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A PHILOSOPHY TO LIVE BY:

GOETHE'S ART OF LIVING IN THE SPIRIT OF THE ANCIENTS

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations v
Acknowledgements vii
Introduction 1
Goethe and Ancient philosophy 6
Philosophy as an Art of Living: Making the most of life 10
Art & Science as a Goethean Art of Living 18
Introduction of Chapters 19
Chapter 1 Ancient Philosophy as an Art of living 26
Central Claim & Methodology 29
Outline of this chapter 31
I. Philosophy as a Way of life 34
Pierre Hadot's Conception of Ancient Philosophy as Spiritual Exercise 34
Goethe's conception of Philosophy 44
II. An ancient art of living as the practice of Epicurean & Stoic spiritual exercise 59
Epicurean & Stoic Therapeutics & the Exercise of a Concentration on the Present 60
Goethean affinities with Epicureanism & Stoicism 66
Goethe's valorization of the present and its Epicurean and Stoic resonances 72
Ancient exercises in a View from above & Cosmic consciousness 91
III. Goethean scientific & artistic variations on the spritual exercise of a view from above and cosmic consciousness 95
Goethean view from above and the intuition of a natural archetype 95
Viewing Nature as a Whole 96
Gegenständliches Sehen 102
Intuitive Apprehension 105
Artistic Intuition 110
Résumé 124
IV. The Italian Journey as the fount of Goethean art of living 126
Reading the *Italien Journey* as a spiritual text in the Ancient philosophical tradition 126
Chapter 2 Goethe's Italian Journey: a therapeutic journey in the spirit of the ancients 147
I. Goethe's Malaise of the Passions 152
Goethe's Art of Healing: Classical Rebirth 160

II. The ancient therapeutics of presence 162
Goethe's Therapeutics of Presence 163
Stoic duty to the present: the imperative of self-reliance 169
Epicurean happiness in the present 190
Conclusion 227
Chapter 3: Goethean Spiritual exercises in Natural Investigation 233
I. Natural Observation as Spiritual Therapy 237
II. Natural Investigation as a Self-transformative Exercise 245
The Ancients' attitude toward nature 245
Goethe's observational stance towards nature 246
Ancient Spiritual techniques in Observation 248
Goethean spiritual techniques in natural observation 251
III. Seeing Nature from a physical point of view: Polarity & Intensification 259
Exercises in Observing Nature through topographic polarities 262
Exercises in observing nature through the Polarity of Generation and Destruction 266
Exercises in observing nature from the perspective of normality and abnormality 272
Temporal Exercises in Seeing 274
IV. Goethe's Scientia Intuitiva as a species of ancient cosmic consciousness 288
The ethical worldview of an ancient cosmic consciousness 288
Goethe's Spinozan ethical worldview 292
Intuitive observations of nature 294
Chapter 4 Goethean Spiritual Exercises in Observing and Producing Artworks 308
I. Self-Formative Travel & Spiritual Knowledge 313
II. Therapeutics of Art Observation 320
The artwork's presence 320
Therapeutic primacy of Presence 322
Goethean exercises in animating presence 327
The Therapeutics of life-affirming art interpretation 333
Exercises in averting one's gaze from death & directing one's gaze towards life 344
III. Goethean Aesthetic exercises in the observation of art through polarities 352
Baumgarten's Conception of Aesthetic Exercises & its Goethean Resonances 352
Baumgarten on the regulation of subjective affects & Goethe on 'gegenständliches Sehen' 360
Ideal and Real Observations of art: Seeing 'in concreto' vs. Seeing 'in abstracto' 364

Perceptual discrepancies between ideal and real 365
Aesthetic Exercises Mediating Ideal and Real..... 368
Historical versus Ahistorical exercises in Seeing 373
Exercises in Historical regard 376
Achieving a Classical Regard 394
Exercises in Ahistorical viewing: the importance of natural context 398
Exercises in seeing in light and in darkness..... 401
IV. The Intensification of Aesthetic Exercises through Productive Seeing 411
Baumgarten and Aesthetic Judgment.....411
Aesthetic exercises in productive seeing 414
Synthesizing Subjective & Objective 416
Reconciling Form & Content..... 420
The Logic of Part & Whole 424
The merging of Artist & Artwork 429
Heightening through Exercises in Productive Seeing..... 432
The Aesthetic form of life: the Happy Aesthete..... 436
Conclusion 439
Concluding remarks on Goethe's ancient art of living in lieu of the notion of Bildung..... 444
Primary Literature..... 467
Secondary Literature..... 468

List of Abbreviations

Frequently cited works have been identified by the following abbreviations of critical editions in the footnotes:

1. WA Weimarer oder Sophienausgabe: *Goethes Werke im Auftrage der Großherzogin Sophie von Sachsen*. Sections I-IV. 133 volumes (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1887-1919). cited by section, volume, page, date of letter or title of work

2. HA Hamburger Ausgabe: *Goethes Werke. Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bände*. Ed. by Erich Trunz. (Hamburg: Chr. Wegner 1948-60). — Neubearb. Aufl. (München: C. H. Beck 1981). cited by volume, page, title of work, place and date of journal entry

3. BA Berliner Ausgabe: *Poetische Werke. Kunsttheoretische Schriften und Übersetzungen*. ed. Siegfried Seidel and others. 22 volumes Poetische Werke (vol 1-16); Kunsttheoretische Schriften und Übersetzungen (vol 17-22) (Berlin, Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag 1965-78). cited by volume, page and title of work

4. FA Frankfurter Ausgabe: *Sämtliche Werke. Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*. Ed. by Dieter Borchmeyer and others 40 volumes. in 2 sections (Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag 1985-99). cited by volume, page and title of work.

5. MA Münchner Ausgabe: *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*. Ed. by Karl Richter, Herbert G. Göpfert, Norbert Miller, Gerhard Sauder, and Edith Zehm 33 volumes (München: C. Hanser 1985-98). cited by volume, page, and title of work

6. GW *Goethes Werke*. 20. volumes. (Stuttgart, Tübingen: J. G. Cotta 1815-1819) cited by volume, page and title of work

7. SW *Große Cotta-Ausgabe*: *Sämmtliche Werke* in 40 volumes (Stuttgart, Tübingen: J. G. Cotta, 1840) cited by volume and page

8. GA *Gedenkenausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche* ed. Ernst Beutler (Zürich: Artemis 1948) cited by volume and page

9. GB *Goethes Briefe*. *Hamburger Ausgabe in 4 Bänden*. Ed. by Karl Robert Mandelkow und Bodo Morawe. (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag. 1962-1967). 3rd Ed, 4 Bd. (München: Beck, 1988) cited by volume, page, recipient and date of letter

10. Tgb *Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Tagebücher*, 5 volumes. (Stuttgart und Weimar: Metzler, 1998-2007) cited by volume, page and date

11. GG *Goethes Gespräche*. ed. by Woldemar Freiherr von Biedermann, volumes 1–10, (Leipzig: Biedermann 1889–1896). cited by volume, page, person and date

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Introduction

"There are nowadays professors of philosophy. Yet it is admirable to profess because it was once admirable to live." Henry David Thoreau

"To compose our character is our duty, not to compose books (...) Our great and glorious masterpiece is to live appropriately." Michel de Montaigne

In his reflections on the role of the educator of humanity in his second *Untimely Meditation*, Friedrich Nietzsche interrogates, by means of the example of his philosophical mentor, Arthur Schopenhauer, what it means to philosophize. Keen to discredit the conception of philosophy that held sway in his day, Nietzsche harkens back to antiquity in order to restitute what he takes to be the essence of the philosophical way of life. Invoking an ancient mode of philosophizing inextricably bound up with everyday human existence, he maintains:

> Ich mache mir aus einem *Philosophen* gerade so viel, als er imstande ist, ein *Beispiel zu geben*...Aber das Beispiel muss *durch* das *sichtbare Leben* und *nicht bloss durch Bücher* gegeben werden, also dergestalt, wie die *Philosophen* Griechenlands lehrten, durch *Miene, Haltung, Kleidung, Speise, Sitte mehr als* durch *Sprechen oder gar Schreiben*.[1]

For the ancients, a man was deemed a philosopher by virtue of electing to lead a life conforming to specific values daily exhibited in his ordinary conduct. The mark of a philosophical pedigree was not the espousal of a particular mode of thinking but the evincement of an exemplary way of being. That this characterization of living rather than thinking philosophically has become obsolete, proving alien to prevailing intuitions about the philosopher's defining features, attests to modernity's fateful partitioning of thinker and liver into two mutually exclusive forms of life. The tendency to confine inquiry about a philosopher almost exclusively to his mode of thought,

[1]Friedrich Nietzsche, "Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen I-IV," *Sämtliche Werke:kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgion Colli, Mazzino Montinari. (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag de Gruyter 1999) 350.

whether through his extant works, his exegesis of authoritative texts, or the re-appropriation of his methods by later philosophical movements, is symptomatic of the marginalization of the ancient conception of philosophy as a fundamental way of life in which the philosopher's lived existence rather than his written works served as an ideal standard for emulation.

Modern culture's forfeiture of a way of existing as part and parcel of philosophizing proves problematic when taking up the work of an individual who is not readily classifiable as one who theorized about the workings of the universe or posited solutions to timeworn questions, but nonetheless unmistakably exhibited the trappings of a philosophical way of living. Indeed, to deny a man of Goethe's achievements, whose learning was indebted to a wealth of noteworthy life experience, the reputation of a philosopher-poet, seems cause for objection. Beyond his status as Germany's preeminent man of letters, Goethe's life bore the mark of steadfast engagement in political governance, noteworthy contributions to the natural sciences, a rigorous apprenticeship in the figural arts, a formidable tenure as a dramaturge and an influential role in cultural administration. Goethe committed the insights he derived from his activity in these contrasting walks of life to a corpus of writings offering an eclectic reservoir of existential expertise born of a way of living unsurpassed in its practical involvement. Moreover, exhibiting an unusual autonomy of thought, he advanced iconoclastic ways of proceeding in the natural sciences and the arts, challenging the establishment and paving the way for the advancement of novel methods and techniques. But despite accomplishments testifying to the wisdom derived from leading what was ultimately tantamount to a philosophical form of life in the ancient meaning, examinations of Goethe's place, not as a philosophical thinker per se, but as a practitioner of philosophy as a way of life are scarce and wanting.

Closer examination of Goethe's own self-conception, reveals the reasons that have

militated against adjudging him the embodiment of the bona fide philosopher. Already in his time, the notion of the philosopher designated an ivory tower intellectual or a professional academic far removed from the concerns of everyday life, that to Goethe's mind, represented an impoverished form of life with which he was loathe to be identified. What better justification for neglecting his philosophical affiliations, than his professed repudiation of a contemplative, scholarly life and his insistence that it was incompatible with his espoused worldview? Goethe's protestations against theoretical philosophy are well known, whereby he prided himself on avoiding pretensions to meta-level reflection, maintaining that, deficient in an organ for abstraction, he had better ways to occupy himself than to think about thinking as such.[2] Challenging philosophy's adherence to concepts of reason that disdained the evidences of the senses, Goethe preferred to defer to the immediate insight won through artistic intuition. But his principle gripe against philosophy was by and large, a function of what he perceived as its willful detachment from the business of living. Openly hostile to theories disengaged from reality, he maintained of his efforts to preserve his common sense sanity against the incursions of philosophical vanities: "von der Philosophie habe ich mich selbst immer frei erhalten; der Standpunkt des gesunden Menschenverstandes war auch der meinige."[3] A healthy human reason was one committed to active engagement in mundane existence that refused to keep life in abeyance to indulge in the vanities of empty speculation.

If Goethe censured philosophy's impractical aims and methods, he was no less critical of its rising circle of intellectualist practitioners that appeared increasingly out of touch with reality. Wary of a dogmatic faith in rationalism and ever suspect of dialectical arguments, he kept

[2]HA I, 329. Zahme Xenien 7 "Mein Kind! ich hab es klug gemacht: Ich habe nie über das Denken gedacht." Goethe similarly maintained to Eckermann on Feb 24, 1824 (MA 19, 81): "Das Schlimme ist, dass alles Denken zum Denken nichts hilft; man muss von Natur richtig sein, so dass die guten Einfälle immer wie freie Kinder Gottes vor uns dastehen und uns zurufen: da sind wir!"
[3]GG 7, 3. Gespräche mit Mit Johann Peter Eckermann 4. Feb 1829

relations to his idealist contemporaries, including the likes of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, at arm's length. Goethe likewise initially avoided the company of his later confidante and colleague, Friedrich Schiller, seeing in him the incarnation of the poet led astray by philosophical ambitions. He decried what he saw as Schiller's unqualified advocacy of speculative freedom that failed to do justice to the eternal laws of nature: "Er predigte das Evangelium der Freiheit, ich wollte die Rechte der Natur nicht verkürzt wissen."[4] But perhaps most distasteful to Goethe, was the rise of new generation of Romantics, who, caught up in infinite reflection on the theoretical underpinnings of aesthetics, denigrated art by making it the mere handmaiden of philosophy.

If Goethe never ceased to harbor reservations against a certain kind of philosophy, whether its methods or its proponents, how is one to understand the distinction history has accorded him as poet-philosopher par excellence and torchbearer of an entire era, the so-called 'Goethezeit,' marking the heyday of German philosophy? Might it be that the exceedingly self-referential quality of his writings summons his readers to an examination of the life that stood behind his works; one that cannot be characterized as other than philosophical? Like no other personage of his time, Goethe self-consciously left behind a meticulous account of his everyday existence, amply documenting his poetic, artistic, and natural scientific modes of occupation. What better evidence of his conviction that his work was a direct manifestation of his way of life? Famously characterizing his literary works as the mere fragments of a great confession, Goethe considered his fiction a repository of wisdom derived from his quotidian existence. Moreover, he regarded his innumerable autobiographical writings, aphorisms, natural scientific studies and essays on art, all of which had equal if not greater significance with his poetic output,

[4]WA II, 11, 52. Einwirkung der neueren Philosophie

as bearing out his perspectives, values, convictions, methodological concerns and habits of thought. Indeed, it could be argued that the principle intent and purpose of Goethe's works was none other than one of furnishing his readers with a source of existential guidance and a practical know-how of living.

Given what to my mind marks a lacuna in the Goethe literature, overlooking an approach that in many respects proves most closely in keeping with his sensibilities, I seek to demonstrate that Goethe was a philosopher in precisely the way Nietzsche describes, namely insofar as his way of living served as the outward expression of his worldview and mode of thinking. The true manifestation of what it meant to philosophize amounted, for him, to no less than an apprenticeship to life through the practice of an art of living, whereby his persistent disclaimers of philosophical allegiances ultimately conferred him the latitude of thought and action to pursue philosophy as a way of life. It is in this vein, that I argue that Goethe's ultimate contribution to the philosophical tradition lay in demonstrating that the possibility of living philosophically was a real one and that such an endeavor had to be continually renewed by way of an exemplary existence. As Ekkehart Kippendorf maintains, Goethe "will nicht verehrt und bewundert, sondern studiert und in seiner Exemplarität verstanden und dann produktiv angeeignet werden...*es ist auf seine Haltung und seine als Vorbild konzipierte exemplarische Praxis, auf die es ankommt*."[5] Although Goethe offered neither systematic expositions of his worldview nor theoretical justifications for his convictions, the existential attitudes, values and pedagogical insights informing his writings present a veritable practice of an art of living. The evaluative beliefs and normative commitments exhibited in his everyday conduct furnish a philosophical model, an example of human flourishing, capable in some measure of being emulated.

[5]Ekkehart Krippendorff, *Goethe: Politik gegen den Zeitgeist* (Frankfurt: Insel, 1999) 36.

Within the context of demonstrating that Goethe was a philosopher in the ancient meaning, where philosophizing was tantamount to the practice of an art of living, my purpose in this study is threefold. First, I attempt to demonstrate the ways in which Goethe's art of living closely corresponded with the ancient tradition of philosophy. My conviction is that it is best understood through illustrating its deep-seated affinities with the motivations and aims informing the ancient conception of a philosophical life. Second, I offer a descriptive account of Goethe's conception of philosophy as an art of living, elucidating its specific character, normative committments and concrete know-how. Finally, and most importantly, I seek to show that Goethe innovatively retrieved an ancient art of living, giving it new impetus, by embedding it in the practices of natural scientific inquiry and the reception and production of art. Goethe in a way revived and modernized the ancient art of living, giving it a new foundation and context for the existential task of fashioning a life worth living.

Goethe and Ancient philosophy

The choice of framing Goethe's art of living in terms of its indebtedness to ancient philosophy stems, in part, from my ascertainment of fundamental intuitions he shared with the Greeks about what it meant to lead an exemplary life. Goethe undeniably harbored an ancient vision of human welfare based on practical efforts to attain self-flourishing. Indeed, his allegiances to ancient culture, far from reducible to a period of faithful adherence to classicism, was the dominant and persisting cultural authority shaping his conception of how one ought to live. A fervent admirer of the ancient cast of mind, he deemed it a cultural reference with universal resonance: 'In allen Werken...finden wir bei den Alten einen einzigen durchgehenden Charakter, der deshalb *ein Zeugnis für die ganze Kultur jener Zeit ist*. Dies ist der Charakter des

Großartigen, des Tüchtigen, des Gesunden, des Menschlich-Vollendeten, der hohen Lebensweisheit, der erhabenen Denkungsweise, der reinkräftigen Anschauung."[6] Goethe singled out the ancients as capable of consummate perfection, emanating robust health, aspiring to the highest wisdom and evincing estimable modes of thought and intuition. He thus in many ways patterned his behavior on the ancients, aspiring to their virtues. Adopting an Olympian equanimity impervious to life's toils, he likewise espoused the ancient's paganism, revering nature to embrace organic life in its immanence, while apprehending reality through a plasticity of perception that earned him the reputation of possessing 'Griechenauge.' Indeed, the emiment philologist Wolfgang Schadewaldt maintained that Goethe's uncanny ability to merge his vision with the objects of his observation exhibited close affinity with the ancients: "Die ursprügliche Fähigkeit des Sehens zieht ihn mit der Kraft geistiger Urverwandschaft zur Antike." Such an unmediated intuitive perception, or as Schiller would have it, a naive mode of apprehension, was in turn honed and refined through his meticulous observations of ancient art and architecture. Schadewaldt continues: "Und in lebenslangem Anschauen der antiken Denkmäler, in denen die Schau der Griechen zum Bild geworden ist, kräftigt, reinigt, vergeistigt er das eigene Sehen."[7] Schadewaldt thus underscores the extent to which ancient culture was not simply one among others for Goethe, insisting,

> Weil Goethe sein besseres Selbst in der Antike fand, gab er sich ihr hin. Weil der antike Geist auf ein ihm tief Gemäßes in Goethe stieß, ließ er ihn nicht los. Darum ist Goethe, wo er antik ist, ganz er selbst, und wie die Antike auf ihn einwirkte, so formte rückwirkened seine Art, die Antike zu erleben, ein weithinaus gültiges Bild der Antike vor.[8]

Ancient culture thus proved most profoundly at one with Goethe's identity, such that the more he assimilated it into his being the more it found its representative form.

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[6]GG 6, 122. Gespräch mit Eckermann 3. Mai 1827
[7]Wolfgang Schadewaldt, *Goethestudien. Natur und Altertum* (Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1963) 12.
[8]Schadewaldt, 13.

If ancient culture exercised a preeminent influence on Goethe, its philosophical tradition exercised no less of a decisive hold on his perspective on life. That being said, it is by no means my intention to suggest either that Goethe was an adherent of the collective doctrines of ancient physics, metaphysics and ethics or a practitioner of a particular school of ancient philosophy. I seek rather to show that his conception of living was remarkably in sync with a specific ancient tradition that conceived philosophy as a concrete way of life rather than a domain of inquiry and study once removed from everyday existence. I essentially endeavor to shed light on the way in which Goethe's adoption of several persisting ancient themes and approaches to life aided him in forging a veritable art of living. If he famously claimed that he was pantheist in his capacity as an observer of nature, a polytheist as a poet and a monotheist when it came to ethics, he was equally catholic in his recourse to ancient philosophy.[9] Indeed, the idea of an eclectic philosopher who selectively adopted tenets compatible with his outlook was one Goethe readily endorsed. He insisted, "Ein Eklektiker ist aber Jeder, der aus dem, was sich um ihn ereignet, sich dasjenige aneignet, was seiner Natur gemäß ist."[10] Goethe thus drew freely from the precepts of ancient philosophers, Greek and Roman, whether Epicurus, Hippocrates, Epictetus and Lucretius, to name only a few, assimilating whatever suited his purposes and rejecting that which failed to accord with his fundamental convictions. But while Goethe's appropriation of ancient philosophy was selective, he employed various practices emblematic of an ancient wisdom to challenge the occupation of living that prevailed in his day, which he deemed at loggerheads with the ancients' exemplary lifestyle. Goethe recognized that the ancients possessed a kind of 'savoire vivre' from which modern man could derive valuable insights. At the same time, he was far from harboring naive, antiquarian illusions enjoining a wholesale return to classical culture.

