earliest recognitions of a non-rational "naturhafte

Tätigkeit" ("natural activity") within human cognition, a recognition which anticipates – at least to some degree – Freud's theory of the unconscious.⁶⁷ In his book *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (1970), Henri F. Ellenberger also argues that Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, and particularly Schelling's concept of the *Weltseele*, is crucial in showing the underlying link between the human soul and nature. Paraphrasing Schelling, Ellenberger writes:

In visible nature, the organic and visible world arose from a common spiritual principle, the world soul (*Weltseele*), which out of itself and through a series of generations successively produced matter, the living nature, and consciousness in man.⁶⁸

For Goethe, human interaction with the world came to be expressive of this underlying link, a link best expressed in the *Urphänomen* of the Daemonic. In this context, the *Urphänomen* comes to represent both an internal limit, a limit placed upon the cognitive capacities of the human subject by its own non-rational drives, and a limit in external objects: expressed by way of their 'incomprehensible ambivalence'. Seen in this way, the *Urphänomen* manifests itself or 'shines forth'⁶⁹ in both subject and object precisely because they spring from the same ground and source: the ground of nature. Thus, the best use which human reason can make of its collisions with the 'incomprehensible ambivalence' of nature is to learn from them. As Gadamer observes:

Der Mensch ist, was er ist, in beständiger Wirkung auf die Welt und im beständigen Erfahren der Gegenwirkung der Welt auf ihn. Nicht in der abgelösten Freiheit des Gegenüberseins, sondern im täglichen Bezug auf die Welt, im Sicheinlassen in ihre Bedingungen gewinnt der Mensch sich selbst. Er gewinnt damit auch erst die rechte Stellung des Erkennens.⁷⁰

The human being is what he is because of his constant effect on the world and of his experience of its countereffect on himself. Man conquers himself not in any detached freedom of standing over against the world, but rather in his daily intercourse with the world, in

⁶⁷ Marquard qualifies this claim by making a crucial distinction between Freud's theory of the unconscious and Schelling's 'naturhafte Tätigkeit'. In Schelling's thought, Marquard argues, "das Unbewußte ist als Natur noch ganz als 'Heile' gedacht, ist noch durchaus das Wahre, Gute, Schöne und äußerstenfalls das Erhabene – also noch nichts, was das Ich seinem bewußten Blick zu entziehen hätte". ("the unconscious is still thought of as redemptive, is definitely still seen as the true, the good, the beautiful and first and foremost the sublime – that is to say, not yet as that from which the I has need to withdraw its conscious gaze"). In short, Marquard contends that Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* does not have any theory of repression (*Verdrängung*) precisely because its image of nature is thoroughly positive. Marquard, *Transzendentaler Idealismus, Romantische Naturphilosophie, Psychoanalyse* 159.

⁶⁸ Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (London: Allen Lane, 1970) 202.

⁶⁹ 'Phänomen' (phenomenon) is derived from the Ancient Greek word *φαίνόμενον*, meaning 'to show' or 'bring to light'. See M. Hossenfelder, 'Phänomen', *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* Band VII 462.

⁷⁰ Gadamer, 'Goethe und die Philosophie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band IX 69. Trans. Paslick, 'Goethe and Philosophy' 16.

allowing himself to participate in its conditionedness. Only by doing so does he attain the proper attitude for the act of knowing.

Keeping in mind Gadamer's observations, and Goethe's presentation of his notion of the Daemonic in 'Mächtiges Überraschen', we shall now turn to Goethe's discussions of the Daemonic in his autobiography: *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.

7.4. *Dichtung und Wahrheit* I: 'After the Example of the Ancients'

In the twentieth book of his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe elaborates upon the phenomenon of the Daemonic in two passages written in early to mid 1813, some six years after the composition of 'Mächtiges Überraschen'.⁷¹ The first of these two passages constitutes what Erich Trunz has called:

Goethes ausführlichste, schlüssigste und tiefste Aussage über das Dämonische. Alle anderen Äußerungen über das gleiche Thema haben nicht ihr Gewicht.⁷²

Goethe's most detailed, most conclusive and deepest statement about the Daemonic. All other statements on the same theme do not hold as much weight.

It is, however, in this statement, and in others like it made to Eckermann, that Goethe's notion of the Daemonic becomes less akin to the philosophical notion or image which we found in 'Mächtiges Überraschen', and begins to operate as something like a rhetorical *topos* through which he attempts to understand or at the very least address what Hans Blumenberg calls the "unresolved remainder" of his (Goethe's) experience.⁷³ Blumenberg elaborates upon this point by arguing, contra the position of Erich Trunz, that what matters about Goethe's famous statement is not "this title [that is, the

⁷¹ Erich Trunz informs us that Goethe's *Tagebuch* notes, on the fourth of April 1813: 'Conception des Dämonischen und Egmonts'. *HA* Band X 650.

⁷² Trunz, *HA* Band X 650. The editor of the more recent *Münchener Ausgabe* edition of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* – Peter Sprengel – agrees with Trunz when he describes the passage as "die substantiellste von zahlreichen Äußerungen des späten Goethes zu diesem ...Phänomen" ("the most substantial of numerous statements made by the late Goethe on this phenomenon"). *MA* Band XVI 1072-3.

⁷³ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 437. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 401.

Daemonic] and the interpretive eagerness to which it has given rise; what matters is the remainder."⁷⁴
 In order to assess these competing claims, and to make my own, it is necessary to 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 umseh, 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 wohlthätig, 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.⁷⁵

In the course of this biography we have circumstantially exhibited the child, the boy, the youth, seeking by different ways to approach to the Suprasensible, first looking with strong inclination to a religion of nature, then clinging with love to a positive one, and, finally, concentrating himself in the trial of his own powers, and joyfully giving himself up to the general faith. Whilst he wandered to and fro in the space which lay intermediate between the sensible and the suprasensible regions, seeking and looking about him, much came in his way which did not appear to belong to either; and he seemed to see, more and more distinctly, that it is better to avoid all thought of the prodigious and incomprehensible. He thought he could detect in nature – both animate and inanimate, with soul or without soul – something which manifests itself only in contradictions, and which, therefore, could not be comprehended under any idea, still less under one word. It was not godlike, for it seemed unreasonable; not human, for it was not rational; nor devilish, for it was benificent; nor angelic, for it often betrayed a malicious pleasure. It resembled chance, for it evolved no consequences: it was like Providence, for it hinted at connection. All that limits us it seemed to penetrate; it seemed to sport at will with the necessary elements of our existence; it contracted time and expanded

⁷⁴ Blumenberg, *Work on Myth* 401. Brackets added. Blumenberg's words in the German are: "Es kommt auf diesen Titel und die Deutungslust, die er erweckt hat, nicht an; es kommt auf den 'Rest' an." *Arbeit am Mythos* 437. Blumenberg repeats this interpretation of the Daemonic as it appears in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* in his recent work *Goethe zum Beispiel*. See page 229 of Blumenberg's text.

⁷⁵ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band X 175-6. The translation of this passage, which I have altered, is by Oxenford and appears in Goethe, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume II 320-321.

space. In the impossible alone did it appear to find pleasure, while it rejected the possible with contempt. To this principle, which seemed to come in between all other principles in order to separate them, and yet to link them together, I gave the name of Daemonic, after the example of the ancients, and of those who, at any rate, had perceptions of the same kind. I tried to screen myself from this fearful principle, by taking refuge, according to my usual habits, behind an image.

We can see, in the presentation of the Daemonic offered in this passage, the double structure which I alluded to earlier in this chapter in my discussion of a term used by Nicholas Boyle: namely, the concept of *anagnorisis*, through which past events in the subject's life are reflected upon and recognised or re-understood in terms which directly influence the present. Boyle's application of the notion of *anagnorisis* to Goethe's works also echoes Benno von Wiese's contention, already discussed in parts One and Five of this study, that the Daemonic is *experienced* by the young Goethe, and then consciously 'theorised' or meditated upon by the late Goethe.⁷⁶ When this double structure of experience and reflection, or event and analysis, is applied to the famous passage from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* quoted above, the following conclusions can be made.

Firstly, the Daemonic, as a notion or *topos* – as opposed to an experience – is something which can only be approached or cognised in retrospect, and as such it corresponds with the reflective mode which Goethe increasingly adopted in his later Classical period, and which he also adopts in the passage quoted above. As Peter Sprengel comments, within the narrative of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* this passage functions "als Deutungsmuster" ("as an interpretive model") through which Goethe promises to synthesise the tendencies of his final years in Frankfurt: namely, his love for Lili, his early artistic productions, and his decision to move to Weimar.⁷⁷ In this regard the Daemonic operates as a mode which involves a kind of reflection upon, and thereby also a re-cognition of, previous strivings, efforts and desires.

Thus, Goethe begins the passage by focusing on his youth. As we have seen in Part Five of this study, youth is the period in which the subject tries to negotiate, and eventually to overcome, the intermediate spaces (*Zwischenräume*) which lie between the sensible and the suprasensible. Just as in the philosophy of Plato 'daemons' are those intermediate beings which move between the secular and divine realms, so in Goethe the first, untheorised sense of the Daemonic manifests itself in the subject's efforts to bridge the gap between the sensible and the suprasensible. These efforts and strivings are,

⁷⁶ Benno von Wiese, 'Das Dämonische und seine Gegenkräfte in der Tragödie Goethes', *Die Deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel* 81.

⁷⁷ Sprengel, *MA* Band XVI 1073.

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. 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 which are poetic (as we have seen in 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 which frustrates all attempts at universal synthesis by manifesting itself in contradictions which exceed rational explanations. Indeed, Goethe points out that the structure of the Daemonic itself is fundamentally excessive of both conceptual and linguistic representation.

In the remainder of the passage, Goethe begins to use terminology which 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 passage by stating that he observed and uncovered or dis-covered (*entdecken*) its effects in nature. The use of the verb *entdecken* is suggestive of a completely immanent and secular revelation in the sense of another German word: *Enthüllung*, which, unlike its brother-term (*Offenbarung*, also translated as revelation) retains a distinctly secular and immanentist resonance. But just as we begin to approach an understanding of the Daemonic as a phenomenon which is suggestive of immanence, Goethe introduces distinctly Platonic/Christian terminology into the equation, albeit by way of negation. The Daemonic, we are told, is not godlike (*göttlich*), nor is it devilish (*teuflisch*), nor angelic (*englisch*). By the same token, however, it is also not human (*menschlich*), it resembles providence (*Vorsehung*), and it feels at home only in the impossible (*im Unmöglichen*). In essence, Goethe seems to suggest that the Daemonic is neither immanent nor transcendent: rather, it tends to obliterate this distinction altogether.

The apparent situatedness of the Daemonic within nature, combined with the sense in which it suggests an excess in nature – an excess which surpasses human attempts to cognise it – is reminiscent of the philosophy of Schelling. In connection with Schelling's claim that nature – as the ground of the subject and therefore also of reason – is something which cannot be known or represented by the rational subject as a totality, we might recall Goethe's suggestion that the Daemonic penetrates or surpasses

(*durchdringen*) everything which limits us ("Alles, was uns begrenzt"). At the same time, however, we might also approach Goethe's passage through other philosophical models.

Rudolf Otto, for example, attempts clearly to distinguish Goethe's experience of the Daemonic from examples of religious 'divinations of the numinous'. In Goethe's notion of the Daemonic, he says, we notice the following elements of the numinous:

... the wholly non-rational, incomprehensible by concepts, the elements of mystery, fascination, awfulness, energy... But in another respect Goethe's intuition falls far short of Job's intuition of the *mysterium*. By his ignoring of the warning of the book of Job and by applying to the *mysterium* the standards of the rational understanding and reason and conceptions of human purpose, the non-rational comes to involve for Goethe a contradiction between meaning and meaninglessness, sense and nonsense, that which promotes and that which frustrates human ends.⁷⁸

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, its "sheer absolute wondrousness that transcends thought" and which "mocks at all conceiving".⁷⁹ Thus, the warning which Otto sees Goethe as refusing to heed, is the warning which suggests that the Divine cannot be approached through rational concepts, and which decrees that any attempt to encompass it by way of rational thought will end only in frustration.

Martin Heidegger, by contrast, in his interpretation of Plato's 'Myth of Er', sees the Daemonic along more secular, Aristotelean lines. In Part Three of this study, we saw how Aristotle sees philosophers as engaging in the discussion of things which are "remarkable, admirable, difficult, and divine [*daimonia*]"⁸⁰ Heidegger is in agreement with Aristotle's view, as for him the Daemonic designates a sense of the transcendent or the 'wholly other' within both Being and beings. The Daemonic, he says, is a kind of secular revelation or 'showing' in the sense of *Enthüllung* or dis-covering, in that it constitutes:

⁷⁸ Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy 168.

⁷⁹ Otto, The Idea of the Holy 94-95. Otto discusses Job's experience on pages 93-96.

⁸⁰ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1141b, 5-10. Brackets added.

...das von sich selbst her aufgehende Blickende und in das Seiende sich hereingebende Sein.⁸¹

...the looking which emerges out of itself and the Being which gives itself into beings.

At this point we can begin to assess the competing claims of Erich Trunz and Hans Blumenberg regarding this first passage on the Daemonic in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Firstly, Trunz's claim that the passage is 'conclusive' cannot be substantiated, while his assertion that it is 'detailed' certainly can. We definitely gain, from reading this passage, some idea about what the Daemonic *is not*, but what it *is* still eludes us. Secondly, Blumenberg's suggestion that, in our interpretation of the passage, we should disregard the term 'daemonic' and instead focus on the 'unresolved remainder' to which it apparently refers, is also deficient, as ignorance of this term amounts to a failure to account for the Platonic/Aristotelean heritage which underlies it, a heritage to which Heidegger draws our attention. This heritage is, moreover, also plainly present in Goethe's conscious choice of the term, when he states his wish to use the notion of the Daemonic "nach dem Beispiel der Alten" ("after the example of the ancients").

Blumenberg's reading of Goethe's notion of the Daemonic becomes more compelling, however, when we investigate it in light of Goethe's admission that:

Ich suchte mich vor diesem furchtbaren Wesen zu retten, indem ich mich, nach meiner Gewohnheit, hinter ein Bild flüchtete.

I tried to screen [*retten*: meaning rescue] myself from this fearful principle by taking refuge, according to my usual habits, behind an image.

This admission concurs with Blumenberg's notion that mythic thinking – that is to say, the creation of stories or images (*Bilder*) – serves its purpose in precisely those situations where rational thought becomes impotent: situations not unlike those encountered by Socrates when he takes counsel in the warnings and dissuasions of his 'divine sign' or *daimonion*. In the introduction to his book *Arbeit am Mythos* (*Work on Myth*) Blumenberg makes the following statement with regard to the philosophical function of myth. Myth-making, writes Blumenberg, is the activity through which:

⁸¹ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides Gesamtausgabe* Manfred S. Frings Hg. Band LIV 165. This passage is translated by David Farrell Krell in his book: *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life Philosophy* 302. I have altered Krell's translation.

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.⁸²

What has become identifiable by means of a name is raised out of its unfamiliarity by means of metaphor and is made accessible, in terms of its significance, by telling stories.

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 he [Goethe] will call 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.⁸³

...belongs to the category of the mythical. By this I mean to say only that it circumscribes – does not explain, perhaps only gives a name to – a potency that has not been fully analyzed historically... a whole century of analytical and descriptive elucidation of the phenomenon by historiography, which cannot tolerate mythical qualities, leaves, as a remainder that resists the grasp of theory, something of the kind which the poet at least gave a name to. Goethe's bewilderment in view of something that he took to be numinous is transformed into theory's disappointment that the center of the phenomenon, the power source of its dominance, the derivation of its energies and visions, has at bottom remained untouched and undiscovered.

Does Blumenberg's analysis serve to substantiate the claim made by Walter Benjamin that Goethe's late conception of the Daemonic reverts back to the '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 concepts which 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, that Goethe suddenly decided, late in life, to adopt a literally

⁸² Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 12. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 6.

⁸³ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 559. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 515.

'mythic' attitude toward existence. Rather, Goethe's late notion of the Daemonic suggests to us 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 an 'image' (*Bild*) for that which cannot be rationally explained.

In this regard, Goethe's attitude to myth approximates the role which Hans Blumenberg ascribes to mythic thinking in his *Arbeit am Mythos*. That is to say, in those situations where rational concepts 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 unnameable, to substitute the familiar for the unfamiliar, and finally to rationalise anxiety into fear by providing it with an object.⁸⁴ In fact, Blumenberg finds a "unique paradigm" of the 'work on myth' in following the incident from Goethe's life:

Als der bayerische Kronprinz Ludwig das Hochrelief der Medusa aus dem Palazzo Rondanini in Rom erwirbt, erhält Goethe 1825 einen Abguß zum Geschenk und dankt mit den Worten: "Schon seit beinahe vierzig Jahren vermisse ich den sonst gewohnten Anblick eines Gebildes, das uns auf die höchsten Begriffe hindeutet, wie sie sich dem Altertum aus täglicher Gegenwart entwickelten." ... Vor ihm stehe das langersehnte "einer mythischen Urzeit angehörige Kunstwerk", das, "sonst wegen unseliger Wirkungen furchtbar", ihm "wohltätig" und "heilsam" erscheine. Für Goethe ist das Haupt der Medusa der Triumph des Klassizismus. Es steht für die Überwältigung des Schreckens der Urzeit nicht mehr durch den Mythos, nicht durch die Religion, sondern durch die Kunst.⁸⁵

When Crown Prince Ludwig of Bavaria acquires the high relief of Medusa from the Palazzo Rondanini in Rome, Goethe receives a cast as a present and conveys his thanks with the following words: "For almost forty years now I have felt the absence of what was once a familiar sight of an image that hints at the highest concepts, such as developed in the ancient world from its daily presence." ... Before him stood the long-desired "work of art from a mythic-primeval time," which, although at other times it had been "fearsome on account of its fatal effects," appeared "benificent and wholesome" to him. For Goethe the head of Medusa is a triumph of Classicism. It stands for the overcoming of the terror of the primeval times by means no longer of myth or of religion, but of art.