[9]HA XII, 372. Maximen und Reflexionen
[10]HA VIII, 465. Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre

He set out, rather, to discriminately rehabilitate ancient perspectives and precepts, creatively adapting them to the exigencies of his times. This is clearly articulated in his credo regarding the incorporation of ancient influences: "Jeder sei auf seine Art ein Grieche! Aber er sei's."[11]He likewise insisted: "Der Parnaß ist ein Montserrat, der viele Ansiedelungen in mancherlei Etagen erlaubt; ein jeder gehe hin, versuche sich, und er wird eine Stätte finden, es sei auf Gipfeln oder in Winkeln."[12] Goethe was convinced that the wisdom of antiquity could flourish under a plethora of differing conditions, assuming new and unknown varieties depending on the circumstances. It is in this vein, one of a versatile and innovative retrieval of ancient wisdom and not an antiquarian recovery of an extinct past, that I argue that Goethe's philosophical way of life, his practice of an art of living, must be understood.

That the Goethean task of fashioning an art of living conducive to self-flourishing can be said to be specifically ancient in spirit, nevertheless requires argument and justification. To this end, I make recourse to the work of a 20th century proponent of an ancient philosophical art of living whose work attempts to rehabilitate its fundamental 'Weltanschauung' and guiding precepts to recast them in their contemporary relevance. I analyze Goethe's art of living as a quintessentially ancient project through marshaling Pierre Hadot's conception of ancient philosophy as a way of life founded on the practice of techniques, what he designates 'spiritual exercises,' designed to dramatically alter one's worldview through the adoption of new convictions and modes of behavior. In retrieving the origins of ancient philosophy as a concrete way of life, Hadot offers a radical reinterpretation of what it means to live philosophically. Indeed, he sketches out a conception of ancient philosphical practice in which the practitioner assimilates life expertise into his daily conduct to overcome various obstacles and bring his way

[11]BA 20, 222. Antik und modern
[12]BA 20, 224-225. Antik und modern

of being in accord with the ways of the world. Against this backdrop, I seek to show that Hadot's account of the salient features of spirituality provide a standard against which to appraise Goethe's committment to ancient values and to evaluate his observance of the central doctrines and practices informing an ancient philosophical mode of existence. Moreover, Hadot not only elaborates the principle features of ancient philosophy as an art of living, he inscribes Goethe in this very tradition. By expressly treating Goethe's life and work to demonstrate the way in which he lived according to precepts traceable to ancient origins, he not only lays the groundwork for my inquiry, he furnishes evidence of Goethe's place in the historical trajectory of an art of living.

Philosophy as an Art of Living: Making the most of life

Having established that Goethe subscribed to a philosophical art of living in the specifically ancient meaning, the yet unaddressed question remains what exactly he understood by it. We might begin by establishing a general definition from which to derive a specifically Goethean variant in order to unpack its central features. The basic premise of an art of living rests on developing capabilities for living a good life. Admittedly, the notion of a good life is indeterminate and far from monolithic. There are hedonistically defined conceptions of the good life at one end of the spectrum and those of an ethical nature on the other, with most subscribing to both pleasure and virtue.[13] Goethe too, countenanced a synthesis of the two, combining on the one hand, an Epicurean conception of pleasure as the absence of pain and measured gratification, with a Stoicist assumption of duty and timely renunciations, on the other. While this work sets out to justify my attribution of such Epicurean and Stoic tenets to Goethe, it suffices at present to say that he effectively integrated these two dimensions of ancient philosophy to develop his

[13] Ruut Veenhoven, "Arts-of-Living," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 4 (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers 2003): 373.

conception of the good life as happiness obtained through self-flourishing. Such self-flourishing begins through efforts at self-improvement, the achievement of which relies on the cultivation of new skills and aptitudes, among which include eliminating pain, restraining desire, discharging duty and constructively embracing renunciation. For Goethe, then, the living of a good life was an accomplishment in which self-cultivation occurred by way of molding the contours of one's identity by means of establishing a balanced temper and an ethos of meeting obligations.

But if Goethe's conception of the good life implied self-flourishing through efforts at self-reform to acquire the right temperament and habits of action, it also involved making the most of one's particular endowments to bring inborn potentiality to fruition. Indeed, Goethe repeatedly underscored the necessity of being authentic to one's ownmost possibilities, where identifying intrinsic aptitudes for development was no simple undertaking because it ultimately presupposed adequate self-acquaintance. Without self-awareness about personal strengths and limitations, not to mention clarity concerning one's genuine preferences, the project of pursuing self-flourishing was an invitation to failure. Moreover, if self-knowledge was needed to pursue an appropriate life plan, the difficulty lay in the fact that the whole of life was essentially spent endeavoring to come to know oneself. Goethe thus believed that the pursuit of a thriving way of life was complicated by the fact that knowing the self was its necessary prerequisite.

If self-knowledge was crucially linked to the project of realizing self-cultivation, Goethe had definite notions about how to go about obtaining it. Against the dominant conception of his time, he was persuaded that enlightenment regarding one's identity was never a matter of self-introspection. While acknowledging the fundamental opacity of the self, he was nevertheless critical of the injunction to 'know thyself,' because more often than not, it became an invitation to passively retreat from reality and indulge in a hermetic form of reflection that jeopardized

constructive intercourse with the world. Ultimately refusing to buy into the idea that self-contemplation could shed light on his identity, Goethe was convinced that the way to discover who one was, lay in active engagment with the world:

> Man hat zu allen Zeiten gesagt und wiederholt, man solle trachten, sich selber zu kennen. Dies ist eine seltsame Forderung, der bis jetzt niemand genügt hat und der eigentlich auch niemand genügen soll. Der Mensch ist mit allem seinem Sinnen und Trachten aufs Äußere angewiesen, auf die Welt um ihn her, und er hat zu tun, diese insoweit zu kennen und sich insoweit dienstbar zu machen, als er es zu seinen Zwecken bedarf. Von sich selber weiß er bloß, wenn er genießt oder leidet, und so wird er auch bloß durch leiden und Freuden über sich belehrt, was er zu suchen oder zu meiden hat.[14]

But if man's orbit lay outwards in commerce with the world, he was nonetheless liable to encounter its resistance. Goethe thus claimed that the insight gleaned from attending to one's disposition to react to reality's intransigence was the very locus of self-knowledge. In attending to one's habitual responses to everyday constraints, one became cognizant of the aversions and attractions that systematically oriented one's behavior. Indeed, if the self's opacity made an untrammeled vision of one's inner life through self-reflection impossible, ascertainment of the affects moving one to pursue certain things and to avoid others could reveal important facets of one's identity. Goethe thus believed that familiarity with desires and impulses that reflect our fundamental propensities to act, essentially define who we are: "Unser Wollen ist ein Vorausverkünden dessen, was wir unter allen Umständen tun werden."[15]Elsewhere he similarly remarked: "Unsere Wünsche sind Vorgefühle der Fähigkeiten, die in uns liegen, Vorboten desjenigen, was wir zu leisten imstande sein werden."[16] The way to gain discernment of one's nature lay in identifying responses to an array of circumstances, not least those of a trying nature. Thus persuaded that familiarity with his affective reactions aided him in coming to know

[14]GG 7, 78. Gespräch mit Johann Peter Eckermann, 10. April 1829
[15]HA IX, 459. Aus meinem Leben Dichtung und Wahrheit, 3. Teil 11. Buch
[16]HA IX, 355. Aus meinem Leben Dichtung und Wahrheit, 2. Teil 9. Buch

himself, Goethe endeavored to control and master them to prevent their causing unnecessary pain and suffering.

Goethe's conception of self-knowledge achieved through attending to affective dispositions in interaction with the world points to an important therapeutic dimension of his art of living. He conceived the task of self-cultivation in terms of the Epicurean goal of realizing self-moderation and temperance. Indeed, the need to regulate emotions and affects that made one susceptible to suffering, while managing appetites and desires to defeat tendencies towards overindulgence, was the cornerstone of Goethe's efforts to live happily. In her monograph, *Goethe's Art of Living*, Katharine Mommsen accordingly writes, "The ability to enjoy the good and draw courage and strength from it, and to bear unavoidable misfortune, is what constitutes Goethe's 'art of living.'"[17]Such an 'ars vivendi' ultimately amounted to the productive regulation of the Manichean forces informing life, in which through learning to cope with diverse circumstances, hardship was endured and pain productively incorporated, while desires and pleasure were moderated to preserve the simple joys of existing. Moreover, Goethe believed that it was through the effective management one's affective disposition in order to weather life's vicissitudes in a constructive fashion, that one came to recognize opportunities for self-flourishing that might otherwise suffer neglect for want of sufficient self-command. For without the ability to reign in affects to overcome the self-dissipation arising from experiencing reality's dilemmas, it was impossible to maintain the perspective needed to make good on opportunities for self-advancement. By thus taking stock of the passions to reign in desires, fears and obsessions, Goethe developed, much in the vein of the Epicureans, new habits conducive to subduing desires for pleasure and perservering through life's adversity in order to make the most

[17]Katharina Mommsen, *Goethe's Art of Living*. Trans. John Crosetto, John Whaley & Renee M. Schnell. (Viktoria: Katharina Mommsen Press, 2003) 57.

of auspicious circumstances promoting self-thriving.

But beyond the self-control won through mastery over the affects, Goethe further conceived self-flourishing in terms of cultivating habits of action that revealed important affinities with a Stoic ethic of duty. In maintaining that acquaintance with one's predispositions to act in systematic ways was tantamount to self-knowledge, Goethe suggested that one's actions ultimately spoke for who one was, whereby he enlarged upon this intuition by pointing to the significance of dutiful actions. In an illuminating series of maxims, he expounded a line of reasoning that begins by raising the question of how one comes to know oneself and concludes by suggesting that self-knowledge issues from grasping one's ability to execute actions arising from duty. He writes, "Handle besonnen ist die praktische Seite von: Erkenne dich selbst."[18] He then proceeds to make explicit the reasoning underlying this claim: "Wie kann man sich selbst kennenlernen? Durch betrachten niemals, wohl aber durch Handeln. Versuche, deine Pflicht zu tun, und du weisst gleich, was an dir ist. Was aber ist deine Pflicht? Die Forderung des Tages."[19]Once again, Goethe rejects pure self-reflection as a legitimate source of self-knowledge, seeking instead to ground it in action. Moreover, if a man's actions determine his identity, than those oriented towards the fulfillment of duty were especially revelatory of his character. Here, what Goethe calls duty, not referring to the self's potential to discharge moral obligations, indicates a feature of the quotidian, involving no more and no less than the ability to answer the demands of the day. Far from something fulfilled under extraordinary circumstances, duty was a capacity that one was perpetually called upon to exercise within everyday confines. The ability to meet the demands of the day, irrespective of their nature, went some way to availing one of the kind of person one was: either the capacity to meet duty was a persisting habit of action

[18]GB IV, 357. Brief an Friedrich Rochlitz 23. Nov 1829
[19]BA 18, 545. Maximen und Reflexionen

reflecting a disciplined character, or it was foreign and unfamiliar, requiring laborious efforts of self-submission that betrayed an attenuated sense of responsibility.

Goethe's practical conception of self-knowledge sheds light on the ethical dimension of his art of living, exhibiting the typically Stoicist notion of the habitual assumption of duty. Indeed, if the ability to respond to quotidian requirements reflected one's character, the caveat was that it was not ordinarily spontaneous, essentially resulting from habituation through systematic self-imposition. At the same token, one came to know oneself precisely in and through the renewed exercise of duty. Goethe thereby developed a specific notion of duty tantamount to the mastery of everyday obligations: "Pflicht: wo man liebt, was man sich selbst befiehlt.[20] Erfüllte Pflicht empfindet sich immer noch als Schuld, weil man sich nie ganz genug getan.[21] Wo ich aufhören muss, sittlich zu sein, habe ich keine Gewalt mehr."[22]The mark of mastering duty was a love of the capacity to routinely dictate to oneself the tasks assumed in life at large. Moreover, the habitual practice of dutiful action served as a mode of self-reflection because it demanded a constant renewal of commitment involving unceasing self-awareness that one could have done better and there remained room for improvement. Dutiful activity was fundamentally inexhaustible in nature, such that once undertaken it retained the aspect of a debt outstanding. For Goethe then, duty was an ability characterized by one who inhabited his evaluative commitments with a reflective appreciation of them.[23]Moreover, insofar as the practitioner of dutiful action acquired the self-command needed to dictate it to himself, he established authority over his character. Goethe maintains, "Versuche, die eigene Autorität zu

[20]BA 18, 605. Maximen und Reflexionen
[21]BA 18, 557. Maximen und Reflexionen
[22]BA 18, 557. Maximen und Reflexionen
[23]Michael Bell, *Open Secrets Literature, Education, and Authority from J-J. Rousseau to J.M. Coetzee.* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007) 94.

fundieren: sie ist überall begründet, wo Meisterschaft ist."[24] Mastering dutiful activity was thus a seminal way of achieving self-authority. Self-authority was in turn important to Goethe for two reasons. Firstly, without becoming accustomed to routinely assuming duty, it remained virtually impossible to embark upon larger enterprises, especially those aimed at acquiring aptitudes permitting one to stake a claim over how to best lead one's life. Secondly, self-authority furnished the self-awareness needed to avoid decisions limiting one's potential, while the knowledge that one was capable of fulfilling quotidian duties was proof of one's ability to take on more demanding pursuits. Absent sufficient self-authority, one typically lacked the power to sieze the initiative to actualize important objectives. Hence for Goethe, the mastery of duty effectively grounded self-authority, permitting one to make the choices required to identify possibilities for self-flourishing and with it, the pursuit of the good life.

While Goethe's art of living is premised on self-authority won through the assumption of duty, it is also importantly based on another quintessentially Stoic practice of self-renunciation. Goethe insisted that the self-mastery that underwrote one's self- authority depended in part upon the capacity for self-limiting renunciations: "In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister."[25] Moreover, the ability to exercise self-restraint and to forgo unproductive activity importantly aided in identifying what lay genuinely within the purview of one's abilities. For when there was no reasonable hope for progress, unbounded activity proved self-defeating, demanding abstension to constructively reorient abilities in appropriate directions. Goethe thus developed a conception of ethical duty based on self-mastery founded on forgoing futile attempts and counteracting false tendencies, where he essentially envisaged an art of renunciation that

[24]BA 18, 613. Maximen und Reflexionen
[25]HA I, 245. Das Sonett

eschewed self-formation conducted against the natural grain.[26]He maintained, "Verharren wir aber in dem Bestreben: Das Falsche, Ungehörige, Unzulängliche, was sich in uns und andern entwickeln oder einschleichen könnte, durch Klarheit und Redlichkeit auf das möglichste zu beseitigen!"[27]Indeed, in cases of inadequate endowment, self-imposed renunciation served as an antidote to dilettantism by compelling one to abandon the cultivation of abilities lacking promise and preventing the pursuit of unfeasible aspirations. Goethe's art of living thus not only depended upon cultivating habits of duty responsive to the demands of day, it required self-mastery arising from embracing necessary self-renunications that cut short engagement with activities for which one was fundamentally unsuited.

Goethe thus understood his art of living as a project of realizing the requisite conditions for self-flourishing, wherein happiness implied a productive life unhampered by self-defeating affects and a lack of self-command. On the one hand, affective dispositions had to be disciplined and controlled to permit one to realize opportunities for self-cultivation. On the other, the right habits of action had to be developed to ensure the assumption of necessary duties and the renunciation of unconstructive enterprises. Both efforts indirectly contributed to disclosing the self-knowledge needed to pursue endeavors promoting the good life. It is in this vein, that the current work endeavors to demonstrate that Goethe's art of living consisted in the development and practice of an ensemble of exercises facilitating self-thriving that aided one to master the affects, assume responsibility to meet quotidian necessities and exercise timely renunciations to seize opportunities appropriate to one's person.

[26]Bell, 116.
[27]HA VIII, 468. Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre

Art & Science as a Goethean Art of Living

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this work seeks to show that what ultimately sets Goethe's art of living apart and warrants a comprehensive analysis of it, is his fruitful contextualization of ancient philosophical practices in his two principle occupations of life, namely natural scientific inquiry and artistic practice. Science and art in many ways became the principle medium through which Goethe practiced an art of living, whereby he learned to manage the passions, secure self-authority and obtain self-knowledge through them. Goethe never ceased to maintain that engagement with activities such as botany and sketching served an important therapeutic function of moderating his passions, helping him to endure life's hardships and offering him untold joys. Moreover, given his autodidactic manner of acquiring scientific know-how, Goethe developed a repertoire of techniques designed to achieve mastery over his skills of observation, transforming himself into the ideal instrument of scientific inquiry. He likewise strove to become a connoisseur of the fine arts, equipping himself with autonomous aesthetic judgment to develop an authoritative command of art reception. Indeed, both the arts and sciences constitutively depended upon rigorous training conducive to apprehending the world in specific, attuned ways that constitutively altered and shaped the practitioner, investing him with the authority to adequately evaluate the objects of natural inquiry and aesthetic appraisal. Finally, natural inquiry and art reception came to serve as the very vehicles through which Goethe reflected on himself, where in acquiring a command of observing natural and art objects, he discovered important facets of his self-identity.

At the heart of Goethe's occupation with the arts and natural sciences, lay his execution of self-transformative exercises in observing natural organisms and artworks, that rejecting the conventions of observations prevailing in his day, paved the way for a new form of engagement

with them. Goethe thereby reinterpreted the two dominant scientific and artistic preoccupations of his times, namely the development of natural scientific classification and the attempt to objectively ground aesthetic judgment, by approaching them through spiritual methods that significantly altered the terms in which they were originally conceived. He demonstrated that spiritual exercises involving ascertaining the limits of the will or disciplining the passions need not be exercised exclusively as ends in themselves, but were amenable to integration into learning processes aimed at acquiring specific kinds of scientific or artistic know-how. Moreover, requiring lengthy, rigorous schooling that involved repeat attempts and trial and error, science and art were ideally suited for the practice of a general expertise of living that cultivated ethical habits such as moderation, objective detachment and holistic modes of apprehending reality. By thus assimilating the philosophical tenets of ancient spiritual exercise to reconceptualize natural taxonomy and art reception, Goethe demonstrated the continuing relevance of an ancient art of living. Far from involving the simple acquisition of technical skills specific to their disciplines, the practice of science and art could be made part of a greater apprenticeship to life, offering new domains within which to forge and cultivate ancient philosophical virtues aiding in the general conduct of life.

Introduction of Chapters

Within the context of the threefold aims of demonstrating the affinities of a Goethean art of living with an ancient philosophical way of life, explicating its features and suggesting how it takes on a new guise under the rubric of Goethe's natural scientific and artistic practices, I initially turn to an exposition of Pierre Hadot's conception of ancient philosophy. Given that the art of living is a phenomena with ancient origins, an adequate understanding of it requires

historical contextualization. I therefore set the stage for my inquiry on Goethe's art of living by offering a highly general overview of Pierre Hadot's account of ancient philosophy as a way of life. I elaborate Hadot's historiographical approach in order to examine the character of ancient philosophy, examining his principle thesis that it was largely exhausted in the practice of 'spiritual exercises' aimed at transforming the self through adopting a new perspective on reality. My discussion concludes by identifying some of the historical forces that led to the demise of this existential conception of self-reformative training. Having thus elaborated Hadot's view of the nature of ancient philosophy as a practical art of living, I attempt to demonstrate how Goethe's conception of philosophy has much in common with this vision. Throughout my discussion, I seek to expose the striking convergence between ancient philosophical practice and Goethe's philosophical mode of existence. I utilize Hadot's treatment of a specific tradition of ancient philosophy, namely the Hellenistic and Roman as evinced in Epicureanism and Stoicism, to analyze the function of two fundamental spiritual exercises, attention to the present and a cosmic perspective on existence, which I take to be the most influential practices shaping Goethe's way of living. Finally, I sow the seeds for the subsequent three chapters presenting Goethe's therapeutic, natural scientific and artistic practice during his journey in Italy, by demonstrating the way in which the *Italian Journey* as a text operates spiritually and exhibits features that define the ancient literary genre of spiritual writing.