Blumenberg does not share Goethe's confidence that in 'Classicism' there can be a kind of 'triumph' over the phenomenon of the Daemonic. "The fine arts" ("Die bildende Kunst"), he writes, have in fact "achieved only meager results in relation to the original terrors" ("hat...auf den urtümlichen Schrecken

⁸⁴ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 11. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 5.

⁸⁵ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 21-22. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 15.

nur Klägliches zustande gebracht.”).⁸⁶ At the same time, however, Blumenberg does suggest that something mysterious called ‘the Daemonic’ can at least be named, circumscribed, and discussed retrospectively in the characteristically reflective mode of Goethe’s late works. Thus, as we have also seen in Lukács’s discussion of the role of ‘Classicism’ in Goethe’s age, the ‘Classical’ is not so much a mode through which Ancient Greek values and themes reassert themselves in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century German culture. It is not, in other words, a return to ancient Greece. Rather, it is an aesthetic mode through which Goethe attempts to endow emotions which are resistant to form – emotions like, for example, anxiety, terror and inspiration, or intimations of the ‘all-powerful’ or infinite – with a formal quality which enables them at least to be approached, if not resolved, in discursive terms.

7.5. *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 Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. The background to this passage lies in Goethe’s discussion of Egmont,⁸⁷ the eponymous main character of a drama that Goethe composed between 1775 and 1787.⁸⁸ In this connection, Erich Trunz observes that:

Das Tagebuch notiert am 4. April 1813: *Conception des Dämonischen und Egmonts*, d.h. an diesem Tage entstand ein Abschnitt, der die Konzeption der Egmont-Gestalt und des Egmont-Dramas darstellt; und in der Gestalt Egmonts wurde in der Jugend auch das Dämonische konzipiert. Goethe weiß und sagt es selbst, daß er das Dämonische damals nur im Bild fassen konnte. Jetzt im Alter kann er es auch theoretisch darstellen.⁸⁹

The diary notes on the 4th of April 1813: *Conception of the Daemonic and Egmont*, that is, on this day there originated a section which presents the conception of the Egmont-figure and the Egmont-drama; and in the figure of Egmont the concept of the Daemonic was also conceived,

⁸⁶ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 21. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 15.

⁸⁷ The following articles address the theme of the Daemonic in *Egmont*: Konrad Schaum, ‘Dämonie und Schicksal in Goethes *Egmont*’, *Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift* 10 (1960): 139-157; George A. Wells, ‘Egmont and *Das Dämonische*’, *German Life and Letters* 24 (1970-1971): 53-67; Arjan van Dijk, ‘Das Dämonische als moderne Rezeptionskategorie, dargestellt an Goethes *Egmont* und *Torquato Tasso*’, *Neophilologus* 83.3 (1999): 427-443. See also Benno von Wiese, *Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel* 84-89.

⁸⁸ For an account of the genesis of *Egmont* see Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* Volume I 356-361.

⁸⁹ Trunz, *HA* Band X 177; 650.

in Goethe's youth. Goethe knows and says himself that, at that time, he could only apprehend the Daemonic in an image. Now in his old age he can also present it theoretically.

Trunz's comments substantiate the theory that Goethe wrote about 'daemonic' phenomena 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 the Daemonic as a concept. Given that this second passage on the Daemonic is written in a reflective mode which accounts for Goethe's activity in the mid 1770's – 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 which were examined in parts Four and Five of this study. In this connection, Goethe sees the Daemonic as something which 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 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 Herzengüte sich empfehlend; aber eine ungeheure Kraft geht von ihnen aus, und sie üben eine ungläubliche 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 ihresgleichen, 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 entstanden sein: Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse.⁹⁰

Although this daemonic element can manifest itself in all corporeal and incorporeal things, and even expresses itself most distinctly in animals, yet with man especially has it a most wonderful connection, forming in him a power, which, if it be not opposed to the moral order of the world, nevertheless does so often cross it that one may be regarded as the warp and the other as the woof... But the most fearful manifestation of the Daemonic is when it is seen predominating in some individual character. During my life I have observed several instances of this, either more closely or remotely. Such persons are not always the most eminent men, either morally or intellectually; and it is seldom that they recommend themselves to our affections by goodness of heart: a tremendous energy seems to be seated in them; and they exercise a wonderful power over all creatures, and even over the elements; and, indeed, who shall say how much farther such influence may extend? All the moral powers combined are of no avail against them: in vain does the more enlightened portion of mankind attempt to throw suspicion upon them as deceived if not deceivers, – the mass is still drawn on by them. Seldom if ever do the great men of an age find their equals among their contemporaries, and they are to

⁹⁰ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band X 177. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume II 322-323.

be overcome by nothing but by the universe itself, with which they begun their struggle; and it is from observation of this fact, that the strange but most striking proverb must have risen, *Nemo contra Deum nisi Deus ipse*.

Goethe's initial contention that the Daemonic presents itself to us most curiously (*aufs merkwürdigste*) through the behaviour of animals can be interpreted along Schellingian lines. In this context, Goethe appears to suggest that the Daemonic is a force or phenomenon which can be found in nature as a whole, and not just within the human sphere. Connected with this linkage 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, the 'moral world-order'. 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: namely, the ground of nature as the source of all existence, a ground which is sometimes 'incomprehensibly ambivalent', and which pays little heed to 'moral' imperatives.

It is also from within the context of nature's 'incomprehensible ambivalence' that we can begin to approach the way in which Goethe understands the phenomenon of the Daemonic to operate within the human sphere. He begins this discussion by observing that the Daemonic is at its most fearful (*am furchtbarsten*) when manifested within humans. Such 'daemonic' humans are, says Goethe, characterised by a tremendous energy or power (*ungeheure Kraft*) which opposes itself to the moral world-order, and which 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 which they seek to oppose. This, he says, is the underlying meaning of the simultaneously powerful and dreadful (*ungeheure*) saying *Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse*: meaning, in German 'Niemand gegen Gott, es sei denn Gott selbst'⁹¹ and in English 'No one (can stand) against God unless it is God himself'.⁹²

As I suggested earlier, our way into the meaning of this passage is through a reconsideration of the aesthetics of genius which characterised 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

⁹¹ This is the translation from Latin into German offered in the *Hamburger Ausgabe* of Goethe's works. HA Band X, 652.

⁹² Here I have altered the translation offered by Robert M. Wallace on page 524 of Hans Blumenberg's *Work on Myth*.

stand in a close relationship with the indwelling powers and energies of nature. The genius, says Herder, is: "...rasend, reißt alles nieder und schreckt Gelehrte und Ungelehrte..." ("...frenzied with rage, tears everything down, and terrifies the learned and the ignorant..."),⁹³ while for the early Goethe, the genius is a "Halbgott" ("demigod") which must be unconcerned ("unbekümmert") with anything extraneous to his own creative projects.⁹⁴

When 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 this time (that is, 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 indeed the 'daemonic individual', may in some ways resemble nature, it cannot, at the same time, overcome nature, nor can it 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 its own. To attempt to do so would be to assume that one is a god, or that one is a 'windowless' monad which is impervious to external obstructions and restrictions. Thus, as Hans Blumenberg comments, Goethe may have interpreted the saying *Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse* not in relation to another,

...sondern an sich selbst... Das Prometheus-Programm war gewesen, 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. Die Umkehrung der Prometheus-Konzeption durch den Alternden und Alten wurde, daß man kein Gott sein dürfe, wenn man nicht herausfordern wolle, daß alles sich gegen den eigenen Willen stellt – daß schließlich das Universum sich zusammenraufe, um den zum Gott sich reckenden Dämon zu vernichten....⁹⁵

...but in relation to himself. The Prometheus program had been that one *had to be* a god – and, as a genius, one also *could be* a god – in order to accomplish one's own will-to-a-world, as though no world yet existed that imposed the conditions of its 'reality' ['Realität', literally, "thinghood"] on the artist. Goethe's reversal of the Prometheus conception as he grew older, and in his old age, implied that one *could not be* a god if one did not want to provoke everything to oppose one's will – to provoke the universe finally to pull itself together in order to destroy the daemon who stretches himself out to be a god...

⁹³ Herder, *Fragmente zur deutschen Literatur Werke in Zwei Bänden* (Hanser) Band I 585. Trans. Ernest A Menze and Michael Palma, *Selected Early Works* 209.

⁹⁴ Goethe, 'Von deutscher Baukunst (1772)', *HA* Band XII 13-14. Translated by Ellen von Nardroff and Ernest H. von Nardroff in *Goethe: Essays on Art and Literature Goethe's Collected Works Volume III* 8-9.

⁹⁵ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, 597. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 549-550. Brackets added to English translation.

Here Blumenberg's comments demonstrate to us, 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: consequences through which the striving individual is obstructed through means which are beyond his or her rational comprehension. At this point it is useful to recall the sense in which, in Part Six of this study, the Daemonic was described as being an *Urphänomen* which constitutes, simultaneously, a limit in the subject and a limit or obstructing force in nature. In this regard, Eduard Spranger also observes, in his book *Goethe: seine geistige Welt*, that the term daemonic designates a kind of 'fate' (*Schicksal*), which is both internal (this is to say, located within the capacities of the subject) and external (located within the obstructing forces of nature). Spranger writes:

Dies Dämonische wird also durchweg als die unmittelbar auf den Menschen bezogene Schicksalsmacht gefaßt. Nun gibt es im doppelten Sinne Schicksal: ein von außen kommendes...und ein aus dem Inneren des Menschen selbst aufsteigendes (Daimon im engeren Sinne).⁹⁶

This 'Daemonic' therefore comes, in every way, to be understood as the immediate power of fate that presides over the human. Now there is fate in a double sense: one that comes from the outside... and one which rises up out of the human itself (daimon in the narrower sense).

The question as to the origin and meaning of the saying *Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse* has produced a wealth of speculation which cannot be discussed here.⁹⁷ It is, however, necessary to consider the possible religious context in which Goethe utters the saying. Is this 'god' or 'universe' which 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: namely, that 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 which can oppose god is part of god itself, or, as Spranger puts it:

⁹⁶ Eduard Spranger, *Goethe: seine geistige Welt* 434.

⁹⁷ In *Goethe: seine geistige Welt*, Eduard Spranger speculates at some length on the question of where Goethe first encountered the saying, only to conclude that its origin "nicht zu klären ist" ("cannot be clarified"). For Spranger's speculations on the origin of the saying see pages 416-419.

...die dämonischen Naturen sind aus dem göttlichen Universum geboren, stellen sich ihm selbstmächtig entgegen und werden von ihm wieder ruiniert.⁹⁸

...the daemonic natures are born of the divine universe, stand against this universe by virtue of their own strength, and are once again ruined by this universe.

By contrast, Hans Blumenberg complicates Spranger's position by arguing that the saying is simultaneously suggestive of both a proto-Spinozist Pantheism and a pagan Polytheism. In this connection, Blumenberg observes that:

...der Spruch [ist] hier weder rein monotheistisch...indem er eine Gegenposition gegen den Gott als illusorisch qualifizierte, noch auch exklusiv polytheistisch, indem er einen Gott gegen einen anderen stellt, sondern eine pantheistische Implikation hat: Nur das ganze Universum kann gegen eine dämonisch-göttliche Natur aufkommen, die innerhalb dieses Universums alle einzelnen Gewalten zu überwältigen vermag. Das Universum ist das Absolute, das in seiner Herrschaft nicht erschüttert werden kann durch das, was in ihm geschieht. Unter diesem Aspekt wird deutlich, daß der 'ungeheure Spruch' von Äquivalenzen handelt, die ihrem Typus nach nur in einem Pantheon paganer Art möglich sind, zugleich aber mit einer Grenzvorstellung überboten werden können, die das Absolute Spinozas wie eine singuläre Größe in den mythischen Kontext einführt.⁹⁹

...the saying ...is neither purely monotheistic (by describing a counterposition, against God, as illusory), nor exclusively polytheistic either (by setting up one god against another), but rather has a pantheistic implication: Only the entire universe can prevail against a daemonic-divine nature, which is able to overpower every individual within this universe. The universe is the absolute, which cannot be shaken, in its power, by what occurs within it. From this point of view it becomes clear that the 'extraordinary saying' deals with equivalences that, by their type, are only possible in a pantheon of the pagan kind, but that can at the same time be surpassed with a limiting idea that introduces Spinoza's absolute, as a unique magnitude, into the mythical context.

The most important term in Blumenberg's formulation of this problem is that of the *Grenzvorstellung* or 'limiting idea' – an idea which exists within a mythical or allegorical context. With regard to the 'mythic' nature of this 'limiting idea', Blumenberg's contention appears to be that its structure is fundamentally overdetermined: that is to say, it is not susceptible of any literal or exact interpretation which 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 always ultimately obstruct, disrupt and limit the strivings of any human who wishes to be a god. This notion conforms, at least partially,

⁹⁸ Spranger, *Goethe: seine geistige Welt* 417.

⁹⁹ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 569. Brackets added. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 525.

with Benno von Wiese's discussion of the Daemonic in Goethe which we encountered in Part Five of our analysis. While Blumenberg focuses on Goethe's rhetorical and mythic *conceptualisation* of the Daemonic as a limiting idea (*Grenzvorstellung*), Wiese is more interested in Goethe's *experience* of the Daemonic as an unaccountable (*unberechenbare*) limit-situation (*Grenzsituation*).¹⁰⁰

Thus, while the notion of Polytheism may suggest to the reader a universe in which gods of 'equivalent' power vie with one another – that is to say, a universe of god against god, as is possibly implied by the saying – at the same time these gods are, themselves, subject to an even greater limiting-power or order akin to that described by Wiese: that of the universe itself, which functions as the origin and condition of all those gods which exist within it.

Here the contemporaneity of the notion of the Daemonic as it is presented in Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* with the genesis of Goethe's *Egmont* can be of interpretative assistance. The final passage of Goethe's autobiography reveals to us another mythical image, taken directly from *Egmont*,¹⁰¹ behind which Goethe takes refuge in order to avoid explaining the reasons for his final decision to move to Weimar. Goethe invokes the metaphor of the human soul as a chariot pulled in different directions by the "Sonnenpferde der Zeit" ("the sun-horses of time").¹⁰² This metaphor appears in the myth outlined by Socrates at 246a-246b *Phaedrus*, in which the soul is described as a charioteer pulled in contrary directions by different horses.¹⁰³ Again, the suggestion here is that the

¹⁰⁰ Wiese writes: "Das Dämonische ist für Goethe eine Grenzsituation, Grenze seines eignen, durchlebten Daseins, gegen die er sich wehrt, soweit sie ihm den Goetheschen Einklang von irdischer und göttlicher Ordnung in Frage zu stellen droht, und die er doch anerkennt, weil er das Dämonische als das Zufällige, Unberechenbare, das sich der Ordnung entzieht, auf paradoxe Weise stets von neuem als einen Bestandteil eben dieser Ordnung selbst begreift." ("The Daemonic is for Goethe a limit-situation, the limit of his own lived-through existence, against which he fights, insofar as it brings into question for him the Goethean harmony between the earthly and divine orders, and which he nevertheless acknowledges, because he himself seeks to understand the Daemonic as the accidental and the unaccountable, as that which withdraws itself from all order, and which, in a paradoxical manner, always renews itself as an enduring element of this selfsame order"). Benno von Wiese, *Das Dämonische in Goethes Weltbild und Dichtung* 4-5.

¹⁰¹ See Goethe, *Egmont* HA Band IV 400-401.

¹⁰² The passage from *Egmont* used in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* runs as follows: "Kind, Kind! nicht weiter! Wie von unsichtbaren Geistern gepeitscht, gehen die Sonnenpferde der Zeit mit unsers Schicksals leichtem Wagen durch, und uns bleibt nichts als, mutig gefaßt, die Zügel festzuhalten und bald rechts, bald links, vom Steine hier, vom Sturze da, die Räder abzulenken. Wohin es geht, wer weiß es? Erinnert er sich doch kaum, woher er kam." ("Child, child! no more! The sun-horses of time, lashed, as it were, by invisible spirits, hurry on the light car of our destiny; and all that we can do is in cool self-possession to hold the reins with a firm hand, and to guide the wheels, now to the left, now to the right, avoiding a stone here, or a precipice there. Whither it is hurrying, who can tell? And who, indeed, can remember whence he came?"). Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band X 187. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume II 331.

¹⁰³ Plato writes, at 246a-246b of the *Phaedrus*: "Let us adopt this method, and compare the soul to a winged charioteer and his team [of horses] acting together. Now all of the horses and charioteers of the gods are good and come of good stock, but in other beings there is a mixture of good and bad. First of all we must make it plain that the ruling power in us men drives a pair of horses, and next that one of these horses is fine and good and of noble stock, and the other the opposite in every way. So in our case the task of the charioteer is necessarily a difficult and unpleasant business." Plato, *Phaedrus* (Hamilton) 50-51. Brackets added.

daemonic *Grenzbildung* alluded to by Blumenberg is most readily represented in mythic images, in this case, an image which is clearly derived from the canon of Classical mythology.

Significantly, Blumenberg, Spranger and Wiese do not address the question as to whether this universe or limiting-power is *pantheistic* or *panentheistic* in its conception, and this is perhaps because such a question is unanswerable. When, for example, we read a poem like 'Mächtiges Überraschen', in which the 'daemonic' Oreas opposes the will of the striving monadic subject embodied in a stream of water, the naturalistic presentation of the poem tends to suggest an immanently located limiting-power not unlike that found in the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling. Likewise, a similar notion of a natural, indwelling limit or determining principle can be found in the first section of Goethe's second late poem on the Daemonic: 'Urworte. Orphisch'. But, as we shall shortly see, Goethe's explanation of this poem also carries with it a sense of the transcendent and the numinous: this time in the form of Socrates's *daimonion* or divine voice.

7.6. 'Urworte. Orphisch' and Socrates.

The poem 'Urworte.Orphisch'¹⁰⁴ was composed by Goethe in 1817, and published in the volume *Zur Morphologie* in 1820. In his explanation of the poem, Goethe observes of the work and its mythic-philosophical origins:

Was nun von älteren und neueren orphischen Lehren überliefert worden, hat man hier zusammenzudrängen, poetisch, kompendios, lakonisch vorzutragen gesucht.¹⁰⁵

That which, until now, has been handed down from old and new orphic teachings, one has attempted to bring together here, and to present poetically, compendiously and laconically.

The apparent 'laconic' presentation of the poem and its meaning offered here by Goethe, demonstrates his personal distance from any literal belief in the 'mythic' *Weltanschauung* presented in 'Urworte. Orphisch', particularly in its first section, entitled 'Dämon':

¹⁰⁴ The *Münchener Ausgabe* of Goethe's works offers this punctuation of the poem's title, (see *MA* band XII 952) as does the *Hamburger Ausgabe* (*HA* Band I 359).

¹⁰⁵ Goethe, 'Urworte. Orphisch', *HA* Band I, 403. Goethe also published his commentary to 'Urworte. Orphisch' in 1820, in *Über Kunst und Altertum*.

Δαίμων, 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 sein, dir kannst du nicht entfliehen,
So sagten schon Sibyllen, so Propheten,
Und keine Zeit und keine Macht zerstückelt
Geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt.¹⁰⁶

Δαίμων, Daemon.

As stood the sun to the salute of planets
Upon the day that gave you to the earth,
You grew forthwith, you prospered, in your growing
Heeded the law presiding at your birth.
Sibyls and prophets told it: You must be
None but yourself, from self you cannot flee.
No time there is, no power can decompose
The minted form that lives and living grows.

It is no coincidence that Goethe published 'Urworte. Orphisch' in the volume *Zur Morphologie*, as the first section of the poem gives us a neat summary of the Aristotelean/Leibnizian teleology which underlies much of Goethe's morphological research. In Part Five 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:

Natürlich strebt jede Monade, jede Seele, nach... Vollendung der Selbstäußerung. Das heißt aber auch, daß sie nur in dieser Vollendung glücklich ist. Diejenige Monade aber, die auf irgendeine Weise an ihrer Selbstverwirklichung gehindert wird, verweilt in unvollständiger Anwesenheit, in Wesenverweigerung und deshalb in Leiden und möglicher Zerstörung.¹⁰⁷

Naturally every monad, every soul, strives for... fulfillment and self-expression. But that also means, that this monad is only happy in this state of fulfillment. Any monad, however, which, through some means or other, is hindered in its self-realisation, dwells in a state of unfulfillment in which its essence has been denied: a state, therefore, of sorrow and of possible destruction.

¹⁰⁶ Goethe, 'Urworte. Orphisch', *HA* Band I 403. Translated by Christopher Middleton in *Goethe: Selected Poems* 231.

¹⁰⁷ Veit, 'Selbstverwirklichung, Entsagung und der Orient' 104.

According to the cosmology of Leibniz, the monad is akin to Aristotle's notion of the *entelechy*, which we also encountered in Part Three of this study. The monad or *entelechy* (Leibniz himself says that these terms are interchangeable) is in fact the soul of the organism: the principle which animates its development or *Bildung*, and which determines its characteristics from birth until death. In this context, *Werther* demonstrated to us 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* (fulfillment or completion) which 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 arise "from the continual outflashings of the divinity from moment to moment."¹⁰⁸ Rather than following literally Leibniz's suggestion regarding the 'divinity' of the monad, the late Goethe prefers to interpret this aspect of the monad or *entelechy* within a mythic or allegorical context, by invoking what Walter Benjamin has called "die Astrologie als den Kanon des mythischen Denkens" ("astrology as the canon of mythic thinking").¹⁰⁹

The invocation of astrological concepts is not particularly unusual within Goethe's *oeuvre*. A glance 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 in relation to *Dichtung und Wahrheit*:

Mit einem symbolischen Bild beginnt es und mit einem solchen endet es, jedesmal die Beziehung zu höheren Mächten andeutend. Auch das Gedicht *Urworte. Orphisch* beginnt mit dem Sternensymbol, das die Einmaligkeit des Individuums und Bedingtheit durch Ort und Zeit ausspricht...Er [Goethe] war zwar der Meinung, daß alles mit allem in Beziehung stünde, war aber kein Astrologe und hat sich darüber mehrfach deutlich ausgesprochen.¹¹⁰

It begins with a symbolic image and also ends with one, in each case referring to the connection with higher powers. Likewise, the poem *Urworte. Orphisch* begins with the star-

¹⁰⁸ Leibniz, *Monadology* § 47, 261.

¹⁰⁹ Benjamin, 'Goethes Wahlverwandschaften' 150. Trans. Corngold, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' 316-317.

¹¹⁰ Trunz, *HA* Band IX 635. Brackets added. In this connection, Trunz directs the reader to Goethe's comments on astrology in his letters to Schiller dated 5.12.1798 and 8.12.1798, and in the *17. Jahrhundert* section of the *Geschichte der Farbenlehre*.

symbol, which expresses the uniqueness of the individual and its conditionedness through location and time... It is true that he [Goethe] was of the opinion that everything stood in relation to everything, he was, however, not an astrologer, and made many clear remarks to this effect.

Thus, when Goethe refers to the daemon in 'Urworte. Orphisch' as "dem Gesetz, wonach du angetreten" ("the law presiding at your birth"), and as the "Geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt" ("The minted form that lives and living grows", also perceptively translated by John Whaley as "Imprinted form informing living matter")¹¹¹ he has in mind not divine predestination as it appears in the canon of Greco-Roman astrology, but the decidedly more secular Aristotelean *entelechy* or Leibnizian monad. Goethe in fact clarifies the meaning of the daemon for us in the following remarks:

Der Dämon bedeutet hier die notwendige, bei der Geburt unmittelbar ausgesprochene, begrenzte Individualität der Person...Hiervon sollte nun auch das künftige Schicksal des Menschen ausgehen...¹¹²

Here the daemon means the necessary, limited individuality of the person that is immediately pronounced at birth... From here the future fate of the person should now also emanate.

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 Part Six of this study, morphology was, for Goethe, a 'Gestaltenlehre' (theory of form) and a 'Verwandlungslehre' (theory of transformation).¹¹³ 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.

Does, however, the presence of the theory of morphology in this section of the poem amount to a kind of biological determinism, a complete subsumption of human freedom by the forces of God/Nature? 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. This is because Goethe sees the daemon as a rule governing an individual's existence, an existence which can also be worked upon and adjusted by four other

¹¹¹ Whaley's translation can be found in: Goethe: Selected Poems Trans. John Whaley (London: J.M. Dent, 1998) 123.

¹¹² Goethe, 'Urworte. Orphisch', HA Band I 403.

¹¹³ Goethe, 'Morphologie', Goethe: Die Schriften zur Naturwissenschaft Band X 128.

formative principles: *Das Zufällige* (Chance), *Liebe* (Love), *Nötigung* (Necessity) and *Hoffnung* (Hope).

Chance (*Das Zufällige*) can, according to Goethe, manifest itself within the upbringing (*Erziehung*) of the individual, through the influence of parents, teachers and guardians, or through local environmental factors. Love, on the other hand, is often the means through which the daemon and Chance are conjoined: "hier verbinden sich die individuelle Dämon und die verführende Tyche miteinander" ("here the individual daemon and seductive Tyche [Chance] connect with one another"), says Goethe.¹¹⁴ 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 sei; jetzt wird er in seinem Innern gewahr, daß er sich selbst bestimmen könne.¹¹⁵

...he is not determined and imprinted [*gestempelt*: literally, 'stamped'] through nature alone; now he becomes aware within his interior, that he can determine himself.

Finally, while Necessity (*Nötigung*) serves to bring the capacity for self-determination within strict limits determined by divine powers or "die Sterne" ("the stars"). Hope (*Hoffnung*) announces the possibility of a complete release from earthly Necessity, through metaphysical salvation.

Of greater interest, though, for our present purposes, is the comment that Goethe makes, in his explanation of 'Urworte. Orphisch', with regard to the daemon of Socrates, a comment which was also mentioned towards the end of Part Two of this study. While *Das Zufällige* or 'Chance' may, according to Goethe, wax and wane throughout the life of the individual, the daemon nevertheless "hält sich alles durch" ("holds itself through everything") as the "eigentliche Natur" ("the real or true nature") of the individual.¹¹⁶ Goethe then elaborates upon this notion with reference to Socrates:

In diesem Sinne einer notwendig aufgestellten Individualität hat man einem jeden Menschen seinen Dämon zugeschrieben, der ihm gegentlich ins Ohr raunt, was denn eigentlich zu tun sei, und so wählte Socrates den Giftbecher, weil ihm ziemte zu sterben.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Goethe, 'Urworte. Orphisch', *HA* Band I 405. Brackets added.

¹¹⁵ Goethe, 'Urworte. Orphisch', *HA* Band I 406. Brackets added to English translation.

¹¹⁶ Goethe, 'Urworte. Orphisch', *HA* Band I 405.

¹¹⁷ Goethe, 'Urworte. Orphisch', *HA* Band I 405.

In this sense a necessarily created individuality is ascribed to every person by his daemon, which occasionally whispers into his ear what really has to be done, and so Socrates chose the poison cup, because for him to die was fitting.

This passage presents us with a number of difficulties, in that it complicates our initial supposition that the daemon is akin to the Aristotelean *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, like both the *entelechy* and the monad, determines the development of the individual, thereby suggesting a sense of biological determinism or 'fatedness', the above passage indicates to us that, at least in the case of Socrates, the daemon (or perhaps Goethe means Socrates's *daimonion* or 'divine voice') is something which endows the individual with a sense of *freedom from determination*, a freedom which 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's 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 Plato's *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's 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 guardian spirit (*δαίμων*, 'daimon') which was given charge over him in his life, tries to bring him to a 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.¹¹⁸

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

¹¹⁸ Plato, *Phaedo* (Tredennick) *The Last Days of Socrates* 170.

which operates within the gulf between the secular and the divine,¹¹⁹ the *daimonion* of Socrates performs the very limited function of dissuading Socrates from certain courses of action.¹²⁰

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? Does he, in other words, mean to suggest that Socrates was daemonically 'fated' to die by drinking Athenian hemlock? Or is he, by contrast, drawing attention to the fact that Socrates freely and rationally chose to make this decision – a decision which in fact confirms for the reader Socrates's 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's *daimonion*: the voice or sign which dissuades Socrates from certain courses of action, and a voice which Goethe encountered in his reading of Hamann's *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten*.¹²¹ But if this is the case, we have a further problem. According to Gregory Vlastos, the most authoritative recent commentator on Plato's works, the *daimonion* never actually tells Socrates that he *should* perform any specific action.¹²² 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 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's *daimonion*, have in common?

It is submitted here that both are expressive of the negativity and incompleteness of all theory or epistemology. In Part Two of this study, we entered into an examination of Socrates's 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 *eide* or forms. In fact it is Socrates's acknowledgement of his own ignorance which leads

¹¹⁹ As is suggested by Diotima's discussion of the daemon in the *Symposium* at 202e-203a.

¹²⁰ See for example, the function of the *daimonion* in the *Phaedrus* at 242b-242c, and in *The Apology* at 31c-32a.

¹²¹ Goethe mentions Hamann's interpretation of the Socratic *daimonion* in a letter to Herder written in early 1772. See Goethe, 'An Herder', Frankfurt, Anfang 1772, Briefe 57 of *Goethes Briefe Hamburger Ausgabe* Band I: 129-131.

¹²² Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* 282-3.

him to discover his own philosophical vocation: the role of elenchus or critique, through which he endeavours 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's admission of ignorance is made within the context of Plato's cosmology. Since the world which Socrates inhabits is mortal, secondary and derivative, in comparison within the divine realm of Plato's forms or *eide*, so too is his knowledge always less than complete. Indeed, on the few occasions when Socrates believes himself 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 beliefs, and to begin his deliberations anew.

I do not wish to suggest that Goethe's late 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* (world-religiousness, world-piety or sense of duty towards the world) 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 the 'incomprehensible ambivalence' of nature, and as the 'unresolved remainder' 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 'Classical' Goethe was led to recognise an epistemological abyss between the subject and the object. Through his failed attempts to synthesise 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 theorise 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 our attention.

At the same time, however, just as Plato would never hold that humans are forever barred from access to the divine realm of the forms, so too was Goethe never of the opinion that the limits of rational cognition ineluctably divide the subject from its natural surroundings, or from the pantheistic or panentheistic 'All' which underlies them. In the end, it was precisely Goethe's intuition of the subject's original and inexorable situatedness *within* nature that confirmed for him the limited extent to which the subject could understand, fathom, or subsume nature through the deployment of rational concepts. The 'Urworte' or 'Primal Words' of which Goethe speaks in his poem are, after all, words spoken or decreed by God/Nature, and in this regard they are words with which we are familiar, but also words which we can never completely understand in rational terms. They are, in essence, words that are invoked within the inexact, provisional and metaphorical realms of mythic thinking.

It is also within the context of the incompleteness of abstract epistemology that we can begin to understand, in a more concrete fashion, Hans-Georg Gadamer's assertion that Goethe's thought, in its opposition to the abstract speculation of its age, draws near to the philosophy of ancient Greece. Goethe, according to Gadamer, saw that:

...die plastische Natur der alten Denker, ihre geschlossene Übereinstimmung von Leben und Lehre, im modernen Zeitalter unbekannt ist, und er begründet darauf seine eigene bewußte Stellung zur Philosophie. In einem von Falk berichteten Gespräche sagt er: "Die Philosophen können uns ihrerseits nichts als Lebensformen darbieten. Wie diese nun für uns passen, ob wir, unserer Natur und unseren Anlagen nach, ihnen den erforderlichen Gehalt zu geben imstande sind, das ist unsere Sache. Wir müssen uns prüfen und alles, was wir von außen in uns hereinnehmen, wie Nahrungsmittel, auf das sorgsamste untersuchen; sonst gehen entweder wir an der Philosophie oder die Philosophie geht an uns zugrunde." Diese Äußerung ist sehr aufschlußreich. Sie zeigt, mit welcher Bewußtheit Goethe sich gegenüber der einseitigen Verstandesbildung der neueren Jahrhunderte verhält. Es sind ja eben die protestantischen Jahrhunderte der Sorge um den rechten Glauben und die rechte Lehre, die auch der philosophischen Spekulation der Neuzeit ihre abstrakte Zuspitzung gegeben haben. Vor solchem war Goethe von Jugend an auf seiner Hut. Er wehrte sich stets gegen jede dogmatische Festlegung. Ob man ihn Pantheist, Christ oder Atheist nennen wolle, gelte ihm gleichviel, "weil niemand recht wisse, was das alles eigentlich heißen solle". Mit dieser Haltung gerät er aber, ohne es zu wissen, in die Nähe des Ursprungs der Philosophie bei den Griechen. Jedenfalls ist es kein bloßer Zufall, sondern eine Verwandtschaft im Grunde, die bei der oben wiedergegebenen Äußerung an den platonischen Sokrates zurückdenken läßt.¹²³

...the plastic nature of the ancient thinkers, the complete coincidence of life and theory, is foreign to modern times; and on that realization he bases his own conscious attitude to philosophy. In a conversation reported by Falk, he says, "Philosophers, for their part, can offer us only the forms of life. Whether these are suitable for us or not; whether we, given our

¹²³ Gadamer, 'Goethe und die Philosophie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band IX 69-70. Trans. Paslick, 'Goethe and Philosophy' 17. Goethe's comments to J.D. Falk can be found in *Goethes Gespräche* Flodoard Frhr. von Biedermann Hg. (Leipzig: F.W. v. Biedermann, 1910) 468.

disposition and abilities, are in a position to furnish them with the requisite content or not, is our affair. We have to examine ourselves and check most carefully what we take into ourselves from outside, just as we do with food. Otherwise, we will either perish from philosophy or philosophy from us." This statement is very informative. It shows how clearly conscious Goethe was of the one-sided emphasis on reason in the education of the preceding centuries. It was precisely the Protestant centuries in their concern for the proper faith and correct dogma that gave to modern philosophical speculation its exaggerated penchant for abstraction. From his earliest years, Goethe was always on guard against such aberrations. Goethe always rebelled against any dogmatic rigidity. He did not really care whether he was called pantheist, Christian, or atheist, "because no one really knows what these things actually mean." With such an attitude, and without even knowing it, he is moving close to the origin of philosophy among the Greeks. In any case, it is no mere accident, but a real affinity that, in the previous quotation, reminds us of the Platonic Socrates.

In Gadamer's formulation, Goethe's relationship with the philosophy of his age – in particular, his relationship with German Idealism – is likened to Socrates's 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 Idealism, not through dialectical argumentation, but in terms of their ability to account for the infinite particularities of sensuous reality: that is to say, in terms of their capacity to encompass the 'incomprehensible ambivalence of nature'. As we have seen in this chapter and in Part Six, both Kant and Schelling failed to convince Goethe of their capacity to achieve a consonance (*Übereinstimmung*) between matter and thought, between concrete and abstract, and between life (*Leben*) and theory (*Lehre*).

Likewise, the 'unresolved remainder' of Goethe's own attempts to conjoin theory and nature is the aspect of his experience which 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 rational human knowledge (*logos*), or human endeavors, cannot pass. Goethe draws our attention to these limits in 'Urworte. Orphisch', when he refers to the daemon as the 'notwendig aufgestellten Individualität' ('necessarily created individuality') allotted to every human being. In this image we find a mythic representation of the Daemonic as it manifests itself in the late Goethe: that is to say, as an ambiguous phenomenon or *Grenzsituation* ('limit-situation') which frustrates, obstructs and limits the attempts of thought or spirit (*Geist*) to adequately account for matter, or the external objects of nature.