In Chapter two, I demonstrate how Goethe's journey in Italy exhibited important attributes of the ethical dimension of an ancient art of living by exploring his practice of spiritual exercise as a therapeutics of the soul. Indeed, the ancients believed that human adversity stemmed from subjugation to debilitating passions such as insatiable desires and unfounded fears that led one astray from one's appropriate ends and made one blind to real, substantive

needs.[28]Within this context, I read the Italian journey as documenting a therapeutic convalescence that delivered Goethe from a taxing tenure as a high ranking political administrator in the Weimar Duchy. Progressively realizing the need to liberate himself from values diametrically at odds with his own spiritual development, Goethe strove to rectify a state of inauthenticity that neglected his artistic abilities. He did this throughout the course of his travels by cultivating a certain indifference to temporal goods including stature and reputation, renouncing a work ethic that disowned the present by systematically deferring satisfaction to the future and discharging himself of obligations to sacrifice private to public interest. In thus embracing a therapy of the passions, he attempted to eliminate regrets of having neglected the figural arts and appease an unrequited desire to undergo serious training in it, while remedying his inability to cope with failure and his compulsive need to prematurely enjoy the fruits of his poetic talents without investing undue labor. Goethe effectively embarked upon a purgative process, expelling self-defeating tendencies to rebuild the contours of his selfhood anew. But while his deployment of self-help strategies served to liberate him from self-imposed forms of suffering, I argue that his ultimate cure lay in deriving health from Italy's classical ground. Perceiving the robust solidity of ancient architectural foundations and the technical virtuosity of constructions built according to nature's lawful purposes, Goethe strove to assimilate their harmony, unity and consequence to cultivate a sound temper needed to defeat a pathology of negative passions and revive his warped senses. Likewise, in witnessing Greco-Roman mural paintings, artifacts and funerary monuments evincing images that embraced the profound tragedies as well as the untold joys of human existence, Goethe was inspired to adopt such an attitude of unconditional commitment to life, dubbing it 'classical health.' Indeed, artistic vestiges

[28]Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*: *Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 83.

of the ancient world not only inspired him to unequivocally accept life's trials and tribulations in absolute allegiance to existence, it compelled him to consecrate himself to the present in order to make the most of life's passing moments. Goethe thereby showed himself a practitioner of a therapeutic art founded on inuring him to life's pain and suffering and giving himself over to its rudimentary sources of joy to categorically embrace the deliverances of the present.

Chapter three investigates the way in which Goethe adopted and transformed spiritual exercises in the context of his natural scientific inquiry in Italy. I argue that Goethe essentially revived an ancient form of lived physics through the practice of spiritual exercises in natural observation designed to probe the polarities constitutive of environmental conditions as well as a biological impulse towards self-enhancement. Indeed, Goethe made abundant recourse to procedures and perspectives underwriting ancient philosophy, whereby his approach to nature was importantly embedded in a pantheistic worldview, involved the assumption of a quintessentially ancient attitude of wonder and reverence before the spectacle of nature and made use of an ancient mode of observation wherein the observer sought to apprehend natural phenomena by bringing his perceptual faculties into accord with natural laws and processes. Within this context, I demonstrate that the principle motivation informing Goethe's natural investigations in Italy was to find an alternative to the then prevailing Linnean taxonomic system which he deemed artificial and ill adapted to the perpetually changing, heterogeneous nature of Mediterranean flora and fauna. Rejecting Linnean classifications of organisms based exclusively on surface features that neglected consideration of their internal developmental forces and dynamic character, Goethe sought an alternative method that took essential factors into account to determine the similarities uniting and the differences separating them. To this end, he cultivated a mode of observation premised on organizing organic particulars in specific ways to

engender a higher perspective that brought out their relatedness as a function of a common form. I attempt to show that such an enhanced vision corresponded to something akin to the ancient spiritual exercise of a cosmic consciousness that apprehended empirical entities from a higher, universal perspective. I explicate the way in which Goethe took on board the Kantian notion of an intuitive judgment that established a synoptic view on discrete particulars to disclose an intuition of their universal form, as well as the Spinozan idea of achieving a God's eye perspective, 'sub specie aeternitatis,' that enabled one to grasp the universal essences of individual phenomenon. By creatively combining these two perspectives, Goethe developed his own variant of a cosmic consciousness, attaining a universal intuition of the essence of natural organisms, which he referred to as a prototypical phenomena or 'Urphänomen.'

Chapter four analyzes the Italian journey from the perspective of Goethe's apprenticeship in the figural arts, elaborating his practice of spiritual exercises in the production and reception of artworks. Here, I initally treat his art of travel as consisting in the practice of a rigorous form of perceptual training based on diverse exercises in observing classical artworks. I demonstrate how, in rejecting educative travel predicated on superficially surveying each and every available renowned work on display in Italy, Goethe developed a distinctly self-formative mode of travel, laboring on himself through visual exercises designed to acclimate him to a select class of art objectsin order to fashion a new visual organ equipping him to intuit their essential forms. Once again, Goethe's self-reformative efforts occurred in the context of his dissatisfaction with prevailing notions of judgments of taste in the fine arts. Persuaded that the production and reception of art depended upon forging self-sufficient modes of aesthetic appraisal that depended on schooling the sensuous cognitive faculties rather than reliance on theoretical doctrines or artistic authority, he devised a set of aesthetic exercises designed to establish a direct, first-hand

estimation of art that nonetheless claimed universality. Borrowing from Alexander Baumgarten's aesthetics to draw out the self-formative character of Goethe's aesthetic exercises, I explore Goethe's techniques of probing the polarities conditioning artworks, whether the real and ideal or historical and ahistorical, while examining his engagement in aesthetic exercises in art production that served to reconcile oppositions such as inner and outer, whole and part to achieve a heightened synthesis. By engaging in a dialectical process of viewing art while producing artworks unifying oppositions, Goethe succeeded in achieving an enhanced intuition of their artistic form that ultimately grounded the objectivity of his aesthetic judgments.

My reading of the Italian journey endeavors to illustrate that Goethe's realization of a thoroughgoing change in his apprehension of reality in order to effectuate a radical transformation of the self that ultimately issued in knowledge of nature and art coincides with an ancient philosophical way of living. Drawing on ancient philosophical resources to re-contextualize them in the practice of natural scientific inquiry and art reception, Goethe modified and molded his faculties of perception. He thus came to see the world from a higher, all-encompassing perspective, permitting him to intuit the unity of natural organisms and obtain a sense of their similarity and difference without making recourse to categorial concepts. In the arts too, the achievement of a synthetic perspective facilitating an intuition of the fundamental forms uniting and differentiating related yet distinct works, allowed Goethe to appraise art without the application of theoretical criteria. By practicing an art of living in which he adapted his sensuous cognitive apparatus to disclose the essence of art and nature, Goethe reanimated the possibility of living a philosophical mode of life in the ancient spirit, demonstrating its versatility as a craft premised on the development of capacities equipping one to enhance the quality of an

array of practices irrespective of their character. The following chapters endeavor to explicate this novel vision of an art of living, illustrating its enduring pertinence and exhibiting the ways in which Goethe was faithful to the ancient idea of the philosophical way of life.

Chapter 1 Ancient Philosophy as an Art of living

"Gedenke zu leben"[1]

This work seeks to demonstrate that Goethe was a practitioner of philosophy as an art of living in the ancient spirit. Such an undertaking is inspired by the classical philologist and philosopher Pierre Hadot's groundbreaking account of ancient philosophy. According to Hadot, ancient philosophy, far from a scholarly domain of study concerned to resolve theoretical impasses by devising systematic arguments more or less removed from the concerns of everyday existence, consisted in an unmistakably existential form of training aimed at assimilating practical expertise to acquire a particular worldview committing one to the pursuit of self-cultivation. The principle objective of the practitioner of ancient philosophy lay in incorporating rules guiding behavior that reflected a specific set of values designed to prepare him to direct his quotidian affairs effectively and bring them into harmony with the ways of the world. The achievement of a seamless correspondence between his adopted values and everyday modes of conduct percipitated a dramatic change in his perspective on reality that led to a reevaluation of how best to live in accordance with it. Philosophy thus amounted to the cultivation of an art of living premised on the endeavor to live better by effectuating a radical reorientation towards the world and with it a metamorphosis of one's selfhood.[2]

If the ancient understanding of philosophy centered on an uncontestably practical register of experience that repudiated contemplation or reasoning detached from the concerns of daily living to focus rather on altering fundamental attitudes and behaviors to ameliorate the character

[1]WA I, 23, 198. Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre

[2]The reader will note that there are two prominent alternative visions of philosophy as a way of life; the idea of practicing an aesthetics of existence (self-fashioning as auto poesis) to give one's life a certain style as put forward by Michel Foucault and the notion of fashioning a literary persona as advanced by Alexander Nehamas in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. A third, closely related theme, the therapeutic dimension of ancient philosophy, conceived in close analogy with medical practice, is elaborated by Martha Nussbaum, in her work, *Therapy of Desire,* where she discusses an art of living premised on the medicine of the soul and the need to educate affectivity.

of ordinary existence, Hadot's conception of ancient philosophy as an art of living importantly rests upon the notion of "the *exercise* of a life."[3]Hadot claims that in espousing concrete practice rather than the study of or reflection upon how to live well, the ancients ultimately enjoined the aspiring philosopher to labor on himself. Such work on the self entailed fulfilling a regimen of practical exercises centered on incorporating rules aiming to eliminate erroneous beliefs and combat inappropriate affective responses in order to replace them with rational judgment, controlled responses and disciplined modes of conduct. The guiding intuition behind the mobilization of such practical exercises was that an exclusively intellectual grasp of rules was insufficient to elicit substantive behavioral changes and engender a dramatically new perspective on reality. Moreover, in order for rule-guided behavior to become a reliable response, it had to be practically worked out and translated into concrete behavior, where its permanent assimilation could only be guaranteed through completing a rigorous and interminable process of hands-on exercise. The ancients designated the intense laboring on the self capable of inducing a fundamental change in one's perspective, 'askesis,' a notion connoting 'exercise,' 'practice,' and 'training' in conformity with a certain ideal.[4] Hadot in turn dubbed these exercises, 'spiritual exercises,' that, effecting not only the mind but also the body, involved both the physical and psychic assimilation of rules until new attitudes and responses became second nature. The full-fledged embodiment of rules represented for the ancients the philosopical task par excellence, ultimately demanding a lifetime of unceasing exercise in the effort to achieve mastery.

Hadot believed that purged of its outmoded aspects and reduced to its essentials, an ancient spiritual way of life enjoining the practice of self-transformative exercises in accordance

[3]Arnold Davidson, introduction, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* by Pierre Hadot (Oxford; New York: Blackwell, 1995) 29.
[4]Maria Antonaccio, "Contemporary Forms of Askesis and the Return of Spiritual Exercises," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*18 (1998): 70.

with behavioral ideals could be rehabilitated within the precincts of contemporary life. Ascertaining the universality and continuing relevance of certain existential attitudes and rules of living that held sway in ancient philosophy, he claimed that the practices espoused by the Hellenistic schools in particular could still serve to improve the quality of human existence. Hadot thereby singled out Stoicism and Epicureanism as representing "two opposite but inseparable poles of our inner life: tension and relaxation, duty and serenity, moral consciousness and the joy of existing,"[5]which he deemed particularly amenable to recuperation. Convinced that the spiritual exercises promoted by these respective schools held the potential to enhance modern man's way of living, he envisaged the possibility of productively rehabilitating them. Whether it be the Stoic's endeavor to bring his conduct into sync with nature and to achieve a universal perspective on things or the Epicurean's attempt to pare down desires to return to the basic pleasures of existing, such exercises could be of considerable benefit to modern existence.[6] Indeed, Hadot further claimed that the tradition of ancient spiritual exercises had never completely disappeared from the horizon, having been implicitly carried on in the work of various authors including Montaigne, Nietzsche, Thoreau and Wittgenstein, the writings of whom provide a point of departure for the task of renewing an ancient art of living. Among such reappropriations of a spiritual way of life, Hadot accords Goethe a particularly salient place within the historical trajectory of spiritual practice. Having authored a work, *N'oublie pas de vivre* : *Goethe et la tradition des exercices spirituels*, that meticulously examines the way in which Goethe espoused spiritual training in the ancient philosophical meaning, Hadot maintains that his example importantly paves the way for further restorations of spiritual practice.

[5]Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 35.
[6]Hadot, 34.

Central Claim & Methodology

Against the backdrop of Hadot's account, the central thesis of this work is that Goethe resuscitates philosophy as an ancient art of living through embedding a self-transformative way of life premised on the practice of spiritual exercises within an entirely new cultural context. Like Hadot, I see Goethe as having adopted spiritual execises in the vein of the Hellenistic philosophical schools. But my account can be importantly distinguished from his in that my fundamental objective is to demonstrate that Goethe's retrieval of spiritual exercises transcends their historical origins by finding their proper expression in the prevailing scientific and artistic concerns of the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. If Hadot attributed the waning of philosophy as a spiritual practice in part to the disappearance of its original cultural context and the institutional structures supporting it, I argue that Goethe discovered emergent disciplines within which they could develop and thrive. In reappropriating the notion of spiritual work on the self by embedding it in the fields of natural scientific investigation on the one hand and the production and reception of art on the other, Goethe responded to what were arguably the two salient scientific and artistic preoccupations of his day, namely natural scientific classification and the cultivation of aesthetic judgment. He thereby reconceptualized these activities as performable exclusively provided the practitioner constitutively altered his perspective on the world and significantly modified his behavior in commerce with natural organisms and with works of art. My analysis accordingly attempts to work out a Goethean conception of philosophy as a self-transformative practice of spiritual exercises by demonstrating how it acquires a new purpose and impetus through integration into the natural scientific and aesthetic preoccupations of the late 18th century. I not only explicate the specific logic of Goethean spiritual exercises, I examine the ways in which Goethe modified their original

meaning through devising innovative natural scientific and artistic variants. In so doing, my approach complements Hadot's project of tracing inheritances to elicit specific Goethean reappropriations of ancient spiritual exercise, whereby I focus on elements of Goethe's own distinct making, demonstrating how he retrieved the ancient tradition to constitutively re-work it. Goethean spiritual exercises are an experimental construct that is renegotiated across natural scientific and artistic contexts, whereby in exploiting the specificities of the taxonomy of living organisms and the cultivation of judgments of taste, Goethe not only reoriented the scientific and artistic practice of his times, he breathed new life into the ancient conception of philosophy, reanimating a practical art of living.

My elaboration of a Goethean philosophical practice in the vein of the ancient tradition of spiritual exercise also importantly differs from Hadot's, in that while his account draws preeminently from Goethe's fictional and poetic oeuvre, my analysis focuses almost exclusively on a select autobiographical work, the *Italian Journey*, to which Hadot makes only passing reference. Drawing from a text that documents Goethe's two year stint of uninterrupted natural scientific and artistic activity in Italy, I utilize the Italian Journey as a case study to shed light on the essential features of Goethe's rehabilitation of an ancient art of living. I thereby attempt to demonstrate that Goethe pursued a new way of life in Italy by adopting a normative perspective that differed significantly from his indigenous values, customs and habits. Moreover, the mainstay of his efforts lay in his conception of a host of original spiritual exercises designed to alter and modify the form and function of his sensuous-cognitive perceptual faculties. In devising such a repertoire of exercises, Goethe adapted himself to Italy's exotic natural endowment and its exceptional artistic patrimony, endeavoring to disclose the fundamental forms inhering in them. My primary intent and purpose thus lies in elucidating how Goethe's practice of novel spiritual

exercises, predominantly centered on transforming visual perception, function to engender spiritual transformation and to argue that new meaning can be given to philosophy conceived as an art of living by assimilating his approach to the arts and sciences. Indeed, an interpretive approach probing his journey's spiritual dimension significantly alters the compass of our understanding of his natural scientific and artistic activities in Italy by revealing the empirical rootedness of his subsequent morphological writings and his promotion of classical aesthetics. Indeed, Goethe's development of a science of morphology, together with his uncompromising defense of classicism are the direct consequence of the concrete practices of observation, selection and production that constituted his spiritual practice in Italy.

Outline of this chapter

This chapter begins by setting the stage for my interpretation through situating my argument in the ancient philosophical tradition by way of an abbreviated recapitulation of Hadot's conception of ancient philosophy. This is necessary not only to familiarize the reader with the original conception of ancient spiritual exercise, but to distinguish it from pedestrian conceptions of an art of living, currently in widespread circulation, designating a self-help regimen of diet, physical exertion and meditation designed to attain happiness and well-being. My conviction is that by dehistoricizing the notion of an art of living, mainstream contemporary culture misconstrues and trivializes the ancients more weighty and profound conception. Indeed, the idea of a laborious regime aimed at bringing one's behavior into systematic accord with a new normative worldview by assimilating rules of conduct instilling specific habits and competencies put to the test over a lifetime, is alien to the common contemporary understanding of an art of living. Moreover, popular conceptions, systematically do away with the idea of

realizing principled forms of conduct demanding considerable self-exertion and a high threshold of commitment to approximate ideals beyond the reach of the common lot. Finally, standard accounts fail to acknowledge that the rules governing an ancient art of living are not ones that allow for selective appropriation but are throughgoing, designed to permeate the practitioner's entire way of being.[7] An art of living premised on altering the whole of life and not just some inadequate aspect of it, is only realizeable provided that rules are comprehensive, intended to be practiced in all domains of existence at every instant without cessation.[8] Given the exacting, all-encompassing character of an ancient art of living, the modern conception not only misleadingly domesticates the ancients' spiritual agenda, it reduces it to an enterprise focusing on a limited profile of concerns and competencies that are driven neither by the requirements of conforming to rules nor governed by a difficult to attain ideal. The considerable divergence between the conventional understanding and its ancient antecedents thus calls for a cursory summary of ancient philosophical practice as Hadot conceived it, permitting me to contextualize my analysis of Goethe's resuscitation of an art of living in the ancient spirit. In thus setting the parameters for my discussion, I seek to demonstrate that while in some ways modern and innovative, Goethe's art of living ultimately evinces remarkable fidelity to the ancient conception.

Once I have furnished the reader with Hadot's historiographical reconstitution of ancient philosophical life as an art of living, I draw on the entire corpus of Goethe's writing in order to demonstrate the extent to which his understanding of philosophy dovetails with this ancient vision. I reconstitute Goethe's specific view of philosophy, elaborating his understanding of the ancient tradition in order to draw out a fundamental convergence of perspective. My motivation for doing so is to avoid suspicions that my interpretation of Goethe's ethic of philosophy as an art

[7]Schmid, Wilhelm. *Schönes Leben? Einführung in die Lebenskunst* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2000) 32.
[8]Hadot, 265

of living in the ancient spirit was peripheral or intermittent, belonging exclusively to an isolated period of his travels in Italy and to demonstrate that it is consistent with his attitude throughout the tenure of his existence. My treatment is catholic and I have taken certain liberties, drawing from diverse periods of Goethe's life to collect together his insights thematically rather than chronologically. I thereby offer an extremely general account designed to show what I take to be deep-seated kinships and affiliations between Goethe's mode of living and the ancient philosopher's form of life. This serves at once to hone in on Goethe's conception of philosophy and to lay the groundwork for my subsequent interpretation of his philosophical way of life in Italy.

Having thus established a general contextual framework of Goethe's take on philosophy and his allegiance to a specifically ancient tradition of a practical art of living, I examine two key ancient spiritual exercises, the affirmation of the present and the view from above issuing in a cosmic consciousness, to demonstrate how Goethe creatively reappropriated them. I analyze these two exercises in some depth because they are arguably the most important ancient spiritual exercises informing Goethe's art of living. Goethe's practice of the former illustrates the extent to which a central precept of ancient philosophy, namely the necessity of being mindful of the immediate present, places him firmly in the tradition of ancient philosophy. The ubiquity with which it surfaces in his literary works, maxims and reflections and correspondence, not to mention the various nuances it assumes, is testament to its forming a constitutive element of his fundamental ethos. Meanwhile, Goethe's practice of a view from above issuing in a cosmic perspective is particularly significant because it serves as an example of his particular retrieval of an ancient spiritual exercise to develop an unconventional form of natural scientific and artistic practice. By illustrating the way in which the exercise of the view from above and its correlate of

a cosmic consciousness pervades Goethe's engagement with the arts and sciences, I elucidate its preeminent role in his highly original conception of a practical art of living.

In the final section of this chapter, I make a case for singling out the Italian Journey as the fountainhead and paradigm of Goethe's mode of living based on the systematic practice of spiritual exercise. To do so, I interrogate the textual authority of the *Italian Journey*, attempting to demonstrate that it conforms to criteria defining the genre of spiritual texts. Here, I initially exhibit the way in which it is itself the product of spiritual exercise. I then show how it operates at a methodological level in ways that parallel ancient spiritual manuels guiding philosophical practitioners towards spiritual transformation. Finally, I elaborate on the text's rhetorical dimension to further indicate how it conforms to spiritual purposes.

I. Philosophy as a Way of life

Pierre Hadot's Conception of Ancient Philosophy as Spiritual Exercise

Pierre Hadot's reinterpretation of the philosophical tradition of antiquity importantly rests on a historiographical approach that examines philosophy's original, cultural context. Hadot probes philosophy's developmental trajectory in order to identify the conditions that promoted it and percipitated its eventual decline. Through an exhaustive excavation of ancient philosophical practices, he discovers that one of the defining features of its philosophical culture was the construal of philosophy as a concrete way of life rather than a theoretical enterprise involving speculation on metaphysical questions or the elaboration of systems explicating the workings of the natural universe. Ancient philosophy was, at its essence, premised on the cultivation of existential attitudes and modes of behavior designed to promote a certain kind of living. Far from

privileging the prerogatives of pure thinking, it was foremost a practical activity that depended on the practitioner's embracing a select worldview defined by specific values stipulating adherence to a demanding set of rules. Within such a context of philosophy conceived as an existential enterprise of radical self reform, Hadot traces its historical evolution, illustrating the way in which a form of life predicated on living out a set of fundamental beliefs was progressively superseded by philosophy concieved as a domain of critical study and reflection largely detached from the concern to live in an exemplary fashion.