It will also shortly become evident in the final chapter of our analysis of the Daemonic in the late Goethe – a stage which will endeavour to address the way in which the term is used in Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe* – that in Eckermann's text the term 'daemonic' is used by Goethe, perhaps for the first time, in an explicitly political context.

8. Eckermann: 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 until June 1831, less than one year before his death. The breadth and variety of the statements made by Goethe on the subject of the Daemonic in Eckermann's *Gespräche* 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:

Das Göttliche konnte nicht mehr das Exzeptionelle sein; es wurde dies das Dämonische. Auf seinen Rang wird alles verwiesen, was die Gewöhnlichkeit des Menschlichen übersteigt, was die Qualität der 'Unerreichbarkeit' besitzt.¹

The divine could no longer be the exceptional; the Daemonic became this. Everything that surpasses what is usual in human affairs, everything that possesses the quality of being unattainable, is assigned to the status of the Daemonic.

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 "nicht einheitlich" ("not unified"),² or that Goethe's use of the term borders upon the burlesque.³ At the same time, however, we should not ignore all of the statements made by Goethe regarding the Daemonic which appear in Eckermann's *Gespräche*, as some of these statements do appear to have been made in earnest. Indeed, some of them suggest to the reader that the Daemonic is a kind of mysterious 'higher-power' in the Neo-Platonic mould, a power which, 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.

¹ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 520. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 479.

² This is the view of Hans Joachim Schirmpf in *Das Weltbild des späten Goethe* 303.

³ Benno von Wiese, *Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel*. Wiese writes, on page 83: "Nur mit tiefsinniger metaphysische Ironie vermochte der alte Goethe über diesen anonymen und sich der Analyse entziehenden Bereich, diesen Bereich ohne Bereich zu reden. Neben der Verehrung der Dämonen und des Dämonischen... steht die fast burleske Redeweise von den Dämonen...." ("Only with profound metaphysical irony was the elderly Goethe capable of speaking about this anonymous sphere which withdraws from all analysis, this sphere without a sphere. Along side the reverence for the daemons and the Daemonic... there stands the almost burlesque manner of speaking about the daemons...").

In Part Five of this study we saw how, in his conversation with Eckermann dated Tuesday March 11 1828, Goethe contends that all artistic creativity can be associated with a divine or godlike influence which exists beyond all earthly power, and which he sees as being related to the Daemonic. It is appropriate, in the present context, to cite these remarks in full:

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 handle aus eigenem Antriebe. In solchen Fällen ist der Mensch oftmals als ein Werkzeug einer höheren Weltregierung zu betrachten, als ein würdig befundenes Gefäß zur Aufnahme eines göttlichen Einflusses.⁴

No productiveness of the highest kind...no remarkable discovery, no great thought that bears fruit and has results, is in the power of anyone; such things are above earthly control. Man must consider them as an unexpected gift from above, as pure children of God which he must receive and venerate with joyful thanks. They are akin to the Daemonic, which does with him what it pleases, and to which he unconsciously delivers himself whilst he believes he is acting from his own impulse. In such cases, man may often be considered an instrument in a higher government of the world – a vessel worthy to contain a divine influence.

From our reading of this passage, it was 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 we saw in Part Four of this study, maintains in his *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* that the *daimonion* or 'divine voice' of Socrates is a transcendent mystery which 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.⁵

⁴ Eckermann, *Gespräche* 514. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 250.

⁵ Herder writes that the 'ancients': "... sprachen vom Genie weniger, ehrten aber und cultivierten 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 gebohrner Geist, δαίμων, [daimon] vis animi diviniior ['göttlichere Kraft des Geistes' or 'the god-like power of the spirit'] 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...Genie ist angebohren...Weder erkaufte noch erbettelt, weder erstritten noch erstudirt kann es werden. Es ist Naturart (*nativum quid*), es wirkt also aus sich, aus angebohrnen Kräften, mit angebohrner Lust, leicht, genialisch." ("... spoke less of Genius, but honoured and cultivated it perhaps more than we do. The higher power, that stimulates a person towards the production of an artwork, and which we recognise as inimitable and unattainable, but feel working upon us powerfully or gently, this distinguished gift from heaven they named spirit, genius. It is this spirit born with us, δαίμων, [daimon] vis animi diviniior, which they, far from excluding it from culture, art and industry, acknowledged, extolled and worshipped much more as the father, founder, catalyst and tutelary

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 1820's and the early 1830's? 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 which Goethe made to Eckermann on the subject of Napoleon, as Napoleon was, according to Goethe, the model of the historical genius as the "höchste Erscheinung, die in der Geschichte möglich war" ("the highest phenomenon that was possible in history").⁶

8.1. The Genius of History: Eckermann, Goethe and Napoleon.

On the sixth of 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 *Raffael* 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 *Shakespeare*. 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 Konstantinopel 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.⁷

When old, we think of worldly matters otherwise than when young. Thus I cannot but think that the daemons, to tease and make sport with men, have placed single figures so alluring that everyone strives after them, and so great that nobody reaches them. Thus they set up Raphael with whom thought and act were equally perfect; some distinguished descendants have approached him, but none have equalled him. Thus, too, they set up Mozart as something unattainable in music; and thus Shakespeare in poetry. I know what you can say against him; but I only mean the natural character, the great innate qualities of nature. Thus, too, Napoleon is unattainable. That the Russians moderated themselves so as not to go to Constantinople is

spirit of all culture...Genius is inborn and congenital...it can neither be bought, nor begged for, neither struggled for, nor attained through studies. It is a natural endowment (*nativum quid*), and works, therefore, out of itself, from innate powers and inclinations, easily and genially"). Johann Gottfried Herder, *Kalligone Sämtliche Werke* Bernhard Suphan Hg. Band XXII (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1880) 202- 203. Brackets added.

⁶ Goethe, 'An Knebel', Weimar den 3. Januar 1807, Briefe 848 of *Goethes Briefe Hamburger Ausgabe* Band III 39.

⁷ Eckermann, *Gespräche* 284-285. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 333. Brackets added to English translation.

indeed very great; but we find a similar trait in Napoleon, he had also moderated himself [*sich gemäßigt*] and did not to go to Rome.

Here Napoleon is initially characterised as 'daemonic' in that he possesses the natural, indwelling powers 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. As Michael Freund observes in his book *Napoleon und die Deutschen* (1969):

Goethe wußte sehr wohl von dem Dämon, von dem Napoleon besessen war. Aber in diesem 'Dämonischen' sah Goethe eine wohlthätige, schaffende Kraft, eine gefährliche Macht zwar, deren sich aber die Natur und die Vernunft als einer großen List bedienen.⁸

Goethe knew very well about the daemon by which Napoleon was possessed. But in this Daemonic Goethe saw a benevolent creative energy, a dangerous power too, but a power which also served nature and reason as a great cunning.

In this instance, therefore, Napoleon is 'daemonic' in Goethe's early, *Sturm und Drang* sense of the term. He is the Promethean individual who, by virtue of 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 as it is manifested in the figure of Napoleon is associated with the natural powers of genius, on the other hand it also educates us as to the limits which 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" ("self-limiting") 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 which also appears in the lengthy deliberation on the Daemonic entered into by Goethe on March 11 1828. Earlier in that conversation,

⁸ Michael Freund, *Napoleon und die Deutschen: Despot oder Held der Freiheit?* (München: Verlag Georg D.W. Callwey, 1969) 41.

Goethe outlines his essentially Aristotelean/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.⁹

If this *Entelechy* is of a minor kind, it will exercise but little sway during its physical obscuration; the body will predominate, and when this grows old the *Entelechy* will not hold and restrain it. But if the *Entelechy* is of a powerful kind, as with all men of natural genius, then it will, with its animating permeation of the body, not only strengthen and ennoble the organization, but also endeavour with its spiritual superiority to insist continually upon the privilege of perpetual youth.

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-realisation (*Selbstverwirklichung*). At this point it seems as though Goethe has reverted to his earliest conception of the ‘daemonic’ subject as a monadic formative drive which must expand and impose itself upon the world at all costs, regardless of any determination from the outside (*Bestimmung von außen*), or any relationship (*Verhältnis*) with external objects or subjects.

Later in the passage, however, we are once more introduced to Goethe’s later notion of the Daemonic as a limiting or hindering factor which is not unlike the universal order that we found at work 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 which is embodied in the “Schreiten eines Halbgottes von Schlacht zu Schlacht” (“stride of a demigod from battle to battle”)¹⁰, on the other hand, such monadic demigods are also ultimately confronted with other gods or *Dämonen* which limit this selfsame expansion in unaccountable ways. This is because, according to Goethe:

⁹ Eckermann, *Gespräche* 513. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 249.

¹⁰ Eckermann, *Gespräche* 509. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 245-246.

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.¹¹

Every extraordinary human being has a certain mission to accomplish. If he has fulfilled it, he is no longer needed upon earth in the same form, and Providence uses him for something else. But as everything here below happens in a natural way, the daemons keep tripping him up until he falls at last. Thus it was with Napoleon and many others.

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 (*Dämonen*), who appear to represent the natural order of *Deus sive Natura*, are likely to intervene and impose *external* limits or obstructing forces which bring the hubristic strivings of such individuals undone.

On the second of October 1808, after conversing with Goethe on subjects ranging from *Werther* to Voltaire's *Oedipus*, a play which Goethe describes as a *Schicksalsstück* (drama of fate, or fate-drama), Napoleon is reported to have made the following remark to Goethe:

Was will man jetzt mit dem Schicksal, die Politik is das Schicksal.¹²

What does one want with regard to fate, politics is fate.

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*: namely, Mozart, Raphael, Byron and Shakespeare, among others. Unlike Napoleon, these figures did not at any stage constitute a direct threat to Goethe's liberty. Goethe's life was directly affected by the Napoleonic army's invasion of Weimar in October 1806.¹³ In the second volume of his biography of Goethe, Karl Otto Conrady observes that:

¹¹ Eckermann, *Gespräche* 516. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 252.

¹² Goethe 'Unterredung mit Napoleon', *HA* Band X 546.

¹³ See, in this connection, Karl Otto Conrady, *Goethe: Leben und Werk* Band II 327-337.

Politische Überlegungen und metaphysische Betrachtungen griffen bei dem Bild, das sich Goethe von Napoleon machte, ineinander.¹⁴

In the image of Napoleon which Goethe created for himself, political considerations and metaphysical contemplations intermingled with one another.

Conrady's observation takes us to the heart of the problem that arises out of Goethe's characterisation of Napoleon as 'daemonic'. In essence, this problem is a direct consequence of Goethe's transposition of a term which had hitherto been confined, for the most part, to the field of aesthetics and the theory of cognition, to the sphere of political history. The 'daemonic' genius becomes, in this sense, the genius or demi-god (*Halbgott*) 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, in the second volume of his *Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik 1750-1945*, the notion of Napoleon-as-Genius, a notion which gave rise to nothing less than a *Napoleon-Kult* (cult of Napoleon) exemplified by mid-nineteenth century German authors like Grabbe and Heine, has one of its most important roots in Goethe's conversation with Eckermann dated March 11 1828.¹⁵ Unlike the aesthetic genius, who produces great works of art, Napoleon, according to Goethe's conversation with Eckermann dated March 11 1828, displays a "Productivität der Taten" ("productivity of deeds")¹⁶, the moral nature of which is not specified, precisely because the indwelling force which purportedly impels the daemonic genius – the force of nature – is not a moral phenomenon. Hence Goethe's statement to Riemer on February 3 1807:

Außerordentliche Menschen, wie Napoleon, treten aus der Moralität heraus. Sie wirken zuletzt wie physische Ursachen, wie Feuer und Wasser.¹⁷

¹⁴ Karl Otto Conrady, *Goethe: Leben und Werk* Band II 333.

¹⁵ Jochen Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik 1750-1945* Band II 69. See in this connection, Schmidt's chapter entitled: 'Grabbe, Heine und das Genie-Paradigma Napoleon im 19. Jahrhundert', 63-74. In his book *The Politics of the Unpolitical: German Writers and the Problem of Power 1770-1871*, Gordon A. Craig also observes that: "to Goethe and Johannes von Müller and Georg Friedrich 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 University Press, 1985) xiv.

¹⁶ Goethe remarks, in this connection: "Ja, ja, mein Guter, man braucht nicht bloß Gedichte und Schauspiele zu machen um produktiv zu sein, es gibt auch eine Produktivität der Taten, und die in manchen Fällen noch um ein bedeutendes höher steht." ("Yes, yes my good friend, one need not write poems and plays to be productive; there is also a productivity of deeds, which in many cases stands an important degree higher"). Eckermann, *Gespräche* 509. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 246.

¹⁷ Flodoard Frhr. von Biedermann, *Goethes Gespräche* Band I 475. Brackets added to English translation.

Extraordinary individuals, like Napoleon, step outside of morality. They function, in the end, like physical primal-causes [*Ursachen*], like fire and water.

In this transformation of the 'daemonic' genius from poet into politician, we can detect the forces of secularisation or immanentisation at work: forces which, as we have seen in Part Four of this study, began with the Pantheism of Spinoza. Since, according to this Pantheism, 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. Thus, the "antizivilisatorische Affekt" ("anti-civilizing emotion or sentiment") of this genius-idolatry emerges, according to Jochen Schmidt, from the:

...pantheistischen Ursprüngen des Genie-Denkens in 18. Jahrhundert ... Aus der intuitiven Verbindung mit der Allnatur, mit der Weltseele, gewinnen seine großen Männer ihre Energien.¹⁸

...pantheistic origins of the theory of Genius in the eighteenth century... Out of the intuitive connection with the 'All' of Nature, with the world-soul, these great men gain their energies.

Seen in this light, Napoleon's observation that 'politics is fate' might be attributable to an almost complete immanentisation of divine forces within the realms of the natural and the human. No longer, suggests Napoleon in his statement, are human beings subject to a mysterious 'incomprehensible ambivalence' 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. Hence Hegel's description of Napoleon, in his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (*Lectures on the Philosophy of History*) as a world-historical figure.¹⁹ Here Napoleon's notion that 'politics is fate' may give us grounds upon which to see his decidedly secular ideas as having been influenced by his reading of French *philosophes* like Guillaume Thomas François Raynal: an influence which Ernest John Knapton suggests may have led Napoleon to conclude that "men of genius are meteors, destined to burn in order to enlighten their century."²⁰

¹⁸ Schmidt, *Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens* Band II 71.

¹⁹ Schmidt, *Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens* Band II, 69. Hegel opines, in this context, that Napoleon is one of the "welthistorischen Individuen, welche den Beruf hatten, die Geschäftsführer des Weltgeistes zu seyn" ("world-historical individuals, who have the task of being the managing-director of the world-spirit"). G.W.F. Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, Hermann Glockner Hg. Band XI *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* 61.

²⁰ Ernest John Knapton, 'The Philosophes and Napoleon', *Eighteenth Century Studies* ed. Peter Gay (New York: Russell and Russell, 1975) 185.

How, then, might we further Schmidt's analysis of Goethe's characterisation 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 which separates these figures, and the many differences in the respective historico-political contexts of the authors who portray them: namely, Plato and Goethe. 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?

8.2. Socrates and Napoleon.

As we have seen in Part Two of this study, Plato's notion of the Daemonic functions, in the most general sense, as an intermediary mode or 'conduit' between the secular and divine realms. 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 mantic, 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 Love or Eros as a great daemon which is intermediate between the divine and the mortal, but this praise nevertheless has no immediate bearing upon political matters.

In fact, it is only within the operations of Socrates's *daimonion* – most notably, at 31c-31d of *The Apology* and at 496b-496d 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* or 'divine voice' of Socrates counsels him to remain outside of politics, or at the very most, to engage in a negative relationship with the political. We have already encountered, in Part Two of this study, the section of *The Apology* (that is, 31c-31d) in which Socrates describes the *daimonion* as the sign which always dissuades him from certain actions, most notably from direct involvement in politics. This is because, according to Socrates:

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. (32a).²¹

Likewise, a similar argument is advanced by Socrates at 496b-496d in Book VI 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 only in a few limited cases, says Socrates, where "some wellborn and wellbred nature, held in check by exile" is able to remain faithful to the true vocation of philosophy, and in the case of Socrates, it was the *daimonion* which encouraged his exile from political affairs.²²

The absurdity of Socrates's argument becomes apparent when we recall that, at 31d of *The Apology*, it was precisely Socrates's experience of his *daimonion* which 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.²³

What function, then, does Socrates's supposed 'negative relation' to the Greek state serve? In Part Two of this study 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 was this realisation which led Socrates to embark upon his philosophical mission: his aim of refuting the misplaced presumption of wisdom in those who claim to wise. In this regard, Socrates's role consists not so much in revealing the worthlessness of all knowledge or epistemology, but rather in demonstrating its limits, its incompleteness. This is due to the fact that human knowledge is, for Socrates, always incomplete and fragmentary in comparison with divine knowledge – the knowledge of God.²⁴

²¹ Plato, *The Apology* trans. Hugh Tredennick *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961) 17.

²² Socrates observes, at 496c-496d, that the *daimonion* "...is hardly worth mentioning – for I suppose it has happened to few or none or none before me. And those who have been of this little company and have tasted the sweetness and blessedness of this possession and who have also come to understand the madness of the multitude sufficiently and have seen that there is nothing, if I may say so, sound or right in any present politics, and that there is no ally with whose aid the champion of justice could escape destruction, but that he would be as a man who has fallen among wild beasts....for all these reasons I say the philosopher remains quiet [and] minds his own affair..." Plato, *The Republic* (Shorey) 732. Brackets added.

²³ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony* 160.

²⁴ Socrates's comments to this effect can be found at 23a-23b of *The Apology*.

Accordingly, in Part Two of this study we concluded that Socrates's 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's negative political role is most obviously embodied in his self-characterisation – which can be found at 30e of *The Apology* – as a fly appointed by God, whose role it is to sting the 'thoroughbred horse' of Athens into political self-awareness.

At this point we can now 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 March 11 1828. Goethe observes, in the early stages 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 Gängelband 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 Zustand 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.²⁵

The obscuration and illumination of man make his destiny! The daemon ought to lead us every day upon leashes, and tell us what we ought to do on every occasion. But the good spirit leaves us in the lurch, and we grope about in the dark. Napoleon was the man! Always illuminated, always clear and decided, and endowed at every hour with energy enough to carry out whatever he considered necessary. His life was the stride of a demigod, from battle to battle, and from victory to victory. It might well be said that he was in a state of continual illumination. On this account his destiny was more brilliant than any the world had seen before him, or perhaps will ever see after him.

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's case, Goethe (albeit incorrectly) sees Socrates's daemon as telling him 'was denn eigentlich zu tun sei'

²⁵ Eckermann, *Gespräche* 508-509. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 245-246.

(‘what really has to be done’),²⁶ while in the case of Napoleon, the daemon is also an illuminating force which tells him ‘was immer zu tun sei’ (‘what we ought to do on every occasion’). 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, in *Goethe zum Beispiel* (1999), that Goethe’s use of the term *Dämon* cannot be equated with Socrates’s references to the *daimonion*.²⁷

In the case of Napoleon, the daemon’s function is *positive*. We presume 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.²⁸ 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-31d of the *Apology*, and at 496b-496c 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 which indicates to Socrates that his reasoning is amiss, and that he needs to begin his deliberations anew.²⁹ 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 deeds (*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 experience than any German writer of his age”³⁰ – uses the term ‘daemonic’ in relation to Napoleon? Was Goethe able, in the end, to engage in a critique of the image of Napoleon as the all-powerful historical genius, or do his descriptions of the ‘daemonic’ Napoleon

²⁶ Here it needs to be pointed out that the Socratic *daimonion*, as portrayed by Plato, has a purely dissuasive function. See, for example, *The Republic* 496c-496d, and *The Apology* 31c-31d. See also my discussion of the *daimonion* in section 2.8. of *Part Two*.

²⁷ Blumenberg, *Goethe zum Beispiel* 229.

²⁸ *Kairos* is the Greek god who personifies opportunity. See Herbert Jennings Rose and Karim W. Arafat, ‘Kairos’, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* 806.

²⁹ Here I am referring, in particular, to the role played by Socrates’s *daimonion* at 242c of the *Phaedrus*.

³⁰ Gordon A. Craig, ‘Goethe as Statesman’, *The Politics of the Unpolitical: German Writers and the Problem of Power 1770-1871* 3.

provide us with grounds upon which to see him as a reactionary and conservative *Fürstenknecht* (servant of princes)?

The allegation that Goethe was a *Fürstenknecht* (servant of princes) is problematic when applied to his abiding interest in Napoleon. Although Goethe is reported to have worn the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour for five years after his meeting with Napoleon in 1808³¹, it is nevertheless necessary to point out that Napoleon, a self-made military man from Corsica, was not a *Fürst* in the same way that Goethe's long time employer Duke Carl August of Saxe-Weimar was. 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 who represented modernisation, progress and enlightenment, and not the old interests of the European nobility.³²

On a psychological level, Hans Blumenberg observes that Goethe's conceptualisation of Napoleon is always bound up with the two chief literary protagonists of his *oeuvre* – Prometheus and Faust:

Die Kontinuität der Napoleon-Beziehung reicht über alles im Leben Goethes hinaus, ausgenommen die der beiden Figuren Prometheus und Faust, die ihrerseits den Komplex Napoleon umschließt. Auf dem Niveau dieser Motive liegt die Verteidigung der eigenen Identität, die immer die Identität eines Lebenskonzeptes und -entwurfs ist. Ihre Verteidigung vollzieht sich auf dem Umweg der Mythisierung. Als je schrecklicher sich die Figur Napoleons dem historischen Rückblick erweist, um so kunstvoller wird der Hilfsbegriff des Dämonischen, der die Evidenz des großen Augenblicks der Begegnung von Erfurt harmonisiert mit dem Unsinnigen vom Typus des ägyptischen Abenteurers.³³

The continuity of the relation to Napoleon extends further than anything else in Goethe's life, with the exception of that of the two figures, Prometheus and Faust, a continuity that for its part includes the complex involving Napoleon. It is on the level of these motifs that the defense of his own identity lies – an identity that is always the identity of a life concept and outline. Its defense is accomplished by the roundabout means of mythicization. The more terrible the figure of Napoleon proves to be in historical retrospect, the more ingenious the auxiliary concept of the 'Daemonic' becomes, which harmonizes the evidence of the great moment of the meeting in Erfurt with the senselessness typified by the Egyptian adventure.

³¹ Gordon A. 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". 'Goethe as Statesman' 20.

³² Hegel, for example, said of Napoleon: "Mit der ungeheuren Macht seines Charakters hat er sich dann nach außen gewendet, ganz Europa unterworfen und seine liberalen Einrichtungen überall verbreitet." ("With the enormous strength of his character he turned himself toward the exterior, influenced the whole of Europe and spread his liberal institutions overall"). Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte Sämtliche Werke* Hermann Glockner Hg. Band XI 562.

³³ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, 505. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 466.

In Blumenberg's formulation, Napoleon is, like Prometheus, the daemonic-Promethean individual who cannot renounce the limitlessness of his own internally generated 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* (renunciation), and in this regard Napoleon's defeat mirrors the fates of both Prometheus and Faust. Hence, Goethe's statement to Eckermann dated February 10 1830:

Napoleon gibt uns ein Beispiel, wie gefährlich es sei, sich ins Absolute zu erheben und alles der Ausführung einer Idee zu opfern.³⁴

Napoleon affords an example of the danger of elevating oneself to the Absolute and sacrificing everything to the carrying out of an idea.

Thus, according to Blumenberg, Goethe is able to preserve the outline of his own life-concept or life-plan (*Lebenskonzept*) by finding the 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.

Karl Otto Conrady, by contrast, suggests that there is a kind of conceptual nostalgia in Goethe's fascination with Napoleon, in which Goethe saw Napoleon as "einen neuen Täter-Prometheus...der ihn an frühe poetische Visionen erinnerte..." ("a new actor-Prometheus...who reminded him of earlier poetic visions").³⁵ In this context, Goethe's 'daemonic' Napoleon was, according to Conrady:

...das Vollzugsorgan des Schicksals; er war hinzunehmen und zu bestaunen, auch wohl zu fürchten, aber immer mit dem Schauer der Bewunderung. Prometheus war in Tätergestalt erschienen. Den jugendlichen Entwurf vom trotzigem, menschengeschaffenden Titanen, dem gegen Jupiter aufbegehrenden, hatte der Dichter längst verabschiedet, der in langen Weimarer Jahren zur Entsagung gelangt war und sich auf die realen Forderungen des Tages willentlich

³⁴ Eckermann, *Gespräche* 299. Trans. Oxenford, *Conversations* 349. Goethe's remark to Eckermann becomes of greater interest when we consider it in relation to another dictum from *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, which reappears in the *Maximen und Reflexionen*: "Unbedingte Tätigkeit, von welcher Art sie sei, macht zuletzt bankrott" ("Unconditioned activity, of whatever kind, leads ultimately to bankruptcy"). Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen HA* Band XII 517. Trans. Stopp, *Maxims and Reflections* 60. I have altered Stopp's translation. Here the 'unconditioned activity' of which Goethe speaks might fruitfully be compared with the Leibnizian monadic soul, which is apparently subject to no external conditions other than its own internal *entelechy* or natural endowment. In this context, Goethe's critique of the unlimited 'monadic' subject, which we have examined in *Werther*, and in 'Mächtiges Überraschen', and which reappears in *Faust*, emphasises the destructive potential of such an understanding of subjectivity, and advocates *Entsagung* ('renunciation' or 'self-limitation'). The problem of unlimited or unconditioned subjectivity and its relation to both the notion of the Daemonic and the theme of *Entsagung*, is most concisely presented in Goethe's *Novelle* (commenced by Goethe in 1826). An examination of this text in terms of the Daemonic cannot be entered into here, and must be left for future studies.

³⁵ Conrady, *Goethe: Leben und Werk* Band II 331.

eingelassen hatte. Napoleon war für Goethe eine Herausforderung. Seine Größe war nicht nur unvergleichlich; es war auch die Frage, wie ihr zu begegnen, standzuhalten sei. An ihm mußte sich messen, wer geschichtliche Bedeutung beanspruchte.³⁶

...the executive organ of fate; he was to be accepted and marvelled at, also to be feared, but always with a shudder of admiration. Prometheus had appeared in the form of a man of action. The youthful experiment of defiant, man-creating Titans, which rebelled against Jupiter, had long been farewelled by the poet, who had, through long years in Weimar, reached renunciation, and willingly accommodated the real demands of the day. Napoleon was a challenge for Goethe. His magnitude was not only incomparable; it also posed the question of how one was to meet him, how one was to hold one's ground. Those who made claim to historical importance had to measure themselves against him.

Goethe's fascination with Napoleon has been often seen as evidence of an alleged political conservatism. As early as 1833, for example, Heinrich Heine already observes that Goethe's pantheistic "Indifferentismus" ('indifferentism') ultimately had a "nachteiligen Einfluß auf die politische Entwicklung des deutschen Volkes" ("harmful influence on the political development of the German people") and served to frustrate the "politischen Regeneration" ('political regeneration') of Germany,³⁷ while recent works have also pointed to political conservatism on Goethe's part.³⁸ Georg Lukács, on the other hand, sees the allegations of figures like Heine as part of a "systematischer Geschichtsfälschung" ("systematic historical falsification"). In fact, Lukács prefers to see Goethe as a progressive thinker within the context of the European Enlightenment.³⁹

The question of Goethe's alleged political conservatism can not be entered into at any length in this study. But a brief analysis of one of the most recent studies of Goethe's politics may nevertheless lead us to into a greater understanding of Goethe's fascination with Napoleon, while also indirectly alerting us to an underlying ambiguity in his late deployment of the term 'daemonic'.

In his book *Wie die Großen mit dem Menschen spielen: Goethes Politik* (1988), Ekkehart Krippendorff argues that Goethe's fascination with Napoleon manifested itself as a preoccupation with moral

³⁶ Conrady, *Goethe: Leben und Werk* Band II 333.

³⁷ Heinrich Heine *Die romantische Schule Werke* Band IV 198-200. Trans. Hermand and Holub, *The Romantic School and Other Essays* 35-37.

³⁸ In this connection, Gordon A. 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..." Craig, 'Goethe as Statesman' 10. See also, most recently and controversially: W. Daniel Wilson, *Das Goethe-Tabu: Protest und Menschenrechte im klassischen Weimar* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999).

³⁹ Lukács, *Goethe und seine Zeit* 11. Trans. Anchor, *Goethe and his Age* 11. For the historical context of Lukács's views regarding Goethe see: Ferenc Fehér, 'Lukács in Weimar' *Lukács Revalued* 75-93.

questions surrounding political action: 'the political' designating, in this context, the possibility of realising "große Projekte" ("grand projects") through the deployment of "Gewalt" ("violence") and "Herrschaft" ("power").⁴⁰ This question was, according to Krippendorff, foremost in Goethe's mind during the composition of late dramatic works like *Des Epimenides Erwachen* (1814)⁴¹, and particularly the Fifth Act of *Faust II* (written in 1830). In August 1815, Goethe is reported to have made the following comment to Boisserée:

Faust bringt mich dazu, wie ich von Napoleon denke und gedacht habe.⁴²

Faust brings me to what I think, and to what I have thought, of Napoleon.

It is the ambiguous double sense of temporality (combining the 'what I think', and the 'what I have thought') which is of particular interest to us in connection with Goethe's late conception of the Daemonic and its embodiment in the figure of Napoleon. The 'what I have thought' in this statement presumably refers to the fascination with Napoleon which followed Goethe's initial meeting with him in October 1808. In this fascination we have found 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 1820's and early 1830's, in Eckermann's *Gespräche* – we are presented with Napoleon as the 'daemonic' genius of history: the figure whose indwelling illumination provides him 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 Revolution⁴³, a revolution which, according to some critics, he viewed with a degree of antipathy.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Ekkehart Krippendorff, *Wie die Großen mit dem Menschen spielen: Goethes Politik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988) 129.

⁴¹ *Des Epimenides Erwachen* was written as a *Festspiel* (festival production) in celebration of the return of Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia. According to Josef Kunz, this festival was intended to be "nichts weniger... als die offizielle Siegesfeier nach der Niederwerfung Napoleons" ("nothing less than the official victory celebration following the suppression of Napoleon"). *HA* Band V 544.

⁴² Flodoard Ffhr. von Biedermann, *Goethes Gespräche* Band II 313.

⁴³ Here I am paraphrasing the speculations of Karl Otto Conrady. See Conrady, *Goethe: Leben und Werk* Band II 333. Gordon A. Craig also writes, in this connection, that: "After the famous meeting 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..." Gordon A. Craig, 'Goethe as Statesman' 20. Brackets added.

⁴⁴ Gordon A. Craig observes that Goethe saw the French Revolution as a "force that would bring social upheaval and distress to all classes of society." Gordon A. Craig, 'Goethe as Statesman' 13. For Goethe's negative view of the French Revolution, see his 'Venetian Epigrams' (1789) *HA* Band I 180. Lukács, on the other hand, argues that Goethe decisively approved of

The 'what I think', 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 *Faust II*, any suggestion that Faust is a 'daemonic' figure who is in any way akin to Napoleon, then it can only be in terms of him 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. *Faust II* is, according to Krippendorff, Goethe's concluding judgement on the subject of Napoleon,⁴⁵ a judgement which attempts to demonstrate the folly and hubris of pursuing the amoral agenda of *Machtpolitik* (power politics).⁴⁶ A similar argument to that offered by Krippendorff is proposed by Katharina Mommsen, in her essay '*Faust II* als politisches Vermächtnis des Staatmannes Goethe'.⁴⁷ Mommsen argues that in *Faust II* we find a dramatic representation of Goethe's "persönlicher Abrechnung mit seinem Fürsten" ("personal settlement with his prince"), in particular with the "militärische Maßlosigkeit" ("military excessiveness") of Duke Carl August of Saxe-Weimar.⁴⁸ Accordingly, Mommsen offers the following political summary of Goethe's *Faust*:

In früheren Teilen der 'Faust'-Tragödie war der Held ein Gottsucher, ein Erspürer des Göttlichen unter all seinen Erscheinungsformen vom pantheistischen Beschwören des Erdgeists bis zur polytheistischen Erfassung der antiken Götterwelt. Nach 50 Jahren politischer Machtstellung und des Bündnisses mit Kriegsdämonen aber gerät Faust mehr und mehr in einen Zustand geistiger Blindheit, in dem er auch das Göttliche in seiner unmittelbaren Nähe nicht mehr wahrzunehmen vermag.⁴⁹

In the early parts of the Faust-tragedy the hero was a seeker of God, a preserver of the divine in all its manifestations, from pantheistic conjurings of the earth-spirit [*Erdgeist*] to polytheistic recordings of the ancient world of the gods. But after 50 years in a position of power and of alliances with daemons of war [*Kriegsdämonen*], Faust became caught more and more in a condition of blindness, in which he was also no longer capable of an awareness of the divine in its immediate nearness.

(*dezidiert bejaht*) "die gesellschaftlichen Zielsetzungen der französischen Revolution" ("the social aims of the French Revolution"), while only objecting to the "plebejischen Methoden ihrer Durchführung" ("plebeian methods for their realization"). Lukács, *Goethe und seine Zeit* 15. Trans. Anchor, *Goethe and his Age* 16.

⁴⁵ Krippendorff, *Wie die Großen mit dem Menschen spielen* 134.

⁴⁶ Krippendorff, *Wie die Großen mit dem Menschen spielen* 138-139.

⁴⁷ Katharina Mommsen, '*Faust II* als politisches Vermächtnis des Staatmannes Goethe', *Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts* 1989 Christoph Perels Hg. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1989) 1-36.

⁴⁸ Katharina Mommsen, '*Faust II* als politisches Vermächtnis des Staatmannes Goethe' 2, 30. In an earlier study of Goethe's political development, *Die politischen Anschauungen Goethes* (1948), Wilhelm Mommsen argues that during his years of political responsibility in Weimar, Goethe was forced to wage a "...Kampf gegen die dämonische Kraftnatur Karl Augusts" ("war against Karl August's daemonically powerful nature"). Wilhelm Mommsen, *Die politischen Anschauungen Goethes* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1948) 43.

⁴⁹ Katharina Mommsen, '*Faust II* als politisches Vermächtnis des Staatmannes Goethe' 34.

In Mommsen's reading, Faust's blindness lies in his failure to recognise that there are gods and powers greater than the *Kriegsdämonen* and himself: an awareness also suggested by the saying *Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse*. Seen in this light, both Napoleon and Carl August are figures who, like Faust, confront Goethe once more with the problem of unlimited *Selbstverwirklichung* (self-realisation), a problem that is also central not only to *Faust II*, but also to 'Mahomets Gesang', *Werther* and 'Mächtiges Überraschen'.

While we should be wary of the tendencies of Krippendorff and Mommsen to draw direct comparisons between the character of Faust and political figures like Napoleon and Carl August, we can nevertheless possibly see, in Faust's grandiose attempts to build a ring around the ocean portrayed in Act Five of Goethe's drama,⁵⁰ a belated image of Napoleon's hubristic efforts to annex far-flung territories like Egypt and Russia to his empire. Even Goethe, whose scientific endeavours often bordered upon hubris, may have seen elements of his own ambitious strivings in the fates of both Napoleon and Faust.