In order to understand the original intent and purpose of ancient philosophy as one that made no principled distinction between philosophizing and daily living, it is necessary to briefly examine what was meant by living philosophically. Once again, the central concern of the individual aiming to live philosophically was one of undergoing training for life that placed rigorous existential demands on him. Here, philosophical training was never undertaken for the exclusive purpose of exercising the intellect to acquire knowledge with which to resolve eternal questions or devise arguments provoking interpretation, critique and counterargument. Rather, philosophy was practiced foremost with any eye to appropriating know-how (savoire vivre) teaching one how best to live. For instance, in the case of the practice of ancient physics, the inquirer's objective was not to discover the structure of nature for its own sake, but to become apprised of the real scale and import of his occupations seen from nature's perspective and the true place he occupied within the natural universe. The inquirer thereby came to realize that in a boundless world governed by all-pervasive natural laws, where human desires and fears were of little if any consequence, rather than futilely resist lawful necessities, he was better off bringing his will into conformity with nature's inescapable ways. Hence, the very idea of drawing up systematic explanations of natural phenomena that afforded no prescriptions for how to conduct

oneself in relation to the natural world, bearing little impact on everyday life, proved fundamentally alien to ancient philosophy. Whether it be physics, logic or ethics, philosophy was foremost a practical affair concerned with improving man's way of life.

While the ancient philosopher was singularly preoccupied with the business of how to live, he was far from observing the run of the mill conduct of life. On the contrary, he sought to break with mainstream society, permanently isolating himself from the customs and habits of the masses.[9] Insofar as he sought to convert to a way of life foreign to and essentially irreconcileable with conventional lifestyles, he strove to lead his life according to a select normative worldview that required him to bring his beliefs and values in strict conformity with it.[10] Here, he might commit his allegiance to any number of philosophical worldviews, the values and doctrines of which were far from monolithic and homogeneous. Indeed, several alternative schools of philosophy existed, the respective followers of which represented a specific form of life defined by its own ideal of wisdom.[11] Each school enshrined its conception of perfection in the person of a sage who incarnated an unrealizeable transcendent ideal. The remote, virtually unreachable status of the sage reflected the exacting standards set by a given school's vision of exemplary conduct, while simultaneously underscoring the need for a lifetime of dedication to self-reform, the pursuit of which was infinitely more important than its ultimate fulfillment.[12]The ancient philosopher thus possessed a twofold objective; he attempted to shed the manners and customs of ordinary men and tirelessly strove to approximate the virtually inaccessible ideal of the sage.

If the philosophical apprenticeship thus began by electing a school and converting to its designated lifestyle, the trajectory of the philosopher's training was rigorous and systematic.

[9]Hadot, 57.
[10]Hadot, 58.
[11]Hadot, 59.
[12]Hadot, 57.

Here, a large part of his endeavor involved subjection to a regimen of self-reform that consisted in eradicating erroneous beliefs and valuations that distorted his perception of the world. The principle means of rooting out false belief occurred through internalising a set of rules of living or 'vitae dogmata' guiding everyday conduct.[13] Such rules of living were instrumental in modifying the content and structure of belief, whereby their permanent appropriation demanded dedicated, lengthy exercise in which failures and recommencements were unavoidable and even necessary.[14] The practitioner in turned embraced the authority of rules of living as a repository of truth largely immune to contestation; the point of philosophical practice being to appropriate dogmas rather than to dispute their meaning or efficacy. The practitioner of philosophy thus adhered to doctrinal truths, bringing his conduct into conformity with them without necessarily questioning their substantive content. But if ancient philosophical practice was ultimately premised on the assimilation rather than the critical exposition of rules of living, Hadot elaborates the specific procedure and methods promoting the realization of its way of life. At the heart of the ancient philosophical tradition, lay the practice of what Hadot terms 'spiritual exercises.' Despite the modern connotations of the term 'spirituality,' spiritual exercises were not necessarily religious or mystical in nature; they were spiritual insofar as they involved man's entire spirit which encompassed the intellect, imagination, sensibility and will.[15] As diverse practices that comprehended a range of self-transformative activities drawing on mental, physical and ethical capacities, they implicated the practitioner's entire existence. Among the most well documented spiritual exercises were research, investigation, reading, listening, attention, self mastery, indifference to indifferent things, meditations, therapies of the passions and the

[13]Hadot, 58.
[14]Hadot, 265.
[15]Davidson, 21.

accomplishment of duties, each of which stipulated conformity to one or more doctrinal rules defining its proper execution.[16]

Whilst encompassing an enormous breadth of activities that varied considerably in nature and tenor, the practice of spiritual exercises followed a common procedure. Establishing a kind of dialogic relation to himself, the spiritual practitioner deployed techniques of self-persuasion that were intended to fundamentally reorient his behavior. The attempt to comply with rules was ritualized, typically entailing their preemptive invocation at the start of the day to reinforce committment, while demanding a review of behavior each evening to monitor errors in execution and gauge incremental progress. Through a process of perpetual recall and reactivation, the practitioner rigorously applied rules to varying circumstances of life, assimilating them into his being to make them a habitual part of his conduct. To this end, essential dogmas were formulated in the most condensed, succint fashion imaginable, often taking the form of pithy, striking sayings that facilitated their retainment in memory.[17] Hadot thus claims that philosophical theory in the Hellenistic and Roman periods was not comprised of comprehensive analytical treatises but "reduced to a... highly concentrated nucleus, capable of exercising a strong psychological effect and easy enough to handle so it might always be kept close at hand."[18]Moreover, the rules informing spiritual exercise were intended to be applicable to all domains of thought and action, so as to lend the practitioner's behavior a certain coherence and consistency. Once appropriated, they empowered him to instantaneously accommodate to changing conditions without deliberation. But while it was important to depend upon deep-seated, reliable responses, flexibility had to be maintained to prevent conduct from degenerating

[16]Hadot, 85.
[17]Hadot, 267-268.
[18]Hadot, 267.

into unthinking, mechanical reflex. Maintaining the proper behavioral orientation was thus a never-ending undertaking, requiring a lifetime of vigilant exertion.

That ancient philosophy's emphasis lay foremost in the practical aspect of exercise is further illustrated by the place occupied by textual production. While a philosophical school's fundamental dogma might be committed to written form, discourse that merely transmitted a ready-made body of abstract knowledge was relatively unheard of. This is because the authoring of discourse was subordinate to the daily practice of behaviorally assimilating rules of living. Moreover, given that fundamental dogmata never preceded concrete practice, arising exclusively from their capacity to ameliorate man's quality of life, their everyday practice was necessarily prior to their written transmission. Once experience confirmed the efficacy of certain rules and doctrines, they might, though they needn't be, codified as the designated means of realizing a given philosophical school's worldview.[19]Within this context, Hadot responds to common critiques levelled against ancient philosophical works by modern day commentators, claiming that they turn a blind eye to the realities that shaped ancient discourse. Citing the presence of textual inconsistencies and contradictions lending ancient texts an unsystematic character, modern commentators often called into question the ancients' capacity for logical exposition, systematic argument and thematic unity. Hadot refutes such claims through a meticulous, exegetical examination of the form of ancient discourses, revealing the way in which textual inconsistencies were owed to the specific constraints under which a given text was written. While the corpus of ancient discourses had to comply with certain rhetorical codes, they ultimately emerged in concrete circumstances of everyday use within the precincts of a philosophical school. Such schools, operating foremost through oral rather than written

[19]Hadot, 30.

instruction, adapted discourse to varying conditions in order to elicit responses from pupils with divergent requirements occupying differing stages of philosophical training. The necessity of conveying fundamental doctrine in pedagogically effective ways, permitting a certain latitude for improvisation that accommodated to heterogeneous endowments and responded to variable circumstances, inevitably led to textual irregularities. By Hadot's lights, such textual anomolies merely served to corroborate the fact that ancient philosophical discourses were dictated by the requirements of practical utility rather than doctrinal consistency, such that pedagogical necessities took precedence over their coherence as a body of teachings.[20]Given the primacy of practice, while the exceptional philosopher might, upon becoming a master of a school, decide to formulate discourse for the purpose of educating his followers on how to meet life's exigencies by adopting know-how developed in lieu of his espoused worldview, his principle function was not to author discourses but to serve in the capacity of an exemplar and mentor. The foremost concern was that his mode of existing provided a touchstone that could be emulated by his adherents, whereby furnishing written instruction facilitating the approximation of his exemplarity remained secondary. Seen within this context, modern philosophy, resting almost exclusively on the solitary authorship of written theories not necessarily representative of the author's daily conduct, proves fundamentally at odds with ancient philosophy's aspired ends of exemplary living, in which the routine expression of philosophical precepts in action proved infinitely more significant than their textual inscription.

Against the backdrop of the institutional framework of a philosophical school of practical training, ancient spiritual exercises fulfilled an array of diverse functions, whereby they were in large part conceived as a response and remedy to the predicament of human suffering. The

[20]Hadot, 105.

ancients saw human anguish as an affliction born of unregulated passions, wherein the self was harassed by unobtainable desires or tormented by illusory anxieties. This called for the scrupulous surveillance of passions and desires liable to deleteriously influence belief. One method of disciplining the affects involved getting clear about what lay within the purview of one's will in order to cultivate indifference to things beyond human control. By eradicating misconceptions about what was subject to human influence to attain a 'true' interpretation of events, the practitioner was led to recognize that misfortune often arose from causes entirely beyond human influence, making it pointless to permit affects like anxiety, distress or fear to dictate behavior.[21] An alternative strategy, conceived to combat tyrannical desires, entailed acknowledging their unnecessary, superfluous character in order to reorient oneself towards elementary needs and the simple pleasures of living. Rules of living were thus underwritten by logical rationales intended to fundamentally modify beliefs so as to curtail the effects of destructive affects. Indispensable to altering behavior in ways facilitating rational confrontation with diverse situations, they aided in defeating tendencies that undermined the capacity to effectively surmount difficulty, while helping to forge resilience towards adversity to prepare for life's unexpected contingencies. Hadot thus invokes the metaphor of the self as a citadel, which never caught off guard and prepared to meet any and all types of exigencies, was seemingly invulnerable to life's changing fortunes.[22] Spiritual exercises thus involved an important self-therapeutic dimension aimed at reforming irrational responses colored by unfounded fears and unruly desires to make the practitioner impervious to their debilitating consequences.

Beyond the acquisition of mechanisms designed to effectively meet life's trials and

[21]Hadot, 83.
[22]For a more detailed perspective on this idea, see Pierre Hadot. *The Inner Citadel: the meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (Cambridge: Harvard UP: 1989).

tribulations, a crucial dimension of spiritual exercises involved the practitioner's adoption of a universal perspective on the world. This implied attempting to transcend subjective particularity to replace anthropocentric with physiocentric ways of seeing reality. The aim was to cultivate an impartial and detached viewpoint on events, so as to become accustomed to seeing things in their objective universality. The attempt to overcome individual particularity amounted not only to suppressing personal perspectives, but ascending towards a genuinely universal or 'cosmic' consciousness approximating a bird's eye view on reality that permitted one to perceive the world in and of itself. As Hadot puts it, "the individual raises himself up to the life of the objective spirit; that is to say, he re-places himself within the perspective of the Whole."[23]The attainment of a cosmic viewpoint demanded replacing habitual ways of apprehending reality through human interest and instrumental purposes with a detached, universal point of view that led the practitioner to reevaluate his position in the world, apprising him of his own finitude such that his thoughts and actions came to assume a different weight and significance.

In thus furnishing a picture of the original character of ancient philosophical life, Hadot's central objective lay in probing the historical transformation of philosophy as an existential expertise designed to spiritually guide its practitioners to ameliorate their quality of life to an academic discipline severed from the concerns of everyday living. In tracing the progressive erosion of an ancient tradition charged with providing individuals with the capacity to adapt to diverse circumstances in order to live in harmony with their surroundings, to an esoteric domain of study divested of an existential function, Hadot identified several important historical changes. Among the most salient was the ascension of Christianity's influence on philosophy, which led to

[23]Hadot, 82.

the subordination of ancient practices to revealed theology.[24] Indeed, once theology came to claim an exclusive monopoly over truth, philosophy's role became secondary, largely serving to rationalize religious dogmas. For example, Aristotelian logic came to provide the concepts needed to explain the viability of biblical doctrines such as the Trinity. But beyond instrumentalizing its conceptual resources, Christianity ultimately dispensed with the practical dimension of ancient philosophy, developing its own scholastic way of life to place spiritual learning in opposition to everyday existence. Later, the rise of the medieval university and its development as an independent institution in the early modern age, spawned the emergence of a professional cadre of professors charged with the transmission of philosophical thinking as specialty knowledge, which further served to exacerbate the philosopher's retreat from the world at large. Finally, the Enlightenment percipitated a dramatic shift, where notwithstanding the fact that philosophy regained its own as a premiere activity, it established itself as a purely theoretical discipline. Early modern thinkers strove to propagate a new philosophy modeled on a scientific paradigm governed by epistemic methods stipulating detached modes of research and inquiry that segregated the demands of learning from living. In an effort to found a new science of thinking as a vocation of its own, philosophy was purged of its existential dimension. The consequence of such ruptures between philosophy and daily life, was a waning demand for its existential know-how. Indeed, the ancient philosophical school was replaced by religious and academic institutions much more attenuated from the mundane concerns of living. The beneficiaries of a training in the service of life became less and less visible within society, so that no longer living reminders of an exemplary mode of existence, the philosophical form of life was deprived of its social function and progressively condemned to obsolescence.

[24]Hadot, 270.

Hadot concludes that the contemporary conception of philosophy as a theoretical undertaking divorced from life has so thoroughly permeated common consciousness, that an important ancient tradition of philosophy based on exercises in assimilating rules of life to benefit everyday existence, has all but been forgotten. Persuaded that the idea of philosophizing had to be understood in its former context of an art of living, he reminds his readers that philosophy originally developed from out of a unique constellation of factors that marked its character as a repository for promoting the good life. At its essence, it was charged with the task of promoting an itinerary of practical exercises designed to equip men with concrete abilities aiding them to overcome vulnerabilities and meet common dilemmas in constructive ways. Moreover, rather than proliferate technical treatises filled with recondite jargon addressed to elite specialists, it transmitted doctrines intelligible to all orally in the institutionalized setting of a school charged to respond to the existential needs of a diverse student body. Hadot thus concludes that if Christianity and Enlightenment skepticism had been the agents of ancient philosophy's fateful decline, new movements and institutions had to be found not only to retrieve and renew its atrophied practices but to recuperate a lost ideal of wisdom that still held the potential to enhance human life.

Goethe's conception of Philosophy

Like the ancients, Goethe valued philosophy only insofar as it aspired to ameliorate man's quality of life, furnishing the resources to alter and improve it. His well known remark, "Grau, teurer Freund, ist alle Theorie, und grün des Lebens goldner Baum,"[25]is typical of his outlook prioritizing the prerogatives of life. Indeed, Goethe was in many ways at odds with a native

[25]HA 3, 66. *Faust*, Studierzimmer (2038-39).

culture steeped in a tradition of theorizing about existence. He maintained that the Germanic penchant for excessive abstraction served merely to make the living of life more onerous:"Die Deutschen sind übrigens wunderliche Leute! – Sie machen sich durch ihre tiefen Gedanken und Ideen, die sie überall suchen und überall hineinlegen das Leben schwerer als billig."[26] Goethe's misgivings were largely a function of German philosophy's tendency to disengage from everyday human concerns, whereby he objected to what he took to be a culturally specific phenomenon of thinking at the expense of living. Unambiguous about the purpose of life being life itself and an amelioration of its conditions, he insisted: "Der Zweck des Lebens ist das Leben selbst."[27] He went so far as to claim that philosophical pretensions to knowledge were not necessarily in the service of life: "Erkenntnis Baum ist nicht der Baum des Lebens."[28] Despite living in an era characterized by an efflorence of German philosophical thought, Goethe steered clear of a form of existence he deemed unduly preoccupied with abstract reasoning that effectively strayed from the imperatives of everyday living.[29]

Goethe saw the philosophy of his times as particularly prone to estrangement from life in virtue of its preoccupation with insoluble metaphysical questions. Persuaded of the futility of conjecturing about issues that intrisically defied human explanation, he exclaimed, "Die Natur Gottes, die Unsterblichkeit, das Wesen unserer Seele und ihr Zusammenhang mit dem Körper sind einige Probleme, worin uns die Philosophen nicht weiter bringen."[30] Far from justify endless speculation, metaphysics betrayed the limits of human reason, such that Goethe enjoined a form of healthy resignation. Moreover, if the culture of metaphysics was spiritually bankrupt, it was

[26]GG 6, 134. Gespräche mit Johann Peter Eckermann, 6. Mai 1827
[27]WA IV, 11, 21. Brief an Johann Heinrich Meyer, 8. Februar 1796
[28]J. W. Goethe, *Goethes Poetische Werke Vollständige Ausgabe* vol 4. ed. Liselotte Bäuerie Lohrer (Stuttgart: J.G. Cottasche Buchhandlung 1891) Aus Byrons Manfred 1072
[29]For an unparalleled account of Goethe's approach to philosophy in the spirit of the ancients see Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Goethe und die Philosophie," *Gesammelten Werke* 9: Ästhetik un Poetik II. Hermeneutic im Vollzug (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1993): 56-71.
[30]GG 7, 148. Gespräche mit Johann Peter Eckermann, 1. Sept 1829

also prone to encouraging a pernicious form of proselytization, obliging man to dogmatically defend articles of faith that did more harm than benefit. Goethe thus responded to the metaphysical sermonizing of his friend Friedrich Jacobi, "Dich hat Gott mit der Metaphysik gestraft und dir eine Pfahl ins Fleisch gesetzt, mich hat er mit der Physik gesegnet."[31]For Goethe, the antidote to the sanctimonious pretensions of metaphysics was the practice of physics, the robust realism of which, kept man's sights firmly fixed on worldly phenomena.

Goethe was exceedingly skeptical of the proliferation of ideas originating from two philosophical quarters that dominated the German cultural scene of his day. He rejected Idealism, which increasingly proved an esoteric domain of study confined to academic circles, and Romanticism, that appeared predicated on the cult of the individual aspiring to unknown forces contrary to human existence. Idealism's tendancy towards metaphysical abstraction, frequently couched in inscrutable rhetoric, made philosophy an abstruse discourse unintelligible to the layman. Worse yet, was the rise of its Romantic adherents who seemed to preach a new religion encouraging a flight into metaphysical transcendence promulgating the search for nebulous, otherworldly ideals opposed to reality. For Goethe, philosophy became suspect the moment it endorsed a perspective that ran contrary to ordinary intuitions and discouraged engagement from the task of living. The risk lay in the temptation either to feebly retreat from the world, content to subsist on ivory tower speculation, or to disdainfully opt out of life persuaded of the futility of engaging with mundane existence. Even those philosophers who insisted on the practical relevance of their precepts, too often failed to convert them into efficacious modes of living. Goethe claims,

Wollte man aber dagegen die Philosophen beschuldigen, daß sie selbst den Übergang zum Leben

[31]WA IV, 7, 212. Brief an Jacobi, 5 Mai 1786

> nicht sicher zu finden wissen, daß sie gerade da, wo sie ihre Überzeugung in Tat und Wirkung verwandeln wollen, die meisten Fehlgriffe tun und dadurch ihren Kredit vor der Welt selbst schmälern, so würde es hiezu an mancherlei Beispielen nicht fehlen.[32]

Wary of the philosophies of his day because of their poor track records of bridging the gap between reflection and quotidian living, Goethe was convinced that philosophical thinking had to be avoided insofar as it lacked bearing on the question of how to enhance everyday human existence.

Beyond his scruples against academic, armchair philosophizing, Goethe's other principle objection to philosophical theorizing was the damage it wrought to the integrity of the subject. With its emphasis on analytical dissection and logical deduction, discursive philosophy seemed to contradict ordinary forms of subjectivity and philosophical analysis stipulated severing mental operations that Goethe had taken pains to unify. He thus lamented the artifice of compartmentalized, isolated capacities: "die Philosophie wollt mich keineswegs aufklären. In der Logik kam es mir wunderlich vor, daβ ich diejenigen Geistesoperationen, die ich von Jugend auf mit der größten Bequemlichkeit verrichtete, so aus einander zerren, vereinzelnen und gleichsam zerstören sollte, um den rechten Gebrauch derselben einzusehen."[33] Privileging separation over integration, prevailing philosophical methods violated the harmonious unity of the human thinking apparatus, tearing asunder faculties that ought to have remained combined in wholeness. Goethe thus concluded that he ultimately lacked the proper constitution for philosophical theorizing: "Für Philosophie im eigentlichen Sinne hatte ich kein Organ."[34]

Further disapprobation stemmed from the asymmetry Goethe perceived between subject and object rooted in the nature of critical philosophies. While crediting Immanuel Kant for

[32]HA 12, 119. Winckelmann
[33]HA IX, 248. Aus meinem Leben, Dichtung und Wahrheit Zweiter Teil
[34]WA II, 11, 47./ HA XII, 25. Einwirkung der neueren Philosophie

ascertaining the link between nature and beauty, the sage of Königsberg was not immune to Goethe's criticism owing to an undue privileging of the cognitive subject of knowledge: "Kantische Philosophie, welche das Subjekt so hoch erhebt, indem sie es einzuengen scheint."[35] While not unaware of the dangers of the opposing school of dogmatic empiricism, conceding that he himself had once been prone "von einem steifen Realism und einer stockenden Objektivität,"[36]Goethe was nevertheless suspicious of an overbearing subjectivism in which the object seemed to go missing.[37] After tireless efforts to mediate subject and object, he ultimately concluded: "Ich danke der kritischen und idealistischen Philosophie, dass sie mich auf mich selbst aufmerksam gemacht hat, das ist ein ungeheurer Gewinn: sie kommt aber nie zum Objekt....; dieses müssen wir so gut wie der gemeine Menschenverstand zugeben, um am unwandelbaren Verhältnis zu ihm die Freude des Lebens zu genießen"[38]Expending considerable efforts to valorize the object, Goethe accorded it primacy both in his thinking and his practical orientation.