In *Faust II* we encounter, once again, the questing Romantic subject – a subject which 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, in relation Goethe's tragedy, we find, in *Faust II*:

...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....⁵¹

Just as Faust believes himself to be capable of encircling the ocean through human endeavour, so too did Goethe once imagine that he could unite the particularities of nature under neo-Kantian universal ideas like the *Urpflanze*, and the notion of Comparative Anatomy. But in the face of these projects, it is

⁵⁰ Faust outlines this plan in the following lines (10227-10231) from Act Four: "Da faßt' ich schnell im Geiste Plan auf Plan: / Erlange dir das köstliche Genießen, / Das herrische Meer vom Ufer auszuschließen, / Der feuchten Breite Grenzen zu verengen / Und, weit hinein, sie in sich selbst zu drängen." ("And so I quickly worked out plans, / resolving to obtain a precious satisfaction: / to bar the shore to the imperious sea, / narrow the limits of the ocean's great expanse, / and force the waters back into themselves."). Goethe *Faust II* HA Band III 309. Trans. Atkins, *Goethe: Faust I and II* 258.

⁵¹ Marshall Berman, 'Goethe's *Faust*: The Tragedy of Development', *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982) 62, 65. Brackets added.

only an underlying *Urphänomen* which shines forth, frustrating the totalising attempts of the striving subject, and attesting to the 'incomprehensible ambivalence' of what Marshall Berman calls the 'anarchic elements', and what Spinoza, Goethe and Schelling would simply have called *Deus sive Natura* (God or Nature). 'Daemonic' is the mythic term with which the older Goethe attempted to name, and therefore reduce the fearful aspect of, this 'incomprehensible ambivalence', an ambivalence which obstructs the subject's efforts to attain a synthesis between idea and object.

This ambivalence is, moreover, a force which exerts itself upon the subject in two senses: both internally and externally. We should recall, in this context, Eduard Spranger's observation that the Daemonic constitutes a kind of fate in a double sense: fate which emerges from within the subject, and fate which descends upon the subject from the outside.⁵² The locus of the 'fate' or 'destiny' which emerges from within the subject can be seen in Goethe's earlier understanding of Napoleon as a daemonic genius who, through the power of his indwelling *entelechy*, manages to exert his will upon the events of world history. But we might also recall, in this context, the passage in Goethe's statement made to Eckermann on March 11 1828, in which he comments that it is also, finally, the mythical "Dämonen" ("daemons"), in the guise of an apparently external fate directed by God/Nature, which obstruct Napoleon's seemingly limitless desire for *Selbstverwirklichung* (self-realisation).

Likewise, Faust too is finally haunted by 'Dämonen' which oppose and frustrate his grandiose goals. These 'Dämonen' are, however, aspects of his own psyche. In Act Five of *Faust II*, Faust encounters a figure who is not unlike the *daimonion* or 'conscience' 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's clumsy attempts to 'resettle' them according to Faust's orders, Faust is visited by a spirit named 'Sorge' ('Care'). After 'Care' makes a speech to Faust in which she explains her capacity to make men indecisive and despairing,⁵³ Faust replies with the following lines (11487-11494):

⁵² Eduard Spranger, *Goethe: seine geistige Welt* 434.

⁵³ 'Care' says, of those whom she possesses (lines 11471-11477): "Soll er gehen, soll er kommen? / Der Entschluß ist ihm genommen; / Auf gebahnten Weges Mitte / Wankt er tastend halbe Schritte. / Er verliert sich immer tiefer, / Siehet alle Dinge schiefer..." ("Whether he should go or come / is something he cannot decide; / in the middle of a street / his stride will break, he'll grope his way; / more and more he is bogged down, / everything seems more distorted"). Goethe *Faust II HA* Band III 345. Trans. Atkins, *Goethe: Faust I and II* 289.

Unselige Gespenster! so behandelt ihr
 Das menschliche Geschlecht zu tausend Malen;
 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.⁵⁴

Ill-omened spectres! Time and time again
 this is the way you work on human kind,
 transforming even days that are indifferent
 into an ugly tangle of enmeshing torments.
 We can't, I know, be rid of daemons easily –
 their ties upon us never can be severed –
 but I shall not acknowledge, Care, not ever,
 your vast, insidious power.

In response to Faust's words, Care curses Faust by blinding him. Thus, Faust's refusal to acknowledge the principle of care makes him blind: blind as to the motivations which drive his limitless strivings, and blind too as to the effects which these strivings have upon external objects (the world and the environment) and other subjects. In short, it is Faust's lack of *Weltfrömmigkeit* (world-piety, care for the world, or sense of duty towards the world) which leads to his downfall.

To understand the ways in which the notion of the Daemonic operates within Faust would necessitate a thesis in itself.⁵⁵ Here I merely wish to suggest that Goethe was, in his late judgement of Napoleonic *Machtpolitik* depicted in the actions of Faust, perhaps led to an awareness of something akin to Socrates's experience of the *daimonion*, as the voice or 'conscience' which always reminds us of the conditional and fallible nature of human knowledge, human reason and human epistemology. 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 or epistemology, the ignorance of which may cause tragic consequences.

⁵⁴ Goethe, *Faust II HA* Band III 346. Trans. Atkins, *Goethe: Faust I and II* 290.

⁵⁵ For an account of the notion of the Daemonic in *Faust II*, see: Wilhelm Emrich, *Die Symbolik von Faust II: Sinn und Vorformen* (Bonn: Athenäum Verlag, 1957) 82, 339-342.

9. The Daemon as a 'Comprehensible Object of Science'.

My intention in this short chapter is to suggest that the Daemonic is a literary/philosophical theme which extends well beyond Goethe's *oeuvre*, into the thought of some of the key figures of twentieth century philosophy, most notably, as we have seen in Part One, in the work of Heidegger,¹ and especially in the field of twentieth century philosophical endeavour with which we will presently concern ourselves: that of the psychoanalytic movement, and particularly the work of its founding father – Sigmund Freud. Before proceeding with our discussion of Freud, it should also be noted that the notion of the Daemonic is a subject addressed by the psychoanalytic movement in its broadest sense, and not just in its exclusively Freudian manifestations.² In particular, the work of Carl Gustav Jung is infused with discussions of 'daemonic' phenomena, which he sees as issuing from the realms of both the personal and the collective unconscious.³

The task of demonstrating a definitive historical link between Goethe's notion of the Daemonic and the senses in which Freud refers to 'daemons', and to 'daemonic' phenomena, extends beyond the scope of this study. Such an undertaking would have to take into account the degree to which certain nineteenth century theorists of the unconscious have exerted an influence upon Freud.

¹ See, in particular, Heidegger's *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang vom Leibniz*, the Marburg lecture course of summer semester 1929 (found in: Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe* Klaus Held Hg. Band XXVI) and the series of lectures on Parmenides given in 1942-1943 (found in: *Gesamtausgabe* Manfred S. Frings Hg. Band LIV). Heidegger's understanding of the Daemonic in his lectures on Parmenides is briefly discussed on pages 320-321 of Part Seven of this study.

² See Rollo May, 'Psychotherapy and the Daimonic', *Myths, Dreams and Religion* 196-210. May's essay is discussed on page 33 of Part One of this study.

³ In this connection, Jung defines 'Dämonie' ('Daemonomania') as a: "...eigentümlicher Geisteszustand, der dadurch gekennzeichnet ist, daß gewisse psychische Inhalte, sogenannte Komplexe, an Stelle des Ich wenigstens temporär die Leitung der Gesamtpersönlichkeit übernehmen, und zwar so sehr, daß die freie Willensentscheidung des Ich aufgehoben ist." ("...peculiar state of mind characterized by the fact that certain psychic contents, the so-called complexes, take over the control of the total personality in place of the ego, at least temporarily, to such a degree that the free will of the ego is suspended"). Carl Gustav Jung, 'Lexiconartikel Dämonie', *Gesammelte Werke* Band XVIII (ii) Lilly Jung Merker und Elisabeth Rüb Hg. (Olten: Walter Verlag, 1981) 694. Translated by R.F.C. Hull in: *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung* Volume XVIII (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977) 648. Jung also describes the *daimonion* of Socrates as a "halluzinatorische Darstellung verdrängter Komplexe" ("hallucinatory representation of repressed complexes"). Jung, *Psychogenese der Geisteskrankheiten* *Gesammelte Werke* Band III 167. Trans. R.F.C. Hull, *The Psychogenesis of Mental Disease* *Collected Works* Volume III 148.

Here I am referring, in particular, to the work of Arthur Schopenhauer,⁴ Carl Gustav Carus,⁵ and Eduard von Hartmann.⁶ In terms of the history of ideas, two key texts have conclusively demonstrated conceptual links between the German philosophy of Goethe's age and the emergence of psychoanalysis: firstly, Henry F. Ellenberger's *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (1970) and secondly, Odo Marquard's *Transzendentaler Idealismus, Romantische Naturphilosophie, Psychoanalyse* (1987). The following excursus amounts only to a brief 'case study' illustrating the way in which Freud uses the terms 'daemon' and 'daemonic'.

In 1925, after having read Stefan Zweig's study of the Daemonic in the works of Kleist, Hölderlin and Nietzsche – *Kampf mit dem Dämon* – a book which Zweig dedicated to him⁷, Freud wrote the following to his friend:

⁴ The influence of Schopenhauer upon Freud is widely known, partly due to the fact that Freud himself acknowledged him as his chief philosophical precursor. The following remark by Freud serves as a case in point: "Die wenigsten Menschen dürften sich klar gemacht haben, einen wie folgenschweren Schritt die Annahme unbewußter seelischer Vorgänge für Wissenschaft und Leben bedeuten würde. Beeilen wir uns aber hinzuzufügen, daß nicht die Psychoanalyse diesen Schritt zuerst gemacht hat. Es sind namhafte Philosophen als Vorgänger anzuführen, vor allen der große Denker Schopenhauer, dessen unbewußter 'Wille' den seelischen Trieben der Psychoanalyse gleichzusetzen ist". ("Probably very few people can have realized the momentous significance for science and life of the recognition of unconscious mental processes. It was not psychoanalysis, however, let us hasten to add, which took the first step. There are famous philosophers who may be cited as forerunners – above all the great thinker Schopenhauer, whose unconscious 'Will' is equivalent to the mental instincts of psychoanalysis..."). Freud, 'Eine Schwierigkeit der Psychoanalyse', *Gesammelte Werke* Band XII 11-12. Translated by Joan Riviere, *Standard Edition* Volume XVII 143-144.

⁵ Carl Gustav Carus (1789-1869), comparative anatomist and gynaecologist influenced by the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling, and the adoption of *Naturphilosophie* by Goethe. Carus wrote three books on Goethe: *Briefe über Goethes Faust* (1835), *Goethe, zu dessen näherem Verständnis* (1843), and *Goethe und seine Bedeutung für diese und künftige Zeit* (1849). The most significant contribution by Carus to the development of theories of the unconscious is his *Psyche: Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Seele* (1846). Odo Marquard quotes the central thesis of Carus's *Psyche* in the following lines: "Der Schlüssel zur Erkenntnis vom Wesen des bewußten Seelenlebens liegt in der Region des Unbewußtseins". ("The key to knowledge of the existence of the conscious life of the soul [*Seelenlebens*] lies in the region of unconscious-being [*Unbewußtseins*]"). Carl Gustav Carus, *Psyche: Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Seele*. (1846; Jena, 1926) 1. Quoted in Marquard, *Transzendentaler Idealismus, Romantische Naturphilosophie, Psychoanalyse* 173. Henri F. Ellenberger writes that Carus's *Psyche* represents the "first attempt to give a complete and objective theory on unconscious psychological life... [and is] the source of von Hartmann [see next footnote] and of the later philosophers of the unconscious." Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious* 207-208. Brackets added.

⁶ Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906) author of *Philosophie des Unbewußten* (1869). Hartmann makes the crucial argument, also apparent in Freud's notion of metapsychology, that "the Unconscious is imperceptibly extended beyond the physical and psychical domains to achieve the solution of problems which, to adopt the common language, would be said to belong to the province of metaphysics." Eduard von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious* trans. William Chatterton Coupland (1869; New York: Harcourt Brace, 1931) 4. Hartmann's statement can be compared with Freud's first mention of the term 'metapsychology' in a letter to Fliess dated March 10, 1898: "It seems to me that the theory of wish fulfillment has brought only the psychological solution and not the biological – or, rather, metapsychical – one. (I am going to ask you seriously, by the way, whether I may use the term metapsychology for my psychology that leads behind consciousness...)." Freud, 'An Wilhelm Fliess', Wien den 10. März, 1898. Translated by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) 301-302.

⁷ Stefan Zweig, *Kampf mit dem Dämon* (1928). Zweig's definition of the term 'daemonic' is discussed on pages 28-29 of Part One of this study.

Über das Grundproblem, den Kampf mit dem Dämon, wäre vieles zu sagen, was zu schreiben allzu weitläufig ist. Unsere nüchterne Art, mit dem Dämon zu kämpfen, ist ja die, daß wir ihn als fassbares Objekt der Wissenschaft beschreiben.⁸

On the fundamental problem, the struggle with the daemon, there would be much to say, which would take far too long to write. Our rational manner of struggling with the daemon consists in describing it as an apprehensible or comprehensible object of science.⁹

Freud assumes, from the outset, that the 'daemon' can be struggled with, conceptualised, and perhaps overcome, by rational means: that is to say, by way of scientific research. A certain aspect of the intellectual background to Freud's assertion can briefly be glimpsed by examining two nineteenth century philosophical interpretations of 'daemonic' phenomena.

In the essay 'Versuch über das Geistersehen' which appears in his *Parerga und Paralipomena* (1851), Arthur Schopenhauer insists that:

Die ganze Daimonologie und Geisterkunde des Altertums und [des] Mittelalters, wie auch ihre damit zusammenhängende Ansicht der Magie, hat zur Grundlage den noch unangefochten dastehenden *Realismus*, der endlich durch *Cartesius* [Descartes] erschüttert wurde. Erst der in der neueren Zeit allmählig herangereifte *Idealismus* führt uns auf den Standpunkt, von welchem aus wir über alle jene Dinge, also auch über Visionen und Geistererscheinungen ein richtiges Urteil erlangen können.¹⁰

The whole daimonology and spirit lore of antiquity and the Middle Ages, and also the view of magic associated with them, have as their basis the still undisputed *realism* that was finally overthrown by Descartes. Only *idealism*, which has gradually matured in recent times, leads to the standpoint from which we can arrive at a correct judgement concerning all these things and so also as regards visions and spirits.

Here Schopenhauer argues that phenomena which come under the category of 'Daimonologie' (Daimonology) can only properly be understood from the perspective of Idealism as manifestations of subjectivity. This is because, for Schopenhauer, all apparently objective or 'real' phenomena exist only

⁸ Freud, 'An Stefan Zweig', Wien 14. April, 1925 Stefan Zweig. Briefwechsel mit Hermann Bahr, Sigmund Freud, Rainer Maria Rilke und Arthur Schnitzler 172.

⁹ As was also mentioned in Part Three, I have translated 'fassbar' as both 'apprehensible' and 'comprehensible'. A literal translation of this word yields 'apprehensible' as the German verb 'fassen' corresponds with apprehend, meaning 'to take hold of'. The underlying argument of my dual translation (apprehensible, comprehensible) is that for Freud, to 'apprehend' in a scientific context is not just to perceive, but also to explicate or 'comprehend': that is to say, to understand or 'grasp' ('comprehend', OED) something by way of scientific analysis and theoretical discourse.

¹⁰ Arthur Schopenhauer, 'Versuch über das Geistersehen', Parerga und Paralipomena Sämtliche Werke Wolfgang Frhr. von Löhneysen Hg. Band IV (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963) 361. Brackets added. Translated by E.F.J. Payne in: Schopenhauer, Parerga and Paralipomena Volume I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974) 300.

insofar as they are conditioned by the perception of a subject.¹¹ A similar attitude is taken toward the *daimonion* of Socrates by Friedrich Nietzsche in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches (Human All Too Human)*. In this text, published in several parts between 1878 and 1890, Nietzsche dismisses the Socratic 'divine voice' or *daimonion* as being an "Ohrenleiden" ("disease of the ear"): an auditory hallucination which he views as having nothing at all to do with numinous or divine forces, and everything to do with Socrates's purported decadence and illness.¹²

It is also from a decidedly secular perspective that Freud begins his consideration of 'daemonic' phenomena in mental life. Freud's opinions on religious matters are easily gleaned from the title of his book on the subject: *Die Zukunft einer Illusion (The Future of an Illusion)*, published in 1927. Religion, says Freud, is a kind of neurotic wish-fulfilment invented by humanity in order to compensate itself for the hardships and dangers of life.¹³ Thus, argues Freud in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips (Beyond the Pleasure Principle)*, published in 1920, we can only begin to understand the *Dämonen* that haunt the human soul and which purportedly shape human destiny (*Schicksal*) as 'comprehensible objects of science' when religious or supernatural explanations for them are discarded.¹⁴

¹¹ Schopenhauer observes, in this connection, that: "...alles Objektive ist doch insofern, als es immer noch durch ein Subjekt überhaupt bedingt, ja eigentlich nur in diesem vorhanden ist, wieder subjektiv". ("everything objective is again subjective in so far as it is still always conditioned by a subject in general, in fact really only exists in this"). Schopenhauer, 'Versuch über das Geistersehen', *Parerga und Paralipomena Sämtliche Werke* Band IV 359. Trans. Payne, *Parerga and Paralipomena* Volume I 298.

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches Werke in Drei Bänden* Karl Schlechta Hg. Band I 529. Translated by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann in: Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) 88.

¹³ Religions, writes Freud in *Die Zukunft eine Illusion*: "...sind Illusionen, Erfüllungen der ältesten, stärksten, dringendsten Wünsche der Menschheit; das Geheimnis ihrer Stärke ist die Stärke dieser Wünsche. Wir wissen schon, der schreckende Eindruck der kindlichen Hilflosigkeit hat das Bedürfnis nach Schutz – Schutz durch Liebe – erweckt, dem der Vater abgeholfen hat, die Erkenntnis von der Fortdauer dieser Hilflosigkeit durchs ganze Leben hat das Festhalten an der Existenz eines – aber nun mächtigeren Vaters – verursacht. Durch das gütige Walten der göttlichen Vorsehung wird die Angst vor den Gefahren des Lebens beschwichtigt..." ("...are illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of their strength lies in the strength of those wishes. As we already know, the terrifying impression of helplessness in childhood arouses the need for protection – for protection through love – which was provided through the father; and the recognition that this helplessness lasts throughout life made it necessary to cling to the existence of a father, but this time a more powerful one. Thus the benevolent rule of Providence allays our fear of the dangers of life. ..."). Freud, *Die Zukunft eine Illusion Gesammelte Werke* Band XIV 352. Trans. W.D. Robson-Scott, *The Future of an Illusion Standard Edition* Volume XXI 30.

¹⁴ In this connection, Freud writes, in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*: "An dem, was man den Schicksalszwang nennen könnte, scheint uns vieles durch die rationelle Erwägung verständlich, so daß man ein Bedürfnis nach der Aufstellung eines neuen geheimnisvollen Motivs nicht verspürt". ("A great deal of what might be described as the compulsion of destiny seems intelligible on a rational basis; so that we are under no necessity to call in a new and mysterious motive force to explain it"). Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips Gesammelte Werke* Band XIII 22. Translated by James Strachey, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle Standard Edition* Volume XVIII 23.

Freud 'struggles' with, or attempts to account for, daemonic phenomena in two sources: his essay 'Das Unheimliche' ('The Uncanny') published in 1919, and his book *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*). In 'Das Unheimliche', Freud contends that in Arabic and Hebrew, the term 'uncanny' (unheimlich) means the same as 'daemonic' (*dämonisch*) and 'gruesome' (*schaurig*).¹⁵ The 'Uncanny' says Freud: "...sei jene Art des Schreckhaften, welche auf das Altbekannte, Längstvertraute, zurückgeht" ("...is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and is long familiar.")¹⁶ In sum, Freud argues that the 'Uncanny' and the sense of things 'daemonic' which accompanies it, refers to those things which are so close to home, so deeply familiar, that they are in fact unfamiliar and frightening: the repressed contents of the unconscious. Thus, for Freud, so-called 'daemonic' phenomena can be seen as 'apprehensible or comprehensible objects of science' when they are regarded as symptoms or effects that point to the dynamic operations of the unconscious. Such symptoms may become 'apprehensible', and perhaps even 'comprehensible', during the course of psychoanalytic treatment.

In *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, perhaps the most speculative work to appear within the canon of Freudian metapsychology, Freud defines 'daemonic' events as those that appear to be inexplicable and therefore 'fateful' in some sense. He contends that such events, while often predominant in the lives of 'neurotics' ('Neurotiker'), can also be found:

... im Leben nicht neurotischer Personen... Es macht bei diesen den Eindruck eines sie verfolgenden Schicksals, eines dämonischen Zuges in ihrem Erleben, und die Psychoanalyse hat vom Anfang an solches Schicksal für zum großen Teil selbstbereitet und durch frühinfantile Einflüsse determiniert.¹⁷

... in the lives of some normal [non-neurotic] people... The impression they give is of being pursued by a malignant fate, a 'daemonic' trait in their experience; but psychoanalysis has always taken the view that their fate is for the most part arranged by themselves and determined by early infantile influences.

Here Freud attempts to expose to rational analysis a notion which had hitherto been seen, by figures like Goethe, to correspond with the non-rational realm of *mythos*. Unlike later philosophers of myth

¹⁵ Freud, 'Das Unheimliche', *Gesammelte Werke* Band XII 232. Trans. Alix Strachey, 'The Uncanny', *Standard Edition* Volume XVII 221.

¹⁶ Freud, 'Das Unheimliche', *Gesammelte Werke* Band XII 231. Trans. Alix Strachey, 'The Uncanny', *Standard Edition* Volume XVII 220.

¹⁷ Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* *Gesammelte Werke* Band XIII 20. Trans. J. Strachey, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* *Standard Edition* Volume XVIII 21. I have altered Strachey's translation.

like Hans Blumenberg, Freud is not of the opinion that so-called daemonic phenomena must remain essentially untouched by *logos* as the 'ungelöste Rest' ('unresolved remainder') of human experience. While Blumenberg argues that Goethe uses the term 'daemonic' in order to refer to regions "wo die Vernunft nicht hinreichte" ("where reason could not reach"),¹⁸ Freud contends that these regions, for him the realms of the unconscious, are to some degree susceptible of rational analysis.

For Freud, as for Goethe, the Daemonic corresponds in a broad sense with the nexus between character and fate. But while Goethe never completely dispenses with the ancient concept of fate (as is evidenced by the poem 'Urworte. Orphisch'), Freud argues that character creates 'fate' or 'destiny' as a kind of projection. Thus, occurrences which present themselves to the subject as being 'fateful' are seen by Freud to arise from those aspects of the personality which are not readily observable, but which can exert a great influence upon the trajectory of the individual's life: the forces of the unconscious. In *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, those apparently 'daemonic' – in the sense of 'mysterious' or 'fateful' – events which recur throughout a person's life are seen as manifestations of an unconscious "Wiederholungsdrang" ("compulsion to repeat"). Accordingly, Freud writes that:

...es ist anzunehmen, daß die dunkle Angst der mit der Analyse nicht Vertrauten, die sich scheuen irgend etwas aufzuwecken, was man nach ihrer Meinung besser schlafen ließe, im Grunde das Auftreten dieses dämonischen Zwanges fürchtet.¹⁹

...it may be presumed that when people unfamiliar with analysis feel an obscure fear – a dread of rousing something which, so they feel, is better left sleeping – what they are afraid of at bottom is the emergence of this compulsion with its hint of possession by some 'daemonic' power.

It is not possible here to give a full account of Freud's notion of the 'Wiederholungsdrang' ('compulsion to repeat'). It is, however, necessary to point out that Freud associates this 'compulsion to repeat' with an unconscious aspect of the self which has as its regressive aim the cessation of life. In this connection, Freud speculates that instincts (*Triebe*) in general can be seen as urges which aim to restore to the subject an earlier, more primitive stage of existence.²⁰ From this general premise, Freud

¹⁸ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 436-437. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 401.

¹⁹ Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* *Gesammelte Werke* Band XIII 37. Trans. J Strachey, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* *Standard Edition* Volume XVIII 36.

²⁰ Freud writes: "Ein Trieb wäre also ein dem belebten Organischen inwohnender Drang zur Wiederherstellung eines früheren Zustandes, welchen dies Belebte unter dem Einflusse äußerer Störungskräfte aufgeben mußte, eine Art von organischer Elastizität, oder wenn man will, die Äußerung der Trägheit im organischen Leben." ("It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to

goes on to conclude that this regressive drive constitutes an instinct which has as its aim "zum Leblosen zurückzukehren" ("to return to the inanimate state").²¹ This drive or instinct would later come to be known as the famous *Todestrieb* (death-drive) which makes its most notable appearance in Freud's *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (*Civilization and its Discontents*).²²

In the closing stages of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, Freud maintains that there is little prospect of humans completely freeing themselves from drives like the *Todestrieb*. The only hope for human civilisation, according to Freud, lies in its ability to create sublimated satisfactions for human drives: drives which – and here Freud quotes Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust I* – press (*drängen*) "ungebändigt immer vorwärts" ("ever forward unsubdued") despite the best efforts of civilisation to repress them.²³

Here we should note that Freud's reference to Goethe's *Faust* is no mere coincidence. Indeed, the most prominent inheritor of the Freudian tradition – Jacques Lacan – remarks that one of the keys to understanding the "poetics of the Freudian corpus" lies in Freud's reported decision to take up a career in medicine upon his hearing a public reading of Goethe's essay entitled 'Die Natur' ('Nature').²⁴

abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life"). Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips Gesammelte Werke* Band XIII 38. Trans. J. Strachey, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle Standard Edition* Volume XVIII 36.

²¹ Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips Gesammelte Werke* Band XIII 40. Trans. J. Strachey, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle Standard Edition* Volume XVIII 38.

²² See Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur Gesammelte Werke* Band XIV 476-481.

²³ Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips Gesammelte Werke* Band XIII 45. Trans. J. Strachey, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle Standard Edition* Volume XVIII 42. Here Freud refers to a passage from *Faust I*, in which Mephistopheles makes the following remarks concerning the 'drives' which consume Faust: "Verachte nur Vernunft und Wissenschaft, / Des Menschen allerhöchste Kraft, / Laß nur in Blend – und Zauberwerken / Dich von dem Lügengeist bestärken, / So hab' ich dich schon unbedingt – / Ihm hat das Schicksal einen Geist gegeben, / Der ungebändigt immer vorwärts dringt, / Und dessen überleitetes Streben / Der Erde Freuden überspringt." ("Scorn learning, if you must, and reason, / the highest faculty mankind possesses, / let your fondness for self-deception / involve you deeper still in magic and illusion, / and it's dead certain you'll be mine! - / Fate has endowed him with a spirit / that cannot curb its onward rush / and that, precipitately striving, / overleaps the joys that this world affords it"). Goethe, *Faust I HA* Band III 61. Trans. Atkins, *Faust I and II* 47-48.

²⁴ Jacques Lacan, 'The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis', *Écrits* trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1977) 102. In his autobiography ('Selbstdarstellung') Freud reveals that it was on hearing a public reading of Goethe's essay 'Die Natur' that he decided to take up a career in the natural sciences. See Freud, 'Selbstdarstellung', *Gesammelte Werke* Band XIV 34. It is now widely acknowledged that the essay is in fact the work of G.C. Tobler, a Swiss writer. Goethe confirms in a letter to Kanzler von Müller that he is not the author of this essay, while at the same time noting that its pantheistic sentiments are expressive of the beliefs which he (Goethe) held dear during the 1780's. See Goethe, 'Erläuterung zu dem Aphoristischen Aufsatz Die Natur', *HA* Band XIII 48-49. For the purposes of our present argument, it is only significant that Freud mentally associated the essay in question with the popular figure known as 'Goethe'. Goethe makes many other appearances in Freud's works: most notably as a subject of Freud's own dreams in *Die Traumdeutung*, and as an anticipator of some psychoanalytic theories in Freud's 'Ansprache im Frankfurter Goethe-Haus', discussed in the next footnote. For Freud's dreams about Goethe see *Die Traumdeutung Gesammelte Werke* Band II/III 332, 359, 440-443. Two late twentieth century studies develop Lacan's suggestion regarding Goethe's influence upon Freud. In *Dictations: On*

Lacan's observation is supplemented by Freud's own quite clear and unambiguous admission, in the address that he wrote in 1930 upon receiving the Goethe Prize for literature, that Goethe's writings anticipate many of the insights and discoveries of the psychoanalytic movement.²⁵

Despite these clues, there is no direct evidence to suggest that Freud's deployment of the terms 'daemon' and 'daemonic' can be attributed to his reading of Goethe. The task of demonstrating definitive theoretical and historical links between Goethe's notion of the Daemonic and the notion of the Daemonic as it appears in Freudian psychoanalysis must therefore be approached in later studies. My purpose here has merely been to demonstrate that the Daemonic is a theme which infuses not only the works of Goethe and those of his late eighteenth and early nineteenth century literary/philosophical contemporaries, but also the work of twentieth century thinkers like Freud. In the Conclusion of this study, I will argue, following the suggestions of Hans Blumenberg in *Arbeit am Mythos*, that the persistence of the theme of the Daemonic in the works of twentieth century thinkers like Freud might be seen to point to the continuing philosophical function of a particular mode of thinking which we first examined in connection with the works of Plato: that of mythic thinking, the creation of *mythoi* (narratives, stories and images) in order to communicate philosophical content.

Haunted Writing (1986). Avital Ronell argues that "Freud recognizes in Goethe the source and seed from which psychoanalysis was engendered." Avital Ronell, Dictations: On Haunted Writing xxvii. Sabine Prokhoris, in her book La cuisine de la sorcière (1988) – translated as The Witch's Kitchen: Freud, Faust and the Transference (1995) – contends that Goethe's Faust functions as a subterranean 'infratext' which exerts an influence upon the entire Freudian corpus. Sabine Prokhoris, La cuisine de la sorcière (Paris: Aubier, 1988). Translated by G.M. Goshgarian as: The Witch's Kitchen: Freud, Faust and the Transference (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995).

²⁵ See Freud's 'Ansprache im Frankfurter Goethe-Haus'. ('Address Delivered in the Goethe House at Frankfurt'). In this paper, the author observes: "Ich denke, Goethe hätte nicht, wie so viele unserer Zeitgenossen, die Psychoanalyse unfreundlichen Sinnes abgelehnt. Er war ihr selbst in manchen Stücken nahegekommen, hatte in eigener Einsicht vieles erkannt, was wir seither bestätigen konnten, und manche Auffassungen, die uns Kritik und Spott eingetragen haben, werden von ihm wie selbstverständlich vertreten." ("I think that Goethe would not have rejected psychoanalysis in an unfriendly spirit, as so many of our contemporaries have done. He himself approached it at a number of points, recognized much through his own insight that we have since been able to confirm, and some views, which have brought criticism and mockery down upon us, were expounded by him as self-evident"). Sigmund Freud, 'Ansprache im Frankfurter Goethe-Haus', Gesammelte Werke Anna Freud Hg. Band XIV (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1948) 547. Translated by Angela Richards, Standard Edition Volume XXI 208-209.

10. Conclusion: The Daemonic and 'Enlightenment'.

Keeping in mind Goethe's admission, in Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, that he uses the term 'daemonic' "nach dem Beispiel der Alten" ("after the example of the ancients"),¹ it is useful, in these concluding remarks, to return 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-242c of Plato's *Phaedrus* – many commentators overlook 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-230c) to describe the scene of their conversation:

It is indeed a lovely spot for a rest. This plane [tree] is very tall and spreading, and the agnus-castus splendidly high and shady, in full bloom too, filling the neighbourhood with the finest possible fragrance. And the spring which runs under the plane; how beautifully cool its water is to the feet... See too how wonderfully delicate and sweet the air is, throbbing in response to the shrill chorus of the cicadas – the very voice of summer.²

Later in the dialogue, the story behind the most striking aspect of this setting – the 'shrill chorus of the cicadas' – 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 "ravished by its sweetness" (259b-259c) 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 honoured 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's 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* abruptly shifts 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 cicadas

¹ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band X 175-6. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume II 320-321.

² Plato, *Phaedrus* (Hamilton) 25. Brackets added.

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's 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.³

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 recognise one of the fundamental *forms* in which his art takes place: the form of *mythos* or myth-making, the creation of images and narratives in order to communicate conceptual content. Here we should recall that Socrates's second speech on love – the speech inspired by the intervention of his *daimonion*, and the speech in which he invokes the 'mantic art' of divine inspiration – 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 which stands in opposition to *logos* or reason in its purest, most abstract form: the non-rational element in humans. 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 dialogue of the *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 (the "interpreters of the Muses") are numbered among the local deities which inspire his oratory.⁴ 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..."⁵ It is the philosopher's consciousness of the everyday world of objects, and of the non-rational sources which help to inspire him, which prevents his philosophy from becoming a sterile abstraction or an

³ G.R.F. Ferrari, Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus 34.

⁴ Plato, Phaedrus (Hamilton) 76.

⁵ Ferrari, Listening to the Cicadas 20.

intellectual game. This is perhaps why, at the end of the *Phaedrus* (at 279b-279c), Socrates utters a prayer of thanks to the local deities which occupy the setting of his dialogue.

In their *Dialektik der Aufklärung* Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno refer to a myth which is in some ways similar to the myth of the cicadas discussed by Socrates in the *Phaedrus*. In Book XII of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus and his oarsmen are confronted by the allurements 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 which the Sirens represent, Odysseus learns to curb, suppress and control that aspect of nature which 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.⁶

Only consciously contrived adaptation to nature brings nature under control of the physically weaker...The subjective spirit which cancels the animation of nature can master a despiritualized nature only by imitating its rigidity and despiritualizing itself in turn.

By overcoming trials like that endured by Odysseus, the enlightenment subject eventually imagines itself to be a purely rational self which 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 which has achieved a pure progression from *mythos* to *logos*, from the wholly non-rational to the purely rational.

⁶ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 64. Trans. Cumming, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 57.

Does Socrates's 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 which 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 which abound in the setting of the *Phaedrus*, while another can be found in the existence of Socrates's *daimonion*.

In Part Two of this study we examined the way in which Socrates's *daimonion* functions as a particular instance of the general notion of the Daemonic which infuses Plato's dialogues, particularly the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. For Plato, the daemon is a figure which mediates between the secular world and the divine realm of the *eide*, and this mediation is achieved by both rational (philosophical, dialectical) and non-rational (erotic, poetic) means. Thus, as Paul Friedländer observes, Plato's notion of the Daemonic prevents his philosophy, and the teachings of Socrates, from being purely rational pursuits, in that it accounts for an element of the non-rational in human thought which is most readily embodied in the Socratic *daimonion*.⁷

In the Age of Goethe, a certain aspect of the philosophical movement which Horkheimer and Adorno see as being allegorically represented in the Sirens episode from book XII of the *Odyssey* – the Enlightenment – manifested itself in two Rationalist systems of thought. The respective systems of Spinoza and Leibniz subscribed to a vision of nature as a logical body of laws underpinned by a rational God – characteristically described by Leibniz as the 'principle of sufficient reason' – which maintains order throughout the universe. Particularly within the *Weltanschauung* of Leibniz, the existence of individual subjects or 'monads' was seen to be determined and regulated by this 'principle of sufficient reason'. As we saw in parts Three and Four of this study, the inherently rational Leibnizian monad has an earlier counterpart in the Aristotelean *entelechy*: a portion of divinity located within the organism, which regulates its development and unfolding. It was this eminently rational view of the human soul, a vision also greatly influenced by Plato's association (in *Timaeus* 90a-90d) of the personal tutelary spirit or 'daemon' with the concept of *nous* or reason, which came to influence Stoic and Neo-Platonic interpretations of both the Socratic *daimonion*, and the notion of the daemon in general.