But despite the drawbacks of philosophical movements of his day, Goethe repeatedly insisted that philosophy was in some measure necessary for life. He unequivocally maintained: "Dencke als Philosoph, und so mußt du dencken wenn du in der Welt glücklich seyn willst..."[39] Goethe was presumably referring to philosophy in the spirit of the ancients, informed by a eudaimonistic aspiration of promoting the good life through human flourishing. All too aware of the gap between the ancients and the moderns, he insisted that unlike the thinkers of his times, ancient philosophers would never have countenanced the segregation of the living of life and critical reflection upon it. He maintained that confronting the task of living had once been part

[35]FA I, 24, 435./HA X, 539. Erste Bekanntschaft mit Schiller
[36]HA 2, 325/ MA 8.1:494. Brief an Schiller, 13 Januar 1798
[37]WA IV, 13, 19. Brief an Schiller, 13 Januar 1798.
[38]WA IV, 49, 81. Brief an Christoph Ludwig Friedrich Schultz, 18 September 1831
[39]WA IV, 1, 59. Brief an Wilhelm Karl Ludwig Moors, 1 Okt 1766

and parcel of donning the appellation of philosopher: "Lebt man denn aber überhaupt noch in diesem Zeitalter? der Stoiker, der Platoniker, der Epikuräer, "jeder muß auf seine Weise mit der Welt fertig werden; das ist ja eben die Aufgabe des Lebens, die keinem, zu welcher Schule er sich auch zähle, erlassen wird.""[40]Regardless of which philosophical school he belonged to, the ancient philosopher's central task was that of contending with reality and not of providing lofty rationales or pedantic justifications for it. It mattered little what specific normative allegiances he harbored, as long as he sought to bring his behavior into conformity with his select worldview, embracing philosophy as a concrete way of living.

Far from providing recipes for success, ancient philosophy could only present exemplary forms of life, such that it was up to the practitioner to determine how to organize the content of his existence to fruitfully assume them. Goethe claimed:

> Die Philosophen können uns ihrerseits nichts, als Lebensformen darbieten. Wie diese nun für uns passen, ob wir, unsrer Natur oder unsern Anlagen nach, ihnen den erforderlichen Gehalt zu geben instande sind, das ist unsre 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.[41]

The philosopher developed his dispositions, assimilating external influences to make his behavior coincide with his designated worldview, whereby the challenge lay in adapting his particular circumstances to lend them appropriate form. Indeed, for Goethe, the adoption of a philosophical form of life, far from an effortless undertaking, proved a veritable test of commitment, whereby one either succeeded in mastering it to place it in the service of existence, or one perished for lack of fit, unable to bring the real conditions of one's actions and responses into sufficient accord with it.

If living philosophically involved incorporating a form of life, Goethe took his cue from

[40]GG 4, 343. Erzählungen von Johann Daniel Falk, date uncertain
[41]GG 4, 343. Erzählungen von Johann Daniel Falk, date uncertain

the ancients, espousing the practice of assimilating rules to guide his daily conduct. He insisted that the characteristic feature of his mode of existing was precisely one in which he adapted to the exigencies of the world through adherence to behavioral rules: "Mein ganzes inneres Wirken erwies sich als *lebendige Heuristik*, welche ich, eine unbekannte und geahnte *Regel* anerkennend, solche in der Aussenwelt zu finden und in die Aussenwelt einzuführen trachtete."[42] Attuned to the reciprocal relations of self and world and their mutual implication, Goethe endeavored to synthesize rules for living in order to forge habits of perception, thought, judgment and action that appropriately responded to reality. This is consistent with his remonstrations against philosophy conceived as the mere appropriation of knowledge. He insisted, "Übrigens ist mir Alles verhasst, was mich bloss belehrt, ohne meine Thätigkeit zu vermehren, oder unmittelbar zu beleben."[43]Goethe deemed thoughts that were not derived from the business of living and that were not amenable to being integrated into the service of life, fundamentally useless: "Mit Gedanken, die nicht aus der tätigen Natur entsprungen sind und nicht wieder aufs tätige Leben wohltätig hinwirken...ist der Welt wenig geholfen."[44] The proper way to conceive of philosophy was as a practical exercise of assimilating rules intended to animate and enhance activity in the world. Indeed, Goethe's conviction of the need to adopt rule guided behavior as part of an art of living is corroborated by his poem *Lebensregel*, which not only thematizing a range of ancient spiritual dogmas helping to meet life's exigencies, but also exhibits a compact poetic form conforming to the pedagogical mode of instruction specific to spiritual exercise. *Lebensregel* enumerates concise rules that could be invoked from memory to daily impress them upon one's behavior. Goethe's succint poetic rendering of quintessential

[42]BA 18, 520. Maximen und Reflexionen
[43]WA IV, 13, 345. Brief an Schiller 19 Dez 1798
[44]HA XII, 397. Maximen und Reflexionen

ancient dogmas suggests that he recognized the importance of a wisdom furnishing simple, unambiguous directives, requiring little if any interpretation that called for assimilation through the labor of ritualized practice.

Goethe conceived the philosophical task of assimilating rules of life into everyday conduct in much the same terms as the ancient practice of ascesis or rigorous work on the self aimed at acquiring new behavioral habits. Here, he was persuaded that while humans possessed certain predispositions, they had to be sufficiently developed to achieve completion as full blown capabilities: "Fähigkeiten werden vorausgesetzt. Sie sollen zu Fertigkeiten werden. Dies ist der Zweck aller Erziehung...Dies ist auch der Gegenstand der Prüfung."[45] Indeed, nothing was gained from the passive reception of rules, such that neglecting the toil of applicative exercise left one bereft of genuine skills: "Überhaupt lernt niemand etwas durch bloßes Anhören, und wer sich in gewissen Dingen nicht *selbst tätig bemüht*, weiß die Sachen nur oberflächlich."[46] Assimilating an expertise of living thus required laborious, daily work on the self to replace misguided evaluative beliefs instilled by common upbringing with habits promoting self-enhancing activity. This was no simple undertaking because real change was difficult to instigate and ingrained predispositions were not easily eradicated. Goethe unambiguously maintained, "Man verändert sich weniger, als man glaubt, und die Zustände bleiben sich auch meistens sehr ähnlich."[47]In order to effectuate a genuine transformation of the self, rules of life had to be continually reactivated in the face of life's endless diversions, temptations, and obstacles. Goethe thus envisaged an arduous process of repeat attempts aimed at appropriating rules of guidance to endow them persisting form. A constitutive part of this undertaking involved subjecting his

[45]HA VI, 278. Die Wahlverwandtschaften 1. Teil 5. Kap. Brief des Gehülfen.
[46]GG 8, 26. Gespräche mit mit Eckermann 21 Feb 1831
[47]HA VIII, 66. Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre Erstes Buch Sechstes Kapital

conduct to constant surveillance. He related his efforts to live up to behavioral rules through spiritual bookkeeping: "Eine tägliche Übersicht des Geleisteten und Erlebten macht erst, dass man seines Thüns gewahr und froh werde; sie führt zur Gewissenhaftigkeit; Fehler und Irrtümer treten bei solchen täglichen Buchführung von selbst hervor..."[48] Cultivating new dispositions through the travail of incorporating rules to redress errors and deficiencies, Goethe believed that appropriating new patterns of behavior often occurred mediately through laboring on an activity which was, at one and the same time, a laboring on the self: "Doch man wendet seine Zeit immer gut auf eine Arbeit die uns täglich einen Fortschritt in der Ausbildung abnöthigt."[49] Indeed, the execution of a rule-guided task amounted to work on the self because it habituated one to mastering rules to bring activities to successful completion.

But while Goethe was persuaded of the importance of occupying oneself with activities in a mode of exercise that aided in assimilating various rules of living, he had definate notions about the proper mode of going about training. Harboring deep-seated reservations about man's capacity to exercise himself appropriately, he initially recommended commencing with simple tasks with proximate objectives in which the means to the aspired ends were already familiar and ready-at-hand. He furnished an explanation for such a mode of proceeding in his Bildungsroman, *Wilhlem Meister*:

> Der Mensch ist zu einer beschränkten Lage geboren; einfache, nahe, bestimmte Zwecke vermag er einzusehen, und er gewöhnt sich, die Mittel zu benutzen, die ihm gleich zur Hand sind; sobald er aber ins Weite kommt, weiß er weder, was er will noch was er soll, und es ist ganz einerlei, ob er durch die Menge der Gegenstände zerstreut oder ob er durch die Höhe und Würde derselben außer sich gesetzt werde. Es ist immer sein Unglück, wenn er veranlaßt wird, nach etwas zu streben, mit dem er sich durch *eine regelmäßige Selbsttätigkeit* nicht verbinden kann.[50]

Goethe thus deemed it imperative to engage in focused enterprises that habituated one to the

[48]GG 10, 149. Unterhaltungen mit dem Kanzler Friedrich v. Müller, 23 Aug 1827
[49]WA IV, 13, 61. Brief an Friedrich Schiller, 10. Februar 1798.
[50]HA VII, 405-406. Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele

regular exercise of self-directed activity. This implied concentrating on a few, select domains ensuring mastery of the fundamentals that precluded half baked abilities and a circuitous path leading in every possible direction: "Allem Leben, allem Tun, aller Kunst muß das Handwerk vorausgehen, welches nur in der Beschränkung erworben wird. Eines recht wissen und ausüben gibt höhere Bildung als Halbheit im Hundertfältigen."[51] The efficacy of exercise thus depended upon the practitioner's capacity to limit himself to focusing on circumscribed undertakings. Moreover, Goethe perpetually thematized the risk of futilely expending efforts on activities inappropriate to the specific requirements of one's circumstances: "Wer tätig sein will und muβ, hat nur das Gehörige des Augenblicks zu bedenken, und so kommt er ohne Weitläufigkeit durch."[52] It was easy to get bogged down and lose one's way in misdirected efforts, particularly by pursuing endeavors that were not grounded in inherent dispositions: "Es ist nichts furchtbarer anzuschauen als grenzenlose Tätigkeit ohne Fundament. Glücklich diejenigen, die im Praktischen gegründet sind und sich zu gründen wissen!"[53] Given the risk of pursuing false tendencies or activities fundamentally unsuited to one's innate disposition, it was imperative not only to discover one's own proper ends but also to learn to apply oneself with discipline and attention. A key figure in *Wilhelm Meister* thus maintains: "Glauben Sie mir, meine Liebe, der größte Teil des Unheils und dessen, was man bös in der Welt nennt, entsteht bloß, weil die Menschen zu nachlässig sind, ihre Zwecke recht kennenzulernen und, wenn sie solche kennen, ernsthaft darauf loszuarbeiten."[54] Goethe's insistence on grounded, appropriately restricted activity thus points to his belief in the efficacy of a method exercised according to a systematic practice.

[51]HA VIII, 148. Wilhlem Meisters Wanderjahre, 1. Buch, 12 Kapitel.
[52]BA 18, 613. Maximen und Reflexionen. Aphorismen und Aufzeichnungen
[53]BA 18, 612. Maximen und Reflexionen. Aphoristmen und Aufzeichnungen
[54]HA VII, 367. Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. 6. Buch Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele

The idea of exercising the self in rule governed activity not only impacted Goethe's quotidian existence, it importantly conditioned his conception of the practice of the arts and sciences. Conceiving happiness owed to the cultivation of his innate aptitudes in analogy with artistic form-giving, Goethe maintained: "Jeder hat sein eigen Glück unter den Händen, wie der Künstler eine rohe Materie, die er zu einer Gestalt umbilden will. Aber es ist mit dieser Kunst wie mit allen: Nur die Fähigkeit dazu wird uns angeboren; sie will gelernt und *sorgfältig ausgeübt sein*."[55]Once again, the mere possession of an inborn facility for art was insufficient; only its exercise could bring it to fruition. In his poem, *Künstlers Fug und Recht*, Goethe thus invoked an artist articulating the belief that exercise was foundational in the realization of artistic endeavors: "Von Jugend auf allerlei Lust gespürt/Und mich in Allerlei *exercirt*,/Und so *durch Übung* und durch Glück/Gelang mir, sagt ihr, manches Stück."[56] But if exercise was indispensable to advancement in the arts, it was similarly a crucial component of Goethe's practice of the natural sciences. He maintained, for example that the key to mastering the science of chromatics lay in prodigious exercise: "Ferner habe ich allerlei Spekulationen über Farben gemacht, welche mir seh anliegen...Ich sehe, dass ich *mit einiger Übung* und anhaltendem Nachdenken auch diesen schönen Genuβ der Weltoberfläche mir werde zueignen können."[57]As a practitioner of natural science, Goethe frequently employed the term 'Versuch,' which implicitly incorporating the notion of exercise, denoted the iterative experiments the investigator was obliged to undertake to create infinite variations on the object of investigation to better grasp its identity. Repetitive exercise was thus the necessary precondition for Goethe's conception of scientific discovery: "Die Vermannigfaltung eines jeden einzelnen Versuches ist

[55]HA VII, 70. Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, 1. Buch, 17 Kapitel
[56]BA 1, 407. Künstlers Fug und Recht
[57]HA XI, 525. Italienische Reise, März 1788 Korrespondenz

also die eigentliche Pflicht des Naturforschers."[58] Recognizing the value of working through the trial and error of repeat attempts to systematically probe the character of natural phenomena, Goethe insisted upon setting up a series of experiments yielding a perspicuous overview on the phenomena under investigation. Only through experimentation incorporating the labor of such exercises in synoptic obsevation, could the natural investigator come to appreciate the mutual implication of subject and object, spiritually forming himself into an ideal instrument of natural inquiry capable of overcoming the division.

But if exercise was necessary to ground activity especially in the arts and sciences, many of Goethe's aphorisms also indicated his belief that exercise was the foundation of personal happiness. Goethe perpetually cautioned against a lack of awareness regarding the happiness owed to abilities won through exercise and the need to mindfully maintain them: "Genieβe also, was dir das Glück gegönnt hat und was du dir erworben hast, und such dir's zu erhalten."[59]Indeed, exercise promoted one's felicity by aiding one to remedy errors and eliminate failings so as to develop and consolidate competencies conducive to self-flourishing: "Glück ist das, welches unsere Mängel verbessert und unsere Fehler ausgleicht."[60] Moreover, activity-based exercise promoted happiness because it sowed the seeds for fruitful enterprises that held the power to transform even life's miseries: "Die Thätigkeit ist, was den Menschen glücklich macht; die, erst das Gute schaffend, bald ein Übel selbst durch göttlich wirkende Gewalt in Gutes kehrt."[61] Finally, for Goethe, exceptionally diligent exercise contributed to happiness because of its redemptive quality, emancipating one from even the fear of death: "Die Überzeugung unserer Fortdauer entspringt mir aus dem Begriff der Tätigkeit; denn wenn ich bis an mein Ende rastlos

[58]GA 16, 850. Die Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt
[59]WA IV, 20, 102. Briefe an Christiane von Goethe, 2. Juli 1808
[60]BA 18, 558. Aus Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahren. Betrachtung im Sinne der Wanderer.
[61]SW 6.1. Palaeophron und Neoterpe, Festspiel, 1800

wirke, so ist die Natur verpflichtet, mir einen andere Form des Daseins anzuweisen, wenn die jetzige meinem Geist nicht ferner auszuhalten vermag."[62]Goethe thus suggested, in characteristically ancient fashion, that consecrating himself to the ceaseless exercise of self-transformative activities was not only the fulcrum of happiness in this life, it served to guarantee a kind of immortality, inscribing him in nature's eternally self-renewing cycle of creative processes.

Beyond the premium he placed on repetitive exercise in engagement with self-transformative activities, Goethe further envisioned the process of appropriating life expertise as importantly involving a self-therapeutic dimension. Here, ancient, pagan forms of life invariably furnished an example of how to cope with life's vicissitudes. Goethe identified with a wisdom counselling restraint in the enjoyment of pleasure and the prevention of suffering from gaining ascendency over life. Claiming that this dual capacity underwrote what he termed 'classical health,' he pointed to the healthy resilience displayed by the ancients in the face of life's ever changing fortunes: "in dem höchsten Augenblicke des Genusses, wie in dem tiefsten der Aufopferung, ja des Untergangs, eine unverwüstliche Gesundheit gewahr werden."[63] Indeed, if the ancients understood the art of enjoying life, Goethe was particularly impressed by their capacity to withstand difficulty, recuperating after even the most devastating setbacks to meet life's recurring challenges:

> Aber nicht allein das Glück zu genießen, sondern auch das Unglück zu ertragen, waren jene Naturen höchlich geschickt: denn wie die gesunde Faser dem Übel widerstrebt und bei jedem krankhaften Anfall sich eilig wiederherstellt, so vermag der jenen eigene gesunde Sinn sich gegen innern und äußern Unfall geschwind und leicht wiederherzustellen.[64]

The ancients were able to effectively contend with adversity because they ceaselessly applied

[62]GG 7, 4. Gespräch mit Johann Peter Eckermann 4, Feb 1829
[63]BA 19, 483. Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert
[64]BA 19, 482. Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert

themselves to the mastery of unruly passions. Immunizing themselves against debilitating affects in order to embrace rational ways of behaving, they established a healthy resilience to misfortune, equipping themselves to combat rather than succumb to life's trials. Goethe deemed the ancient aptitude for bearing life's extreme hardships and savoring its intense pleasures, infinitely worthy of emulation.

Frequently thematizing the importance of learning to control the passions in order to live productively, Goethe's literary corpus incessantly issues cautionaries against succumbing to the dictates of the passions, whereby the reader acquires a pronounced awareness of the adverse effects that ensuing from giving them free reign. Indeed, Goethe treated the entire gamut of self-defeating pathologies, whether Werther's grievous sentimentality, Mignon's traumatic captivity to the past, Tasso's intemperance and lack of self-mastery, Ottilien's immoderate asceticism or Faust's compulsive desire. All are lifeforms prevented from leading healthy, flourishing existences, precisely because they fail to sufficiently regulate their passions. Given the pervasive menace posed by ungoverned passions, Goethe was persuaded that learning to minimize susceptibility to emotions and moderate an appetite for pleasure was integral to the practice of an art of living. He insisted: "Viele Leidende sind vor mir hingegangen; mir aber ward die Pflicht auferlegt, auszudauern und eine Folge von Freude und Schmerz zu ertragen..."[65]Hence, for Goethe, mastery of the passions was a self-imposed duty aiding one to persevere through life's interminable procession of joy and anguish.

Goethe envisaged coping with the extremes of pain and pleasure by way of a therapy of the passions founded on self-moderation. Authoring no negligible quantity of maxims enjoining self-regulation of the affects, he insisted that the failure to control them imperiled common sense

[65]WA IV, 43, 114. Brief an Rauch, 21 Okt 1827

and rational behavior: "Der Mensch ist Mensch, und das bißchen Verstand, das einer haben mag, kommt wenig oder nicht in Anschlag, wenn Leidenschaft wütet."[66]Indeed, he warned of the debilitating consequences of a disposition wanting in self-mastery that gave inordinate latitude to the passions: "Alles, was unsern Geist befreit, ohne uns die Herrschaft über uns selbst zu geben, ist verderblich."[67]The remedy lay in chastening affects and inclinations: "Ernst und Heiligkeit *mäßigen* die Lust, und nur durch *Mäßigung* erhalten wir uns."[68] The ability to restrain prodigal desires was the result of knowing how to exercise measure and temperance. For if "das Äußerste liegt der Leidenschaft zu allernächst," it was important to cultivate an ability "im ganzen immer *das Maß* zu erhalten wissen."[69] Indeed, the effective regulation of the passions through moderating responses to circumstances liable to provoke them, ultimately amounted to virtue: "Was ist die Tugend anders als das wahrhaft Passende in jedem Zustande?"[70] Thus setting store on a therapeutic strategy of adapting to circumstances through judicious regulation of the affects, Goethe saw virtue, much like the ancients, as a capacity to react appropriately to the contingencies of life through systematically restraining unruly passions.