⁷ Friedländer, Plato Volume I 36.

During the late eighteenth century, however, the 'rational' philosophical systems of Spinoza and Leibniz began to be threatened by the broad European literary-philosophical movement known as Romanticism, the origins of which manifested itself most obviously in the *Sturm und Drang* period of German literature and its three chief progenitors: Hamann, Herder and the young Goethe. In his book *Natural Supernaturalism*, M.H. Abrams finds the key feature of the European Romantic movement in the notion of secularisation. According to Abrams, the Romantic movement served to secularise the relationship between the individual and his or her God by reconfiguring this relationship as a cognitive interchange or transaction between the subject and a divinely-infused conception of 'Nature' after the model of Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura*. This secularisation of religious thought-systems led to a situation in which the Romantic subject – often understood as a genius – came to be seen as a secular demigod or daemon which could harness the potentially limitless divine forces of nature which exist within the self. This 'daemonic' genius would later be theorised by Schiller, in the essay 'Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung', as the 'naïve' poet who is capable of healing the division between humanity and nature through his potentially unlimited capacity for 'natural' artistic expression.

By associating the divine with nature, and with the imaginative powers of the 'natural self' or genius, *Sturm und Drang* thinkers like Herder and Goethe demonstrated that the unity and order of the world is underpinned, not so much by a rational God or 'principle of sufficient reason', but by a potentially non-rational human subject. In particular, Goethe's *Werther* revealed that the subject is free to interpret the world according to his own longings, passions and desires, independently of any so-called 'principle of sufficient reason'. Thus, in the absence of this overriding 'principle of sufficient reason', the central concern of the late eighteenth century Enlightenment was to establish a locus of reason *within* the free human subject. For Goethe this concern manifested itself in a particular question: how can the subject cognise nature in a 'rational' manner, independently of its subjective emotions, preoccupations and longings, while at the same time doing justice to nature's infinite complexity?

Throughout the course of this study, we have seen the ways in which Goethe endeavours to answer this question within the scope of his notion of the Daemonic. The development of Goethe's notion of the Daemonic can be reviewed most clearly when we examine the ways in which it is manifested in the metaphor of water as subjectivity, a metaphor which recurs throughout this study.

Goethe's early notion of the Daemonic can be seen to coincide with the secular tendencies found by M.H. Abrams in the broad European movement encompassed by the term 'Romanticism'. While for Plato the daemon is a figure who mediates between the secular realm and the divine world of the *eide*,

for the early Goethe, the daemonic genius is the Leibnizian monadic subject which longs to fuse itself with the pantheistic 'All' of God/Nature. In the section of Part Five entitled Water as Subjectivity I: 'Mahomets Gesang', we saw the way in which the 'daemonic' subject-stream in Goethe's poem rushes to unify itself with the external world. The inadequacy of this approach to nature is revealed in the poem's conclusion. In fusing itself with external nature (embodied in the Ocean) the subject achieves only a loss of self: it finds itself literally swallowed by the immensity of God/Nature.

This problem is tackled again in *Werther*. As we have seen in the section of Part Five entitled Water as Subjectivity II, Werther, like Mahomet, longs to achieve a communion with pantheistic 'Nature', but from a different angle. By seeing all of nature as a mirror of his own subjective emotions, Werther loses contact with external reality. The subject is not swallowed by nature – rather, nature is swallowed and lost in Werther's own boundless subjectivity. Finally, in losing an object-world against which he can differentiate and thus define himself, Werther also experiences a loss of self.

The period spanning the years between the Göschen edition of *Werther* (1787), and the poem 'Mächtiges Überraschen' (1808) is decisive in the development of Goethe's new understanding of the relationship between the subject and nature, and his later notion of the Daemonic. As we have seen in Part Six of this study, Goethe can be seen to occupy an ambiguous position with regard to the late eighteenth century Enlightenment, a position which is defined by his highly individualistic response to the Critical Philosophy of Kant. On the one hand, Goethe saw in Kant's universal ideas the opportunity to unite the sensuous particularities of nature within overriding models or schemata. Goethe initially believed that these models – like, for example, the *Urpflanze* – might be physically demonstrable in terms of their manifestation within the objects of nature. At the same time, however, we also discovered that Goethe's scientific investigations, combined with his encounters with Kant's Critical Philosophy and the essentially orthodox Kantianism of Schiller, allowed him to develop an increasingly sophisticated mode of cognition which came to recognise an abyss which exists between the theory or hypothesis of the scientist, and the concrete actuality of nature or 'things in themselves'. An abyss, in short, between subject and object. This abyss marked, for Goethe, a limit placed upon the capacities of the subject to objectively cognise and theorise nature. In the wake of the failures of his ambitious scientific models like the *Urpflanze*, Goethe came to see this limit as a general existential principle or *Urphänomen* ('primal phenomenon'). While this notion of subjectivity in limitation is a commonplace of Goethe's *Klassik* period, it was also contended, in the concluding stages of Part Six, that Goethe's concern with bringing subjectivity within limits is in fact an explicit philosophical

response to the model of unlimited subjectivity exemplified in *Sturm und Drang* texts like 'Mahomets Gesang' and *Werther*.

In Part Seven we examined Goethe's reactions to the early *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling. Schelling's thought initially represented to Goethe the possibility that the abyss between the subject and nature may be overcome by seeing both humanity and the natural world as belonging to a greater transcendental subject known as the *Weltseele* (world-soul). While Goethe eventually dismissed this theory as an 'idea' which could never adequately correspond with concrete, physical reality, he nevertheless came to acknowledge a certain truth in Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. This truth resides in Schelling's notion that human reason is conditioned by nature. The human subject, dwelling ineluctably within the realm of nature, cannot present nature to itself as a unified and complete object. Thus, all understandings of natural phenomena are themselves conditioned by the position of the subject within nature. This was the dictum which Goethe took from the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling, a dictum which would henceforth inhere in his later experience of the Daemonic as an *Urphänomen* which attests to both the 'incomprehensible ambivalence of nature', and the 'unresolved remainder' of human experience.

Thus, in the section of this study entitled Water as Subjectivity III: 'Mächtiges Überraschen', we were introduced to Goethe's later notion of the Daemonic as that aspect of nature which both exceeds and obstructs the rational capacities of the subject. Like the protagonist of 'Mahomets Gesang', the subject-stream of Goethe's sonnet rushes once more to the sea. But here it is confronted, diverted and limited by a 'daemonic' counter-force embodied in the nymph Oreas. Having been obstructed, limited and confined by this unaccountable daemonic force, the subject discovers a new life of subjectivity-in-limitation.

In 'Mächtiges Überraschen', the first and second senses in which the notion of the Daemonic exists in Goethe's works begin to interact. While on the one hand the protagonist-stream of the sonnet is 'daemonic' in Goethe's early sense of the term, in that it attempts to fuse its supposedly limitless subjectivity with the pantheistic 'All' of God/Nature, its aims are at the same time diverted, obstructed and limited by an apparently external 'daemonic' power associated with nature.

It is Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* which provides us with grounds upon which to theorise the interaction between the first and second senses of the Daemonic in Goethe. For the early Goethe, the 'daemonic' individual is the natural genius who seeks to mediate between humanity and nature. This

early sense of the Daemonic remains untheorised in Goethe's *oeuvre*, but nevertheless expresses itself in early texts like 'Mahomets Gesang' and *Werther*. Beginning with 'Mächtiges Überraschen', the later Goethe begins to critique this earlier notion of the unlimited 'daemonic' subject by demonstrating the extent to which nature may oppose and obstruct the subject's internally generated fantasies, longings, projects and theories. Just as Goethe's early notion of the Daemonic is expressive of the purportedly infinite well of 'natural', genial creativity within the subject, so is his later conception of the Daemonic expressive of the ways in which nature may oppose the subject, both internally and externally. At the level of interiority, Goethe's later conception of the Daemonic corresponds with those unaccountable, non-rational and unconscious aspects of nature within the self which prevent the human subject from being purely objective or rational. While with regard to the exterior, the notion of the Daemonic in the late Goethe represents the extent to which the infinite particularities of nature will always exceed the cognitive capacities of the subject.

Here we can conclude that the Daemonic in Goethe exists in a dual sense. On the one hand, it represents that aspect of nature which exceeds the cognitive capacities of the subject, while on the other hand it constitutes a natural, non-rational aspect of the subject itself.

In Part Eight of our analysis, we examined the ambiguous way in which Goethe's later, mythic notion of the Daemonic finally entered the realm of the political, in his descriptions of Napoleon as daemonic genius of world history. While on the one hand Goethe's characterisation of Napoleon was seen to contain echoes of the *Sturm und Drang* notion of the daemon as a demigod who possesses preternatural creative powers, at the same time we also discovered that Goethe was able to critique Napoleon's deployment of *Machtpolitik* (power-politics) by demonstrating its lack of any sense of *Weltfrömmigkeit* (respect for the world or sense of duty toward the world). Accordingly, Goethe was finally led to the view – directly expressed in the conversation with Eckermann dated March 11 1828, and perhaps indirectly expressed in Act Five of *Faust II* – that political leaders who succumb to the hubris of believing that 'politics is fate' will, at the same time, invite the mythical *Dämonen* to obstruct their political ambitions.

At this point in our summary, it is appropriate to turn to another observation offered by Horkheimer and Adorno in their *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, this time in relation to the interpretation of Platonic and Aristotelean metaphysics adopted by the Enlightenment:

Die Aufklärung...erkannte im platonischen und aristotelischen Erbeil 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.⁸

The Enlightenment...recognized the old powers in the Platonic and Aristotelean aspects of metaphysics, and opposed as superstition the claim that truth is predicable of universals. It asserted that in the authority of universal concepts, there was still discernable fear of the daemonic spirits which men sought to portray in magic rituals, hoping thus to influence nature. From now on, matter would at last be mastered without any illusion of ruling or inherent powers, of hidden qualities.

Following the suggestions of Horkheimer and Adorno, we can confirm that a certain species of 'allgemeine Begriffe' ('universal concepts') did, in a sense, present Goethe with an experience of 'Dämonen' or 'daemonic spirits', albeit different spirits to those perceived by the Enlightenment thinkers in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. The daemons or *Dämonen* experienced by the later Goethe were, on the contrary, direct effects or consequences of the Enlightenment's belief – a belief which was perhaps momentarily shared by Goethe in his concept of the *Urpflanze* – that matter could be 'mastered' (beherrscht) "ohne Illusion waltender oder innenwohnender Kräfte, verborgener Eigenschaften" ("without any illusion of ruling or inherent powers, of hidden qualities"). The failed 'universal concept' of the *Urpflanze* demonstrated to Goethe the ultimate resistance of natural phenomena to purely immanentist or secular models which attempted 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 – like, for example, the preternatural creative powers of the genius – may be just as inexplicable as the mysteries of external phenomena. Thus, in Part Nine of this study, I suggested that this acknowledgement can be seen to place Goethe in a direct lineage with the emergence of the theory of the unconscious in the work of Arthur Schopenhauer, Eduard von Hartmann, Carl Gustav Carus and ultimately in the work of Sigmund Freud, a lineage to which Freud himself draws our attention in his 'Goethe Prize' address.⁹

Unlike Freud, however, Goethe's aim was not to give a comprehensive theoretical account of the hidden or submerged natural drives (*Triebe*) at work in the activities of the human subject, nor of those

⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 12. Trans. Cumming, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 6.

⁹ See footnote 25 on page 369 of Part Nine of this study.

drives at work in nature as a whole. Goethe's opinion seems to be that an account of this domain is not open to the Enlightenment's scientific methodologies: rather it reveals itself only in images (*Bilder*) and in myths.

In Socrates's myth of the cicadas, we investigated one instance of the role played by myth in the dialogues of Plato. From this investigation it was concluded that Plato uses myths in order to access those regions of thought or experience which are inaccessible to the rational, inductive logic of Socrates. Seen in this way, the myths deployed by Plato point to a kind of 'truth' which does not make any claims to philosophical 'correctness', 'rigour' 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's *daimonion*, as phenomena which 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" ("Wahrheit"), is: "...nicht bloß das vernünftige Bewußtsein, sondern ebensowohl dessen Gestalt in der Wirklichkeit" ("...not merely the rational consciousness but equally the form that consciousness assumes in actual life.")¹⁰ The Platonic Socrates which we encounter at the beginning of the *Phaedrus* does not seek to outline his notion of the *eide* 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.¹¹ Likewise, in the opinions of Horkheimer and Adorno, 'the form that consciousness assumes in actual life' is a form which 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, which are better represented in mythic modes, than in the discourses of scientific Rationalism. At the same time, however, Horkheimer and Adorno also observe that the Enlightenment has always seen the basic principle of myth as being:

...Anthropomorphismus, die Projektion vom Subjektiven auf die Natur... Das Übernatürliche, Geister und Dämonen, seien Spiegelbilder der Menschen, die von Natürlichem sich schrecken lassen.¹²

¹⁰ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 4. Trans. Cumming, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* xiv.

¹¹ Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas* 20-21.

¹² Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 12. Trans. Cumming, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 6.

...anthropomorphism, the projection onto nature of the subjective...the supernatural, spirits and daemons, are mirror images of men who allow themselves to be frightened by natural phenomena.

This view of myth is most succinctly presented in the work of Freud, who clearly saw himself as an adherent to the enlightenment methodology which Horkheimer and Adorno describe.¹³ But are invocations of myth always simply irrational, or are they better described, less pejoratively, as non-rational: as pointing to 'truths' which 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.¹⁴

The philosopher cares much for myth because it is composed of what is also supposed to constitute the attraction of theory.

It is the inexact but suggestive mode of mythic thinking, argues Blumenberg, which 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 through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize."¹⁵ Aristotle elaborates on this contention (also at 982b) by adding: "the myth lover is in a sense a philosopher, since myths are composed of wonders."¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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" ("one of the modes of accomplishment of logos.")¹⁸ In having originated in, and in having defined itself in opposition to, *mythos*, *logos* can never

¹³ See the section of Freud's *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* (*The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*) entitled 'Determinismus, Zufalls- und Aberglauben' ('Determinism and Superstition') 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." ("In point of fact I believe that a large part of the mythological view of the world, which extends a long way into most modern religions, is nothing but psychology projected into the external world"). Freud, *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* *Gesammelte Werke* Band IV 287. Translated by Alan Tyson *Standard Edition* Volume VI 258.

¹⁴ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 33. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 26-27.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Tredennick) 13.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Tredennick) 13.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Tredennick) 17.

¹⁸ Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 34. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 27.

completely dispense with the former, just as there is an inner logic (a kind of *logos*) which 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 Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, ‘Urworte Orphisch’ and in some passages of Eckermann’s *Gespräche mit Goethe* – designates the sphere of the non-rational in human thinking and experience, a sphere which is not clarifiable through the deployment of purely rational concepts but which 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. Quite the contrary. Not unlike the intrusive voice of Socrates’s *daimonion*, it serves to designate a sphere which cannot be elucidated through the deployment of exclusively rational thought, thereby demonstrating that the purely rational human subject – the subject to which Horkheimer and Adorno refer as “des rechten Sohns moderner Zivilisation” (“the dutiful child of modern civilization”)¹⁹ – is also 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 ‘unresolved remainder’ to which it refers,²⁰ the central purpose of this study has been to show that this term – daemon, *δαίμων* – 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 meaning and its philosophical purpose.

Thus, the ‘daemonic spirits’ or ‘Dämonen’ which, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, the Enlightenment saw in the Platonic ‘universals’ or *eide*, find their purpose insofar as they embody the notion of there being an ‘outside’, an unknown and unknowable excess, a sense of wonder, which escapes the confines of a purely immanent human epistemology, thereby demonstrating its negativity and incompleteness. The Enlightenment fled from these *Dämonen* precisely because, when such phenomena disappear from view, man imagines (*wähnt*) himself to be free from fear.²¹

¹⁹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 4. Trans. Cumming, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* xiv.

²⁰ Blumenberg writes: “Es kommt auf diesen Titel [das Dämonische] und die Deutungslust, die er erweckt hat, nicht an; es kommt auf den ‘Rest’ an.” (“What matters is not this title and the interpretative eagerness to which it has given rise; what matters is the *remainder*”). Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* 437. Brackets added. Trans. Wallace, *Work on Myth* 401.

²¹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 22. Trans. Cumming, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 16.

'Enlightenment', then, corresponds with what Horkheimer and Adorno refer to as the "reine Immanenz des Positivismus" ("pure immanence of positivism"), a positivism in which:

Es darf überhaupt nichts mehr draußen sein, weil die bloße Vorstellung des Draußen die eigentliche Quelle der Angst ist.²²

Nothing at all may remain outside, because the mere idea of outsideness is the source of fear.

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 myth, by hiding "hinter ein Bild" ("behind an image"): an image that he called the Daemonic.²³ In hiding behind this image Goethe does not regress to a pre-Enlightenment mode of mythic thinking akin to that alluded to by Walter Benjamin in his essay on Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandschaften*: rather, Goethe's aim is to show us that the Enlightenment's attempted progression from *mythos* to *logos* is never complete, nor susceptible of completion.

²² Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 22. Trans. Cumming, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 16.

²³ Here I am quoting from the following passage in Book Twenty of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, referred to earlier in this chapter: "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." ("To this principle, which seemed to come in between all other principles in order to separate them, and yet to link them together, I gave the name of Daemonic, after the example of the ancients, and of those who, at any rate, had perceptions of the same kind. I tried to screen myself from this fearful principle, by taking refuge, according to my usual habits, behind an image"). Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* HA Band X 175-6. Trans. Oxenford, *The Autobiography of Goethe* Volume II 320-321.

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* Note: English translations of German texts are listed directly beneath the original German text.

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