Goethe's beliefs and perspectives on how to live life thus proved very much in keeping with an ancient conception of philosophy as an art of living. Indeed, whether it be his aversion to speculative philosophy disengaged from everyday living, his embrace of rule-guided conduct equipping him to constructively meet events, or his conviction that unruly affects had to be conquered through discipline and self-moderation, Goethe's affinities with ancient philosophy are striking. But beyond this fundamental convergence, there is further evidence that remains outstanding, corroborating his noteworthy ties to an ancient tradition of a philosophical art of

[66]HA VI, 50. Die Leiden des jungen Werther
[67]HA VIII, 293. Maximen und Reflexionen
[68]BA 18, 555 Maximen und Reflexionen
[69]SW 2, 330 Wahlverwandschaften Kapitel 17
[70]GG 6, 102. Gespräch mit Eckermann, 1827

living.

II. An ancient art of living as the practice of Epicurean & Stoic spiritual exercise

In Pierre Hadot's conception of ancient philosophy as an art of living, the spiritual practices of Epicurean and Stoic schools occupy a particularly preeminent position. Hadot privileges these two traditions given their focus on certain paradigmatic existential experiences that he feels provide the greatest resonance for contemporary culture: "I have felt very strongly that it was Epicureanism and Stoicism which could nourish the spiritual life of men and women of our times."[71]Indeed, within the historical ambit of spiritual exercise, Hadot's treatment of the Epicurean and Stoic schools is particularly suggestive when examining the influence of ancient philosophy on later, more modern proponents of an art of living, not least of all Goethe.

Notwithstanding their indisputable differences, Hadot ascertains striking affinities between Epicurean and Stoic philosophical traditions, particularly with regard to the spiritual exercises of a concentration on the present and a view from ahigh engendering a cosmic consciousness. The cultivation of attention to the present, involving a therapeutics of the passions based on adopting remedial measures against the burdens of time, reveals the essence of the ancient conception of spiritual health and well-being. Meanwhile, the exercise of a cosmic consciousness, premised on attaining a view of the world from above leading one to see various phenomena objectively for what they are, led to a dramatic revision of one's estimation of things. A comprehensive examination of the workings of these two spiritual exercises affords the reader a more focused, concrete grasp of the actual mechanisms at play in ancient spiritual practice, while laying the basis for understanding how Goethe takes on board their premises to adapt them

[71]Hadot, 280.

to his needs.

Epicurean & Stoic Therapeutics & the Exercise of a Concentration on the Present

An Epicurean therapy of the passions consisted foremost in eliminating unnecessary forms of suffering. While Epicureans identified the root of human anguish in a variety of causes, a principle source of affliction included the worries and pain engendered by unsatisfied desires. In particular, Epicureans saw desires of a particular type, namely those they qualified unnatural, such as the desire for wealth, power or fame, counterproductive to existence because of their inescapably forward looking character. They frequently caused hardship in their obtainment, induced the torment of expectation, fueled fears of failure to acquire them, and provoked worry about their eventual loss. What is more, unnatural desires were destabilizing due to their illimitable nature and prone to spiral out of proportion because of their unappeasable character. The Epicureans were thus critical of desires provoking inordinate preoccupation with the future, diagnosing individuals who lived chiefly in anticipation of fulfilling their desires so tormented by the fear of failing to realize them, that once they succeeded in obtaining them, they were unable to enjoy what they had anxiously labored to acquire.[72] Given the self-defeating character of prospective desires, corrective measures had to be taken to curb and eliminate them.

A further important dimension of the Epicurean therapy of passions involved rectifying ignorance of the true source of human happiness. In the conviction that desires only troubled man to the extent that they were artificial and unnecessary,[73]Epicureans favored a strategy of dispensing with unnatural desires to recuperate a state of satisfaction derived from life's

[72]Hadot, 223.
[73]Hadot, 222.

fundamentals.[74] This demanded a radical reorientation, accustoming one to a species of pleasure essential to life and certain to be obtained in the present.[75] It implied systematically renouncing dispensable desires and revalorizing those least onerous to obtain, relatively unadulterated by worry and most likely to procure peace of mind. Desires free from negative provocation were typically those of a stable, constant nature that lay within immediate reach, where no doubt arose as to their future satisfaction. All other desires were essentially unnecessary, eliciting anxiety due to their uncertain nature and blinding one to the basic pleasures obtainable in the present. Indeed, for the Epicurean, the simple recognition that fundamental physical needs such as hunger and cold could be satisfied without great difficulty, could furnish genuine contentment. As one commentator notes, the Epicurean became poor in desires in order to become rich by nature. Moreover, appreciating rudimentary pleasures in turn implied recognizing that nature made what was necessary to preserve existence easily obtainable, while making unnecessary things considerably more arduous to acquire.[76] The deliberate relinquishment of inessential attachments to limit oneself to pleasures continuously satisfiable in the immediate present, issued in a sense of reassurance and a feeling of gratitude towards nature. The satisfaction of necessities (commensurate to the removal of pain) thus proved itself the highest pleasure for the Epicurean because where necessities had been met, the world was revealed liberated from instrumental utility. [77] Orientation towards basic, immediately satisfiable pleasures thus served an important therapeutic function of extricating one from illusory dependence on superfluous desires to establish self-sufficiency, while awakening consciousness of life's simple joys.

The Epicurean conception of the present, within which true pleasure was attainable,

[74]Hadot, 103.
[75]Hadot, 223.
[76]Hadot, 225.
[77]Andrew Mitchell, "Friendship Amongst the Self-Sufficent: Epicurus" *Essays in Philosophy*, 2.2 (2001) : 5.

served a particularly important therapeutic function. Not only seeking to escape enslavement to desires by rendering them inessential, the Epicureans systematically avoided thoughts of previous painful experiences in order to concentrate exclusively on basic pleasures residing in the present. Assuming an attitude of calm detachment, they strove to suppress the recollection of disagreeable experiences from the past liable to provoke regret or a fear of recurrence,[78]attempting instead to bring before the mind felicitous circumstances that had recently transpired as a constant reminder of the possibility of their renewal. A further Epicurean strategy designed to induce appreciation for the value of the immediate present involved engaging in hypothetical exercises. One such example, involved attempting to live each moment 'as if' one were experiencing it for the first or the very last time.[79] The former was brought about by seeing things as if reborn, while the latter was realized through imagining one was faced with imminent death. The idea behind such exercises was that immediate pleasure and gratitude could be experienced either by entertaining the unexpected and unknown or through savoring something in the knowledge of its unrepeatable finality. Such exercises went some way to demonstrating that, given the right frame of mind, pleasure depended solely on the present. Indeed, with sufficient practice, satisfaction could be derived by habitually banishing thoughts of a disagreeable past to focus entirely on the unique value of one's immediate experiences.

If Epicurean exercises in valorizing the present served to awaken the consciousness that the present alone sufficed to experience happiness, certain measures had to be taken to ensure their efficacy. Indeed, Hadot evokes the urgency informing the procurement of immediate pleasures,[80]citing the Epicurean dictum that if man was born but once, indefinately postponing

[78]Hadot, 223.
[79]Hadot, 225.
[80]Hadot, 224.

enjoyment of the present, could potentially lead to the permanent forfeiture of the happiness obtainable within it. If the future was uncertain, then the prospect of an untimely death meant forever relinquishing felicity graspable in the present. One thus constantly ran the risk of neglecting one's immediate occupations to allow pleasure and happiness slip from grasp. [81] An important correlate to this conception of making haste to embrace the present before it was too late, was the Epicurean espousal of a specific notion of the duration of pleasure. Deeming pleasure enjoyable exclusively within the present conceived as a self-sufficient plentitude, the Epicureans believed that the quality of one's pleasure could neither be multiplied through satisfying an ever-increasing number of them nor amplified through attempting to prolong the duration of any single desire to make it everlasting.[82] Pleasure was complete at each instant, possessing a unique value, resisting magnification or prolongation.

The Stoic exercise of a concentration on the present, while sharing certain features of the Epicurean variant, was characterized by a different rationale and existential attitude. Stoic therapeutics rested on the assumption that distress and agony arose from the human propensity to pursue things unobtainable or liable to loss, and the desire to escape unavoidable misfortunes. According to one commentator, for the Stoic, suffering arose because man was situated in a universal order autonomous of the desires that moved him to seek out the inaccessible and balk at the occurrence of the inevitable.[83] In order to cope with a world indifferent to and often resistant to subjective desires, the Stoic sought to master them and accept reality's implacable intransigence. This implied recognizing that humans could obtain certain goods and avoid specific evils only insofar as they depended on the will, whilst everything else had to be accepted

[81]Hadot, 268.
[82]Hadot, 223.
[83]Daniel Desroches, La philosophie comme mode de vie chez Pierre Hadot, Encyclopédie de l'Agora, Grandes Questions, Dossier thématique, premiére version: Juillet 2011, 10.

as part of the necessary concatenation of cause and effect that made up the natural order.[84] While subjective desire and judgment lay within the purview of control, things like wealth, power and fame lay outside the will's jurisdiction. The Stoic thus exercised constant self-vigilance, subjecting himself to scrutiny in order to adhere to the fundamental rule of correctly ascertaining what did and did not depend upon the will. At the same time, he strove to adopt a radically objective perspective on reality in order to impress upon himself that events in the world were governed by unalterable, necessary laws. In so doing, he learned to occupy himself exclusively with things that depended directly on his will, while cultivating indifference towards whatever lay beyond its scope, to prevent it from becoming an illegitimate source of anxiety or desire.

The Stoic distinction of things dependent and independent of the will, was in turn applied to the temporal dimension of human life. On the one hand, the Stoic deemed it futile to regret past occurences, given their unalterable, irrevocable nature, while on the other hand, a future filled with uncertainties made it senseless to dwell on purely speculative fears and worries. As the past and future lay beyond the scope of control, to give way to regret or apprehension was to allow the passions to thrive on them at the expense of the immediate present. If the past had expired and was no longer available and the future was yet to be and unreachable, then, as the sole domain subject to the will, one was obliged to concentrate on the present.[85] Here again, the prospect of death brought to consciousness the relevance of the present, whereby the recognition that any given action could prove one's last, made one aware of the need to act without delay.[86]The Stoic thus practiced a spiritual exercise of 'delimiting the present,' whereby past and future were suspended to concentrate exclusively on the circumstances of the moment. Exerting

[84]Hadot, 83.
[85]Hadot, 227.
[86]Hadot, 229.

vigilance, resolve and self-control within the immediate precincts of life, he strove to master fleeting passions, exercise conduct fitting to actual conditions and subject representations present-at-hand to careful scrutiny. As the sole temporal dimension of life that could be influenced, efforts had to be expended to respond appropriately to the continuously renewed circumstances of the present.

For the Stoic, the key to mastery over the present depended upon bringing thoughts and actions into conformity with the reason inhering in universal nature.[87] Hadot insists that there had to be a harmonization of man's reason with the reason guiding the universe that produced the chain of causes and effect determining fate.[88] By bringing subjective possibilities into agreement with nature's course, the Stoic effectively learned to embrace everything that occurred in life as conforming to the necessary succession of events in the universe. Here, the challenge lay in learning to accept hardship and misfortune as part of the reason inhering in the cosmos. For only insofar as one succeeded in reconciling oneself with life's ineluctable necessities, achieving a genuine correspondence between the will and the scheme of the universe, could one come to participate in its overall movement in order to experience the totality of reality within the present.[89]The Stoic requirement of living in agreement with universal necessity thus implied a certain determinism that allowed for freedom to the extent that one embraced self-abnegation. Far from harboring a modern conception of self-determination that gave significant latitude to the human prerogative for volitional action, the Stoic sought to ascertain the scope of his freedom in lieu of acknowledging life's inexorable necessities. While seeking to achieve the greatest possible immunity from worldly contingency by minimizing vulnerability to various

[87]Hadot, 268.
[88]Hadot, 229.
[89]Hadot, 229.

conditions, he accepted submission to life's inescapable forces. Hence if a universally ordained reason was binding upon human reason, freedom became a matter of resolutely acquiescing to what occurred as part of the necessary arrangement of things. The Stoic thus renounced attempts to defy conditions curtailing the realm of his action, while cultivating forbearance to assume life's implacable burdens.

Despite their substantial doctrinal and attitudinal differences, there is a striking convergence of thought between Epicurean and Stoic conceptions of the value of the present. Indeed, Hadot maintains that their respective modes of comportment corresponded to two opposed and yet intertwined poles of man's inner life. The Epicurean existential attitude, characterized by relaxed detachment and serenity, found contentment in basic pleasures to entertain an uninhibited joy of existing in the present. The Stoic posture, marked by constant tension and driven by a dutiful sense of self-mastery, embraced the presence by submitting to the necessity inhering in the world. Hadot saw these contrary postures as being complementary and mutually reinforcing, whereby the inner calm and cheerfulness of Epicurean sensibilities served to temper the guarded watchfulness and disciplined resignation characteristic of Stoic comportment.

Goethean affinities with Epicureanism & Stoicism

There is a remarkable degree of common ground linking Goethe's worldview and values with Epicurean and Stoic philosophical perspectives. Notwithstanding this correspondence, my intention is by no means to claim that Goethe was at bottom a Stoic or Epicurean. Conversant with the main doctrines of Epicurean and Stoic philosophy, he practiced an art of living informed by their vision of existence, though never becoming an adherent of either school and selectively

drawing from their respective teachings to constructively orient his manner of living.

Goethe construed Epicureanism largely as a repository for practical wisdom aiding in the living of everyday existence. Particularly drawn to its therapeutic dimension, he explained how his tireless efforts to approximate the Epicurean facility for incorporating pain had not been without success: "Ich habe diese Zeit her ohne Schmerzen gelebt und und habe also nach Epikurs Lehre mich über nichts zu beklagen, doch bleibt ein beständiges Abwiegen unsres physischen und moralischen Betragens immer eine lästige Sache."[90]Elsewhere, upon inspecting a Roman painting recovered from the ruins of Pompey, Goethe praised a form of life evincing what he took to be an Epicurean equanimity in the face of suffering: "so ruhig und leidenlos wie die epikurischen Götter...Eben diese himmlische Ruhe, dieses Verharren in sich selbst, nicht etwas auf Leidenschaft und Sehnsucht hindeutend...gibt uns die Anschauung einer andern Welt."[91]The Epicurean made himself impervious to suffering by achieving absolute mastery over his passions in order to make himself imperturbable against them. In his *Maxims and Reflections*, Goethe further elaborated on his understanding of the Epicurean mode of subduing pain*:* "Man hat den Epikur, der ein armer Hund war wie ich, sehr mißverstanden wenn er das Höchste in die Schmerzlosigkeit legt."[92]Goethe suggests that one misunderstood the Epicurean strategy by equating it with the attempt to do everything in one's power to avoid pain. The point was rather, that in learning to permanently eliminate a feeling of deprivation for want of the possession of certain unnecessary goods, one could eradicate pain, the absence of which was tantamount to pleasure. Learning to overcome a sense of want was nonetheless far from a painless affair. For

[90]WA IV, 21, 289. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 5 Nov 1810 Goethe repeats the same thought in a letter to Voigt, albeit with a slight shift in emphasis: " Ich habe diese Zeit her ohne Schmerzen gelebt und mich deshalb, nach Epikurs Lehre, über weiter nichts zu beklagen; allein die Gebrechen mucken doch immer hier und dort." Brief an C. G. v. Voigt 1. Mai 1810

[91] Goethe. Johann Wolfgang. "Copien pompejanischer und herculanischer Gemälde von Ternite," in Ernst Grumach, *Goethe und die Antike Eine Sammlung* vol.1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1949) 813.

[92]BA 18, 667. Maximen und Reflexionen

the Epicurean then, happiness was not simply a matter of systematically avoiding pain at all cost, but of cultivating self-sufficiency to pare down unnecessary desires and habituate oneself to readily available, natural desires.

Beyond estimating its practical insights concerning the management of the passions, Goethe was acquainted with Epicureanism's physical and ethical worldview through his reception of its Roman adherents. For instance, he embraced Epicurean strains of natural philosophy as imparted in Lucretius' masterpiece, *On the Nature of Things.* Attracted by a didactic work that expounded the Epicurean philosophical system in poetic verse, Goethe discovered a non-theistic, materialist account of the physical world, wherein the right perspective on the cosmos aided in combatting fears and disturbances to aid in the rational management of pleasure and pain. He writes of his endeavor to incorporate teachings based on an Epicurean cosmology into his sphere of daily life: "(daß) ich...für meine Person an der Lehre des Lucrez mehr oder weniger hänge und alle meine Prätensionen *in den Kreis des Lebens einschließe...*"[93]Goethe became increasingly aware of the convergence between Epicureanism's physical and ethical doctrines, where knowledge of nature and physical phenomena was a source of guidance for appropriate human behavior. But despite persistent efforts to assimilate such ethical precepts, he recognized that the permanent incorporation of Epicurean modes of conduct required a lifetime of habituation. At the ripe age of seventy-nine he exclaimed: "Ich bin alt genug geworden und hab es auch doch nicht so weit gebracht, mich an die Seite der epikurischen Götter zu setzen."[94]Even in his advanced years, Goethe recognized that he had yet to master the practical wisdom of the Epicurean sage.

Goethe's interest in the ancient Stoic tradition was similarly characterized by an

[93]WA IV, 9,77-78. Brief an Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg, 2. Feb. 1789
[94]WA IV, 43. Brief an Zelter, 27 Juli 1828

overriding practical orientation. In his autobiography, he not only recounted his discovery of Stoicism at a surprisingly young age, he related the actual practice of Stoic spiritual exercises. Goethe thus clearly appreciated Stoicism's fundamental character as a practical teaching premised on shaping man's conduct through exercise. Moreover, he was impressed by its conception of virtue as a habitual mode of comportment aimed at subduing the passions. He remarked, "und da ich, um das Peinliche der Ungeduld von mir zu entfernen, mich schon öfters im Ausdauern geübt hatte, so schienen mir die Tugenden, welche ich an den Stoikern hatte rühmen hören, höchst nachahmenswerth..."[95]Stoic exercises cultivated mental fortitude and bodily resilience in order to master debilitating affects that ran counter to virtue and undermined the tranquility of the soul. Goethe initially made recourse to such exercises to combat the physical susceptibilities of adolescence: "Unter den Übungen des Stoizismus, den ich so ernstlich als es einem Knaben möglich ist, bei mir ausbildete, gehörten auch die Duldungen körperlicher Leiden."[96] But despite his initial deployment of Stoic spiritual exercises to withstand the bodily agitations of youth, Goethe's interest was far from a passing fancy. With age, its prescribed techniques of restraining the passions and enduring suffering increasingly assumed a prominent role, albeit taking on a new form of exercises in self-renunciation.

Goethe's reception of Stoicism occured by way of various practitioners, many of whom offered practical expertise in the art of renunciation. Goethe was well acquainted with the writings of Seneca and those of Marcus Aurelius, whereby he especially esteemed the teachings of Epictetus. He enthusiastically recounted, "Zu den Stoikern hingegen hatte ich früher einige Neigung gefasst, und schaffte nun den Epiktet herbei, den ich mit vieler Teilnahme

[95]HA IX, 17. Aus meinem Leben Dichtung und Wahrheit
[96]HA IX, 65. Aus meinem Leben Dichtung und Wahrheit

studierte."[97]But while having familiarized himself with Stoic worldview, he was not uncritical of certain aspects, not least of all concerning the Stoic enjoinment to renunciation. To be sure, the scholarly consensus suggests that Goethe's central concept of renunciation, figuring as a recurrent theme in his mature, fictional works owes much to Stoicist thinking.[98] But it is a mode of renunciation purged of a certain rigor provides the guiding motif of the second part of Goethe's Bildungsroman, *William Meister's Journeyman Year or the Renunciants*, while in his acclaimed novel, *Elective Affinities*, the main characters variously acquiesce to the necessity prevailing in the world, where the work's central insight is arguably a cautionary against a debased form of renunciation. *Faust*, too, is governed by the question of what it means to surrender to life's dictates, where reality's necessity insistently harasses a protagonist who refuses to renounce his desires: "Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren, das ist der ewige Gesang, der jedem an die Ohren klingt, den unser ganzes Leben lang, uns heiser jede Stunde singt."[99] Indeed, Goethe selectively employs a range of terms connoting renunciation with contrasting semantic inflections, be it 'Versagung,' 'Entbehrung' and 'Verzichtung,' to indicate the spectrum of meanings it could assume. Given his persistent appeal to the idea of resigning oneself to life's inescapable necessities, his reappropriation of a central Stoic doctrine warrants further examination.

Like in the case of Epicureanism, a Stoic ethics of renunciation was closely linked to the doctrines governing its physics. In line with the Stoic conception of a natural order governed by implacable laws, Goethe was undeniably convinced of nature's necessity: "Die Nature wirkt nach ewigen, nothwendigen, dergestalt göttlichen Gesetzen, dass die Gottheit selbst daran nichts

[97]HA IX, 221. Aus meinem Leben Dichtung und Wahrheit
[98]Paul Bishop, *The World of Stoical Discourse in Goethe's Novel 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften,'* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1999) 13.
[99]HA III, 52. Faust Eine Tragödie

ändern könnte. Alle Menschen sind hierin unbewusst vollkommen einig."[100] Moreover, if he espoused something akin to the ancient Stoic physical theory in which nature was deemed a single, unified, living whole presided over by the divine force of law governed reason, he readily embraced the notion of bringing his will into accord with it. In his comments on the *Natural Questions*, he thus praises Seneca for his categorical adherence to natural law, systematically rejecting contingency in his explanations of natural phenomena : "Was an Seneca höchlich zu schätzen ist daβ er über(all) etwas Gesetzliches anerkennt und für das seltne Streben wie (er) sich gegen alle zufällige Erklärung mit mehr oder weniger Glück auflehnt."[101] But even in Goethe's fictional works, one finds a recurring belief in the metaphysical necessity of conforming to nature's dictates, with one commentator arguing with respect to *Faust*, "in one form or another, the Erd-Geist for Goethe, is the intelligible Logos speaking to man."[102] In his *Maximen und Reflexionen,* Goethe in turn writes of Naturnotwendigkeit that the sole mode of comportment appropriate to it was dietetic submission to its inelutable ways: "Der Mensch kann ihr nicht entgehen, nicht ausweichen, nichts abgewinnen. Nur kann er durch Diät sich fügen und ihr nicht vorgreifen."[103]He similarly articulated the Stoic theme of harmonizing the will with universal nature in his 1783 poem *Das Göttliche*. Here, Goethe acknowledges nature's indiscriminate character, meting out good and evil irrespective of its object: "Denn unfühlend/Ist die Natur:/ Es leuchtet die Sonne/ Über Bös und Gute,/ Und dem Verbrecher/ Glänzen wie dem Besten/." Nature's implacable laws governed the universe and dictated men's existence: "Nach ewigen, ehernen, / großen Gesetzen / müssen wir alle / unseres Daseins / Kreise

[100]WA I, 29, 12. Aus meinem Leben Dichtung und Wahrheit
[101]WA II 52, 241. Paralipomena zur Farbenlehre
[102]Frederic Will, "Goethes Aesthetics: The Work of Art and the Work of Nature," *The philosophical Quarterly*, 6. 22 (Jan 1956): 63
[103]BA 18, 617. Maximen und Reflexionen

vollenden."[104]Indeed, one was compelled to bring one's conduct in accord with its intransigent necessity: "Heil den unbekannten / höhern Wesen, / die wir ahnen! / Ihnen gleiche der Mensch! / Sein Beispiel lehr uns / jene glauben." In thus suggesting that divine nature was the authority to which man had to defer, setting an example for him to follow, Goethe shared the Stoic assumption that man's fate was inseparable from nature's, and that the reason inhering in it served as the touchstone regulating the common conduct of human life.

While the Epicurean and Stoic themes to which Goethe adhered are far and wide, a mere cataloguing of motifs to which he subscribed is insufficient to claim that they were the locus of his art of living. In his work, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Pierre Hadot offers a more nuanced examination of the way in which the dominant preoccupations of ancient philosophy weave their way into the fabric of Goethe's works, elaborating the specific spiritual exercises practiced not only by Goethe himself, but by his fictional characters. A detailed examination of the most important spiritual exercises, namely the affirmation of the present and a view from above issuing in a cosmic consciousness, is thus in order to illustrate further fundamental connections.

Goethe's valorization of the present and its Epicurean and Stoic resonances

Among the diverse spectrum of Stoic and Epicurean spiritual exercises comprising an ancient art of living, Hadot investigated the close affinity between the ancient practice of valorizing the present and Goethe's insistent invocation of the infinite value of the present. Goethe was, by and large, a staunch admirer of the Greek propensity to uninhibitedly act within the immediacy of existence, never ceasing to hold up antique culture as one to be emulated precisely because of its acute awareness of the value of the present. He commended the ancients'

[104]FA I, 334. "Das Göttliche"

unwavering affirmation of each moment of existence, exclaiming "Mit allem Sinn, aller Neigung, aller Kraft *wirkten sie auf die Gegenwart*..."[105] Elsewhere, he insisted that the characteristic feature of the ancients was, "Jenes *Vertrauen auf sich selbst*, jenes *Wirken in der Gegenwart*."[106] Drawn to this commendable ability to engage with the present, Faust's exclamation, "*Die Gegenwart ist die einzige Göttin*, die ich anbete," is emblematic of Goethe's committment to the necessity of embracing the moment in the ancient spirit. Indeed, Hadot points to the extremely suggestive line from *Faust II*, "Nun *schaut* der *Geist* nicht *vorwärts*, nicht zurück, Die *Gegenwart* allein – ist unser Glück,"[107]to suggest that Goethe not only believed in the wisdom of orientation towards the present, but that he was persuaded that committment to it was the lynchpin for happiness.[108] Interpreting the climactic encounter between Faust, in the guise of a Medieval knight and Helen, the mythical Greek protagonist of the Trojan war, Hadot deems the meeting between two lovers and historical epochs, representative of a privileged moment that collapses past and present to unite the couple in consecration to the immediate present. In an exchange charged with meaning, Faust implores Helen to leave behind the past and assent to her unknown destiny to affirm the immediate present. Hadot suggests that Goethe appeals to the necessity of adopting a temporal stance that consisted in forgetting past burdens and future uncertainties to uninhibitedly embrace the moment. He essentially understands the Faustian summons as a quintessential expression of the ancient enjoinment to affirm the present, drawing the conclusion that Goethe espoused something akin to an ancient ethic of striving to achieve happiness through categorical adherence to the present.[109] Noteworthy is the fact that Goethe makes a Medieval knight, who is the personification of a Romantic vision of

[105]BA 19, 481. Winckelmann
[106]BA 19, 483. Winckelmann
[107]HA III, 283 Faust II, Innerer Burghof, 9381-83.
[108]Hadot, 218.
[109]Hadot, 220.

transcending the mundane present, the emissary of a call to endorse immediate existence. Meanwhile, the addressee of Faust's message, Helen of Troy, is the quintessential symbol of Greek culture, who embodies classical ideals and instinctively honors the immediacy of life. The deliberate reversal of the bearer and receiver of the injunction to affirm the present, ironically calls attention to the possibility of retrieving a long neglected ancient wisdom to reconcile opposing Romantic and Classical perspectives.

That Goethe advocated a way of life that sought to be mindful of life's immediacy is further evidenced by his many reflections on the character and significance of the present, particularly in view of what he took to be its misconstrual by his contemporaries. Concerned to rectify an understanding that he thought went astray of its ancient meaning, Goethe explains,"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 sey, darüber kommt man nicht zur Besinnung."[110]Goethe suggests that the present was taken for granted due to the false presumption that it amounted to no more than passively acceding to things seen and felt in an ever-transpiring succession of moments, rather than a discrete possibility realizable through active living at every passing instant. He insists that the moderns drifted further afield from the ancient conception by conceiving the absolute value of the present as commensurate to the real and placing it in direct opposition to the ideal: "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 durch's Reale das Ideelle gleichsam aufgehoben wird; daher mag denn wohl kommen daß den Modernen ihr Ideelles nur als Sehsucht erscheint."[111]The consequence of conceiving the present in terms of real versus ideal, was that the real became the purview of

[110]WA IV, 46, 109. Brief an Zelter 19. Okt. 1829
[111]WA IV, 46, 109. Brief an Zelter 19. Okt. 1829

banal quotidian existence, while the ideal, as the alternative to mundane everydayness, came to assume enhanced value and appeal. The moderns invariably privileged the ideal, setting out in pursuit of often illusory, unfulfillable yearnings, while allowing immediately actualizeable realities to slip through their grasp. Goethe suggests that such a conception of the present ran the risk of degenerating into a Romantic vision of life; one that fed on nostalgia for an ideal past, while hankering after an irreal, utopian future at the expense of seizing the day to lay hold of concrete happiness realizable in the present.

In order to recuperate the original, ancient meaning of the present, Goethe favored the adoption of an attitude towards time much in the spirit of what Hadot identified as central to Stoic and Epicurean philosophical traditions. Indeed, he perpetually invoked the need to extricate oneself from the onus of the past and avoid pining away for the future in order to concentrate on the immediate demands of the present. Rehearsing this theme in his poem *Einladung,* he wrote*:* "Mußt nicht vor dem Tage fliehen:/Denn der Tag, den du ereilest/Ist nicht besser als der heut'ge. Heut' ist heute, morgen morgen/Und was folgt und was vergangen,/Reißt nicht hin und bleibt nicht hangen."[112] Suggesting the wrongheadedness of passing up the present as quickly as possible in presentiment of an improved future, Goethe adjudged that no promise of a better tomorrow justified hastily disengaging from the 'here and now' to forsake it for a past already expired. But not content to simply critique a shortsighted neglect of the present, Goethe elaborated on the need to seize the present without delay in his *Marienbad Elegy*: "Stund um Stunde/Wird uns das Leben freundlich dargeboten,/Das Gestrige ließ uns geringe Kunde,/Das Morgende, zu wissen ist's verboten;/Und wenn ich je mich vor dem Abend scheute,/Die Sonne sank und sah noch was mich freute./Drum thu' wie ich und schaue, froh verständig,/Dem

[112]BA 3, 83.West-östlicher Divan, "Einladung"

Augenblick in's Auge! Kein Verschieben!/Begegn' ihm schnell, wohlwollend wie lebendig,/Im Handeln sey's, zur Freude, sey's dem Lieben;/Nur wo du bist sey alles, immer kindlich,/So bist du alles, bist unüberwindlich."[113] Goethe insists that rather than look backwards or forwards, one had to look the present straight in the eye. He betrays a sense of urgency informing the need to embrace the present by insisting that all attempt to put it off jeopardized meaningful action, joy and even love. Goethe was thus persuaded that happiness depended on a naïve lack of preoccupation with past and future that enabled one to spontaneously embrace the moment like a child who had yet to possess artificial, temporal inhibitions that retarded action. In alluding to the child as the figure most attuned to immediacy, whose innate allegiance to the present led him to embrace the moment without hesitation, Goethe suggested that man unwittingly replaced his instinctive orientation towards the present with undo preoccupation with an erstwhile past and an unknown future.

Goethe likewise frequently alluded to a typically Epicurean and Stoic attitude towards the present in his novels and dramas. In *The Sorrows of young Werther*, Goethe's protagonist, realizing the danger of allowing past ills to sabotage contentment with the present, insists that he must reform his attitude towards the past if he is to overcome his suffering: "ich will mich bessern, will nicht mehr ein bißchen Übel, das uns das Schicksal vorlegt, wiederkäuen, wie ich's immer getan habe; Ich will das Gegenwärtige genießen, und das Vergangene soll mir vergangen sein."[114] Similarly, in a moving soliloquy from his play, *Egmont*, Goethe's hero expounds upon a relation to past and future that closely resembles the reasoning employed by Stoics and Epicureans alike. Egmont emphatically exclaims, "Leb ich nur, *um* aufs Leben zu denken? Soll ich den gegenwärtigen Augenblick nicht genießen damit ich des folgenden gewiβ sei. Und diesen

[113]BA 1, 499-500. Marienbader Elegie
[114]HA VI, 7. Die Leiden des Jungen Werther Erstes Buch 4. Mai 1771

wieder mit Sorgen und Grillen verzehren?...*Scheint mir* die *Sonne heut, um* das zu *überlegen* was *gestern* war? und *um* zu rathen, zu verbinden, was nicht zu errathen, nicht zu verbinden ist, das Schicksal eines kommenden Tages?"[115]Categorically adhering to a 'vita activa,' Egmont insists that action in the present became impossible the moment one gave way to brooding over the past or speculating on the future, where heroism lay precisely in the ability to liberate oneself from the shackles of the past, while resolutely assuming one's destiny to risk immediate existence. But perhaps nowhere does Goethe more forcefully enunciate the ancient appeal to embrace the present than in his masterpiece, *Faust*. Weighed down by remorse for the past and ridden by anxieties for the future, Faust storms through life indulging one desire after another only to realize that he remains forever unsatisfied. Having vowed never to be contented with the mere present, he blindly chases after insatiable desires, neglecting all attempt to affirm the moment as a self-sufficient plentitude. Initially seeking refuge in the past, he resuscitates an ancient ideal in the specter of Helen of Troy, satisfaction with which ultimately proves short-lived. He subsequently sets his sights on the future, pursuing a grandiose vision of a land reclamation project that quickly proves chimerical. Forever caught between the mirage of past and future, Faust serves as a Goethean cautionary against man's inherent tendency to overlook and neglect the present, unsuspectingly jeopardizing his true welfare. Acknowledging his consistent adherence to the present, Georg Simmel concludes that Goethe ultimately saw an inveterate inability to affirm the moment akin to a kind of Faustian neurosis.: "Sein Lebensgefühl hatte eine unvergleichliche »Gegenwärtigkeit«, was nicht als Kraftquelle in die Leistung des Augenblicks einfloss, empfand er als einen Fremdkörper im Leben, das Sichforterbende leicht

[115]HA IV, 399. Egmont 2. Akt

als eine ewige Krankheit." Negligence of the present thus not only led to the abnegation of fortuitous opportunities, it was a symptom of impaired health and well-being.

Far from a conviction articulated exclusively in his literary corpus, Goethe's autobiographical works and letters are replete with urgings to revere the value of the present, whereby preoccupation with the past or yearnings for an unknown future were deemed detrimental to forging allegiances to life in its immediacy. Invoking the danger of dwelling on the past that diverted attention away from the task of animating the present, Goethe writes, "Es gibt kein Vergangenes, das man zurücksehnen dürfte; es gibt nur ein ewig Neues, das sich aus den erweiterten Elementen des Vergangenen gestaltet, und die echte Sehnsucht muss stets produktive sein, ein neues Bessere erschaffen."[116] Rather than allow nostalgia for former times to sap one's energies, the past had to be productively incorporated, serving as prospective material to create ever better versions of the self. Conversely, man could only extricate himself from the grips of suffering by refusing to resort to behavior resenting past injustices or regretting former failures, electing instead to rectify them by endeavoring to make them a positive impetus for productive activity in the present. Goethe ultimately concluded that keeping conscience free of past matters to concentrate on the present was indispensable to ensuring that tomorrow remained as felicitous as today: "Liegt dir Gestern klar und offen, / wirkst du heute kräftig frei, / kannst auch auf ein Morgen hoffen, / das nicht minder glücklich sei." Simmel thus concluded of Goethe's orientation towards the past: "Es ist die allgemeine Meinung, dass Goethe ein großer Vergesser war: mit dem Vergangenen abgefunden, ruhig alle Schwierigkeiten abstreifend, zu denen die Konsequenzen unserer Taten werden, alles Nachrückwärtssehen, Nachrückwärtsempfinden vermeidend, sobald es den Blick und Schritt nach vorwärts hemmen

[116]FA 37, 120.Gespräch mit Kanzler Friedrich von Müller

wollte."[117] Again and again Goethe thus reiterated the fact that he was loathe to acknowledge the past insofar as it obstructed activity allowing him to advance in life.

Seeking not only to dissuade his readers from assuming modes of comportment towards the past antithetical to living in the present, Goethe was equally wary of misdirected efforts in relation to the future. He wrote to his sister cautioning against pervasive attempts to direct its course: "Man muβ auch der Zukunft etwas überlassen."[118] Elsewhere he identied fear and hope as the two principle forces preventing humans from living in the present, polemically maintaining, "Die Hoffnung wie die Furcht sind zwei leere Wesen."[119]By fostering insecurities based on uncertainty, hope and fear were immobilizing, leading one to either submissively retreat from life or passively await it, rather than run the risk of pursuing the prevailing interests of the present. The danger lay in the temptation to subsist on empty promises or to withdraw in foreboding of unwelcome consequences, paralyzing action and squandering opportunities available in the present. As late as 1872, Goethe related his verdict on man's inability to value the present: "Weil die Menschen die Gegenwart nicht zu würdigen, zu beleben wissen, schmachten sie so nach einer besseren Zukunft, kokettieren sie so mit der Vergangenheit."[120]

If Goethe's art of living thus importantly rested on the ancient precept to attend to the present, it drew on Stoic and Epicurean methods designed to effectuate minded orientation towards it. To begin with, Goethe inscribed his committment to valorizing the present in the rule-guided practice of ancient spiritual exercises. His adherence to rules vindicating the 'here and now' is unmistakably articulated in his poem *Lebensregel*. Invoking precepts designed to grapple with life's adversities, the poem's remarkably terse presentation reads:"Willst du dir ein

[117]Georg Simmel, "Bemerkung über Goethe," *Der Morgen. Wochenschrift für deutsche Kultur*. 13 (6. September 1907): 393-395.
[118]WA IV, 20, 187. Brief an Christiane von Goethe 25. Okt 1808
[119]WA IV, 21, 122. Brief an Carl Friedrich Zelter, 30. Okt 1809
[120]GG 6, 78. Gespräch mit Kanzler von Müller, 1872

hübsch Leben zimmern,/Mußt dich um's Vergangne nicht bekümmern;/ Das Wenigste muß dich verdrießen;/mußt stets die Gegenwart genießen,/Besonders keinen Menschen hassen,/ Und die Zukunft Gott überlassen."[121]Goethe brings to bear the ancient dogmas of extricating oneself from past burdens, containing negative passions, submitting rather than nursing forebodings about the future to bring behavior in sync with natural necessity, and above all seizing happiness in the present. *Lebensregel* thus engages with the ancients' preoccupation with the temporal dimension of human life, suggesting that rule governed behavior promoting self-mastery was the key to making the most of the present.

But beyond the premium he placed on self-schooling designed to assimilate rules designating appropriate conduct towards past and future, Goethe also endeavored to acknowledge life's perpetual oscillation between pleasure and pain in order to embrace the Epicurean assent to life's joys and Stoic forbearance in the face of adversity. He insists, "Fürwahr, es wechselt Pein und Lust./Genieße, wenn du kannst, und leide, wenn du mußt./Vergiß den Schmerz, erfrische das Vergnügen."[122]Acknowledging polarity as a formative force in human life, Goethe adopted antipodal Stoic and Epicurean strategies to manage pleasure and pain. Moreover, he claimed that human nature itself was often marked by contrary Epicurean and Stoic tendencies that had to be reconciled: "Wie oft giebt es Menschen, die ihren angebornen Neigungen nach halb Stoiker und halb Epikuräer sind! Es wird mich daher auch keineswegs befremden, wenn diese die Grundsätze beider Systeme in sich aufnehmen, ja sie miteinander möglichst zu vereinigen suchen."[123]Thus convinced of the need to selectively draw on Epicurean and Stoic strategies to live in the present, Goethe creatively reconfigured their fundamental

[121]BA 1, 479-480. Lebensregel
[122]SW I, 175. Maskenzug
[123]GG 10, 345. Erzählungen von Johann Daniel Falk

intuitions to adapt them to his particular needs.

One Epicurean intuition to which Goethe increasingly subscribed in the course of his existence, was the conviction that pleasure was derivable from the simple fact of existence and its basic accessible pleasures. Applauding attempts to live modestly and relinquish unnecessary desires insofar as it was not the expression of excessive self-denial and genuinely accorded with one's nature, Goethe insisted: "jeder Mensch sollte sowohl sich selbst Enthaltsamkeit als andern Gehorsam geloben, nicht um sich immer, sondern um sie zur rechten Zeit auszuüben."[124] The practice of abstaining from desire had to be proportionate to one's nature and befitting to circumstances that genuinely called for it. But if Goethe deemed the circumscription of desire to return to life's essentials in terms of appropriateness, he also saw the enjoyment of pleasure necessitating the eschewal of prodigality. The proper enjoyment of pleasure called for moderation and measure, where one never desired more than was appropriate: "Beschränktheit sucht sich der Genießende."[125] Indeed, if the connoisseur of pleasure derived gratification from the tempered enjoyment of things of a basic nature, Goethe, like the Epicureans, was aware of the need to derive satisfaction from life's fundamentals, recognizing that the most negligible pleasures had the power to furnish genuine contentment. He thus gestured towards the artless joy of a child who needed neither reasons nor explanations to relish in commonplace pleasures: "Schmeckt doch dem Kinde der Kuchen, ohne daß es vom Bäcker weiß, und dem Sperling die Kirsche, ohne daß er daran denkt, wie sie gewachsen ist."[126] For Goethe too then, modest pleasures were those that could be entertained by virtually anyone in the immediate present. But beyond merely maintaining that simple, perpetually renewable pleasures were of the essence of

[124]HA VI, 208. Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten Die Geschichte von Ferdinand und Otillie
[125]HA IV, 246. Die Natürliche Tochter
[126]GG 8, 36. Gespräch mit Eckermann, 28. Feb 1831

happiness obtainable in the present, he also pointed to man's proverbial tendency to remain unaware of the fact that happiness lay just within reach, in close proximity: "Willst du immer weiter schweifen? / Sieh, das Gute liegt so nah. / Lerne nur das Glück ergreifen: / Denn das Glück ist immer da."[127] Happiness was not commensurate to the fulfillment of unnatural desires such as wealth, fame and power, but things so intimate and ready-at-hand that one often remained blind to their potential as a source of immeasurable felicity. "Was heisst denn Reichthum? Eine wärmende Sonne, Genieβt sie der Bettler, wie wir sie genieβen!"[128]True pleasures were precisely those most taken for granted; those which anyone could appreciate irrespective of their lot in life.

If Goethe saw a return to life's basic pleasures a prescription for happiness, he shared the sense of urgency informing the Epicurean enjoinment not to defer its procurement. There were good reasons militating against delaying the pursuit of happiness, whereby Goethe underscored the finite nature of human existence. Resisting the idea of sacrificing satisfaction obtainable in this life in exchange for compensation in another, he insisted that there was no such thing as a subsequent life that could indemnify one for abnegating the joys of this one: "Wir wollen einander nicht aufs ewige Leben vertrösten! Hier noch müssen wir glücklich sein."[129] In his play *Clavigo*, he similarly urged making the most of life's one-time opportunities, where their forfeiture was akin to madness: "Man lebt nur einmal in der Welt, hat nur einmal diese Kräfte, diese Aussichten, und wer sie nicht zum Besten braucht, wer sie nicht so weit treibt als möglich, ist ein Tor."[130]Goethe was persuaded that nothing could replace immediate earthly happiness and that there was no time to be lost in the endeavor to realize it. With the ancient dictum 'ars longa

[127]BA 1, 48. Erinnerung
[128]BA 3, 83.West-östlicher Divan
[129]WA IV, 2, 292. Brief an Auguste Gräfin zu Stolberg, Sept 1775
[130]HA IV, 261. Clavigo, Ak 1 Sz 1

vita brevis,' serving as a recurring motif in his writings, he suggested that an art of living, demanding a lengthy, sustained effort had to be taken up immediately if it was to bear fruit in the course of a brief lifetime.

The Epicurean conception of the present as a self-sufficient plentitude also strikes a chord with Goethe's thinking on the present. He writes to an acquaintance as early as 1767, "Ein Augenblick Vergnügung ersetzt tausende voll Qual."[131]Indeed, Goethe repeatedly posits the possibility of a unique, pleasureful moment annulling life's countless vexations, the most insistent expression of which is rehearsed in his *Faust*. But while indicating that a single instant of life could yield immeasurable joy, he introduced an important nuance, incorporating the notions of a healthy and pregnant moment. The idea of a healthy moment suggests the vitality symptomatic of life-affirming conduct and reflects Goethe's perception of the ancient ethos as one driven by robust, spirited engagement with mundance existence. The notion of a pregnant moment in turn points to Goethe's faith in the present insofar as it was a reservoir of possibility capable of bearing fruit. The Goethean variation on the Epicurean idea of the plentitude of the moment thus suggests that every moment is invaluable because it holds the promise of enhancing one's existence forevermore. Indeed, Goethe was persuaded that grasping hold of the moment to give it value could make it represent an eternity: "Beharren Sie nur dabei und halten Sie immer an der Gegenwart fest. Jeder Zustand, ja jeder Augenblick ist von unendlichem Wert, denn er ist der Repräsentant einer ganzen Ewigkeit."[132] In his poem, *Vermächtnis*, he further enlarges upon the thought that a single instant could come to claim eternal worth: „Wo Leben sich das Leben freut/Dann ist Vergangenheit beständig,/Das künftige voraus lebendig,/Der Augenblick ist

[131]WA IV, 1, 141. Brief an Ernst Wolfgang Behrisch, 11 Nov 1767
[132]GG IV, 308. Gespräche mit Johann Peter Eckermann, 3. Nov 1823

Ewigkeit."[133] The suggestion was that whoever joyfully occupies himself with his immediate present demonstrates a capacity to perpetually vindicate it through endowing it with value. By refusing to wallow in past disappointments, while meeting the future unencumbered by anxieties of failure, the forthcoming moment was animated in advance through the promise of its eventual fruition. The practitioner of a joyful consecration to the moment ultimately possessed the capacity to forever renew life-enhancing activity, proving himself infinitely worthy of the present to lend his existence an eternal aspect. For Goethe then, the present was a self-sufficient plentitude insofar as it was healthy and pregnant; each moment was animated through spirited activity free of inhibitions, wherein possibilities were mobilized to surpass the present and give it eternal significance.

Goethe's valorization of the present also drew on important Stoic precepts, perhaps the most important of which was the idea of bringing one's conduct in alignment with nature's necessity. Despite having seized upon a Promethean conception of unbounded freedom in his youth, with time, Goethe increasingly came to embrace the notion of complying with the natural necessity that governed the world. He thereby construed freedom as an assent to reality's objective constraints rather than an unbridled expression of subjective striving. Freedom was tantamount to a subjective imposition of the will, whereby objective acts and events in the world were autonomous and not necessarily effected by it: "Unser Leben ist, wie das Ganze in dem wir enthalten sind, auf eine unbegreifliche Weise aus Freiheit und Nothwendigkeit zusammengesetzt. Unser Wollen ist ein Vorausverkünden dessen, was wir under allen Umständen thun werden. Diese Umstände aber ergreifen uns auf ihre eigne Weise. Das Was liegt in uns, das Wie hängt

[133]BA 1, 541. Vermächtnis

selten von uns ab, nach dem Warum dürfen wir nicht fragen."[134] Indeed, if the will was ultimately subject to necessity, freedom became largely a question of interpretation, with events at times appearing subject to control and determination while at others unyielding and insurmountable. Goethe explains, "Freiheit als Unbestimmbarkeit kann es nicht geben; der Wille ist immer determiniert. Es gibt nun Motive, die wir als Hemmungen und solche, die wir als Hebungen unserer Existenz empfinden." Goethe thus embraced an essentially Stoicist determinism, where events and occurrences were often interpreted as manipulable, but were nevertheless bound by necessity. Within this context, he affirmed the need to live in accordance with the necessity inhering in reality. In his novel, *Wilhelm Meiser*, the protagonist poses the daunting question of how he ought to comprehend the cosmos and in what relation he ought to stand to it: "Was bin ich denn gegen das All?...wie kann ich ihm gegenüber, wie kann ich in seiner Mitte stehen?"[135] The conclusion he finally arrives at is one with Stoic resonances of complying with natural destiny: "Das Gewebe dieser Welt ist aus Notwendigkeit und Zufall gebildet; die Vernunft des Menschen stellt sich zwischen beide und weiss sie zu beherrschen; sie behandelt *das Notwendige als den Grund ihres Dasein*, das Zufällige weiss sie zu lenken, zu leiten zu nutzen..."[136] On the one hand, Goethe was persuaded of the world's necessity and the need to rationally comply with it, while on the other, he sought, insofar as possible, to channel and direct its contingent remainder. If it was imperative to acquiesce to life's necessities there was nevertheless room for maneuver. A figure from Goethe's novel, *Elective Affinities* explains, "daß dieser Augenblick in unserm Leben epoche mache können wir nicht verhindern; aber daß sie unser wert sein, hängt von uns ab."[137]Goethe ultimately suggests that although we have little power over the way in

[134]WA I, 28, 50. Aus meinem Leben Dichtung und Wahrheit
[135]HA VIII, 118. Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre, 1. Buch, 10. Kapitel
[136]HA VII, 71.Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre
[137]HA VI, 326. Die Wahlverwandtschaften

which a given instant of nature's course comes to influence our fate forevermore, how we bear its consequences as willing subjects, be it through actions that preserve or compromise our self-worth, remains in our hands. Goethe thus held to a belief in the need to conform to life's necessities, albeit without compromising the capacity to influence that which remained subject to determination. Towards the end of his life he remarked: "In meinen Jahren hat man *nichts weiter zu thun, als seine Existenz der Naturnotwendigkeit gemäss* nach bestem sittlichen Wissen und Gewissen fortzusetzen..."[138] But while setting store by an ethical duty to comply with necessity as best as subjectively possible, this is not to say that Goethe advocated such efforts without qualification.

Goethe's vision of conformity to nature's necessity implied the exercise of something akin to a Stoic renunciation of things that placed in jeopardy the capacity to actively engage with the present. He unequivocally declared, "Alles, was die Ausübung der sittlichen Thätigkeit hemmen oder schädigen kann, müssen wir möglichst von uns fern halten; Selbstverleugnung und Entsagung muss unsere Lösung sein." In the face of what persistently resisted one's efforts, rather than make a show of blind intransigence, Goethe favored the acceptance of human limitation. He recognized that there were circumstances which inherently resisted determination and could only be met through acquiescence. Moreover, intransigence towards things that persistently obstructed the will frequently proved self-defeating, whereas circumspect resignation could bear fruit in unexpected ways by making room for alternatives. Goethe was thus persuaded that rather than embrace resignation constructively, human nature all too often either obstinately resisted or submissively yielded to it. He maintained, "Wir Menschen haben es aber an der Art dass wir uns bald zu heftig gegen Entsagung wehren, bald aber, ohne Widerstand zu

[138]WA IV, 44, 58. Brief an Sulpiz Boisseree, 7 April 1828

versuchen, ganz gelassen uns darein ergeben."[139]Effectively meeting one's fate was neither a matter of vehement defiance nor passive submission, but a veritable art demanding the exercise of a form of renunciation that Goethe saw exemplarily exhibited in the comportment of the ancients. He insisted that they possessed, "(die) Fähigkeit zu wircken, gegenzuwircken und was mehr ist, sich zu *beschräncken*, zu *dulden*, zu *ertragen*...Alles Kernhafte das wir im Alterthum...finden."[140] The ancients were able to effectively act and react precisely because they knew when to renounce their intentions and to submit to necessity in order to make way for other possible paths of action. Goethe thus espoused an essentially active conception of renunciation wherein self-restrictive measures were taken in order to make way for viable alternatives capable of channeling activity in more felicitous directions.

Despite his insistence on the need to periodically renounce subjective possibilities to necessity, Stoicism's overly restrictive notion of what lay within the purview of man's will, met with Goethe's resistance insofar as it encouraged the privation of things wrongly deemed beyond the power of the individual. In its overeagerness to subordinate particular interests to necessity, Goethe found Stoicism guilty of an exaggerated asceticism fundamentally at odds with human freedom. Polemically exclaiming, "freien Menschen geziemt es nicht Krist oder Stoiker seyn,"[141]Goethe insisted that Stoicism undermined possibilities for self realization because of its tendency to immediately deem unnecessary things ostensibly beyond human reach. He explained of this oppressive form of self-denial, "Die stoische Philosophie ist, wie ich schon sonst bemerkte, eine Philosophie für die Armen, nämlich beruhend auf dem Abweisen des

[139]WA IV, 31, 202. Brief an Christian Gottfried Daniel Neesvon Esenbeck, 24 Juni 1819
[140]J. W. Goethe,"Vorarbeiten zu einem Deutschen Volksbuch," in Ernst Grumach. *Goethe und die Antike: eine Sammlung*. (Potsdam: E. Stichnote, 1949) 68.
[141]HA IV, 174. Götz von Berlichingen

Objekts als in nostra potestate non situm."[142]Goethe believed that premature abstention from things wrongly deemed unobtainable, ran contrary to man's intrinsic needs and impoverished his existence. He elaborated on the inherent difficulty, maintaining, "So manches was uns innerlich eigenst angehört, sollen wir nicht nach außen hervorbilden; was wir von außen zu Ergänzung unseres Wesens bedürfen, wird uns entzogen, dagegen aber so vieles aufgedrungen, das uns so fremd als lästig ist."[143] The Stoic, by too readily acceding to external causes, denied himself the requirements of his essential nature, suppressing his ownmost possibilities to assume a form of self-deprivation alien to his character. Goethe responded to the perceived failures of Stoicism by positing a form of renunciation that avoided going against the grain of one's true nature. He gestured at such self-willed renunciation with a positive inflection in his poem *Eins und Alles*: "Statt heißem Wünschen, wildem Wollen,/ Statt lästigem Fordern, strengem Sollen,/ Sich aufzugeben is Genuß."[144] Goethe thus envisaged the possibility of an affirmative art of renunciation, that far from entreating excessive privation, encouraged limitation within reason to preserve possibilities for self-realization.

While embracing the Stoic conception of submission to life's necessity, with the caveat that it refrain from taking the form of a self-defeating abstension from things integral to one's well-being, Goethe introduced a noteworthy shift in Stoicism's conception of affirming the present. The correlate to the Stoic call to sieze the present, was the injunction 'memento mori,' serving to remind man of the inevitability of death and his inescapable mortality. Convinced that man's indolence and self-satisfaction led him to neglect happiness in the present, Goethe believed that rather than oppressive reminders of his eventual demise, he had greater need of

[142]GG 2, 179. Gespräch mit Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer, 1.Aug 1807
[143]HA X, 76. Aus meinem Leben Dichtung und Wahrheit
[144]BA 1, 540. Eins und Alles

inducements to live fully and make the most of immediately available opportunities. Thus refusing to affirm the fatality of existence, Goethe adjudged the appeal to happiness a greater inducement for seizing life in the present, than admonitions of impending death arousing fear of leaving behind an unfulfilled destiny. Happiness was a real prospect that lay within reach, provided that one avoided idly waiting for it to transpire and took up the task of procuring it. Goethe similarly repudiated a Christianized variant of 'memento mori,' involving acts of self-deprivation undertaken in the hope of recompense in an afterlife. In his novel *Wilhelm Meister*, he implicity critiques figures who inure themselves of the fear of death through subordination to a life of extreme piety and devotion to charitable acts. Goethe not only adjudged such behavior self-compromising, he considered it life-negating, wherein one sacrificed the present for the sake of an unknown, transcendent future. Thus invoking his own motto of 'Gedenke zu leben' ('memento vivere'), he shifted the emphasis of the Stoic enjoinment to contemplate death in order to overcome it, to one of reminding man to embrace life in its absolute immanence and not take it for granted,

Ever mindful of the need to remember to live, Goethe also adhered to the specifically Stoic existential attitude of concentrating on the present as a task and duty necessitating fulfillment. Once again, *Faust* provides a reference, wherein Goethe writes, "Durchgrüble nicht das einzigste Geschick! *Dasein ist Pflicht*, und wär's ein Augenblick."[145]Here, the Stoic goal of embracing existence in a way that admitted no divergence between life's desires and duties, was, for Goethe, one mediated by concrete work within the sphere of daily existence. Undue preoccupation with the future in the form of yearning could be pacified through self-engrossing activity deflecting attention away from uncertain hopes to bind one to the present. Indeed,

[145]HA III, 283. Faust. Der Tragödie zweiter Teil 3.Akt Innerer Burghof

Goethe was persuaded that meaningful ever-renewable activity was the only thing that could combat the human propensity towards discontentment with life to guarantee allegiance to immediate existence. In his cycle of poems *Chinesisch-Deutsche Jahres-und Tageszeiten,* he accordingly counseled steadfast employment that kept one's sights on the present: "Sehnsucht ins Ferne, Künftige zu beschwichtigen, *beschäftige dich hier und heut im Tüchtigen*."[146]Setting store by the gratification derivable from the labor of immediate activity, Goethe incessantly called for the cultivation of new spheres of 'Tätigkeit' serving to divert debilitating affective states, be it regrets or longings, into constructive activity wedded to the present. Embracing immediate existence as a duty thus implied active engagement that labored to enhance the perpetually fleeting present. In his hommage to J.J. Winckelmann, Goethe saw the features of such a dutiful work ethic intent on valorizing the present incarnated by none other than Winckelmann himself:

> Wir finden ihn immer in Tätigkeit, *mit dem Augenblick beschäftigt*, ihn dergestalt ergreifend und festhaltend, als wenn der Augenblick vollständig und befriedigend sein könnte, und ebenso ließ er sich wieder vom nächsten Augenblicke belehren. Diese Ansicht dient zu Würdigung seiner Werke.[147]

Winkelmann made the most of each moment, embracing it through the labor of his activity. Never taking for granted opportunities arising in the present, he grasped the initiative in ceaseless travail with the arts, moved by the inspiration he derived from the successive discoveries he made. By thus committing himself to a duty to redeem the present, he succeeded in leaving behind works pregnant with meaning, eliciting eternal reverence.

Goethe thus creatively reappropriated Epicurean and Stoic philosophical precepts governing the management of the pleasure and pain informing everyday existence. Placing his faith in the efficacy of following rules and directives to animate his activity, he sought, by means of it, to attain happiness in the present. Goethe thereby construed human destiny as oscillating

[146]BA 2, 109. Chinesisch-deutsche Jahres-und Tageszeiten
[147]HA XII, 117. Winckelmann

between necessary extremes, wherein happiness was a function of navigating through life's continuous ebb and flow of joy and suffering, in alternation between work and enjoyment, mediating between the demands of the world and duties to the self. Here, the Epicurean emphasis on satisfaction derived from basic pleasures and a Stoicist submission to life's necessities through constructive renunciation, aided in cultivating the proper use of pleasure and the necessary regulation of pain. Through assimilating two contrasting modes of behavior to enhance his everyday existence, Goethe realized an ancient spiritual way of life; he achieved self-sufficiency through committment to ceaseless, fruitful activity, gained consciousness of his place and purpose in a world governed by necessity, developed a sense of serenity and gratitude towards life in the knowledge of its readily available, basic pleasures and was ever mindful of the happiness attainable in the present.

Ancient exercises in a View from above & Cosmic consciousness

If the attempt to embrace the present represented a significant pillar of Goethe's art of living, another important ancient spiritual exercise, analyzed in detail by Hadot, is the exercise of a view from above engendering a cosmic flight of the soul. This spiritual exercise required the practitioner to marshal his power of thought to attempt to visually embrace the entirety of the universe and place himself within its whole.[148] The underlying premise was that by ridding himself of the influence of the passions, his soul had the capacity to rise above earthly things.[149]The practitioner thereby attempted to extricate himself from his affects and particularistic perspective to attain universality and objectivity.[150] Ascending to the celestial

[148] Hadot, 240.
[149] Hadot, 241.
[150] Hadot, 242.

heights of the universe, he strove to visually encompass it, casting his gaze over its entirety to grasp it as a greater whole. This enabled him to achieve a higher, universal perspective from which to see things that transpired on earth, furnishing him with a new vantage point. Raised above mundane preoccupations he ultimately came to fathom the true scale of human affairs.

Within the various ancient philosophical schools, the spiritual exercise of a view from above engendering a cosmic consciousness, assumed various forms with contrasting emphases. In all schools, the attempt to spiritually elevate oneself above the world was an integral part of physics as a lived practice in which the imagination traversed the universe's extensive magnitude to ponder the mutual implication of each particular thing in everything else and to probe nature's continuous cycle of rebirths to grasp its universal essence.[151] Here, the Epicureans, with their metaphysical assumptions of an infinity of space and an infinite number of worlds, had particularly broad scope for traversing the universe. Surveying its limitless amplitude, the Epicurean was afforded the delight of plunging into an inexhaustible expanse without boundaries in order to lay nature bare.[152]The activity of scouring the universe and contemplating the infinity of space to see concrete particulars in their higher universality proved at once liberating and tranquilizing.[153]

The Stoic cultivation of a higher cosmic view brings to light yet other purposes related to the practice of a universal physics.[154] For instance, Marcus Aurelius, pursued exercises in adopting a view from above centered on attaining a genuinely physical viewpoint on things, wholly severed from subjective value judgments. By cultivating such an objective perspective,

[151] Hadot, 244.
[152] Pierre Hadot, *N'oublie pas de vivre* (Paris: Albin Michel 2008) 104.
[153] Hadot, 243.
[154] Hadot, 98.

he attempted to get at the essence of things to critically assess them.[155]To do so, he adopted a method of rigorously defining the natural objects he observed, resolving them into their constituents parts to meticulously describe them from every side, shorn of all possible concealments.[156]In the course of such a thoroughgoing analysis of the object's composition, he interrogated himself as to whether and to what extent he was dependent upon the object. The activity of physical definition thus aimed to clearly distinguish subjective judgments from the objective representation of an object. Once the decomposed object was subject to sufficient scrutiny, it was relocated within the totality of the universe's nexus of causes and effects.[157]The activity of resituating the object within a greater natural context to survey it from above brought to light the veritable place it occupied within the world.[158] Indeed, in grasping the natural object's true organization undistorted by human interests and valuations to view it from ahigh, the practitioner freed himself of an anthropocentric mode of perception and came to see particular objects from nature's universal perspective.

If ancient physics was foremost a form of natural inquiry driven by the objective of attempting to ameliorate the character of everyday existence and never an investigation of nature merely for its own sake, the spiritual effects of obtaining knowledge of nature through a higher cosmic perspective were diverse and significant. At the most basic level, surveying the natural universe from above permitted the observer to gain autonomy by learning to grasp natural entities independent of the influence of subjective affects, where they were neither a force exerting power over him nor a means with which to satisfy his needs.[159]On another level,

[155] Hadot, 244.
[156]Micel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject Lectures at the College de France 1981-82* trans. Graham Burcell (New York: Picador 2001) 294.
[157]Hadot, 197.
[158]Foucault, 297.
[159]Hadot, 234.

investigations of nature involving the acquisition of an all embracing higher perspective, consolidated the investigator's sense of unity with nature. In his *Natural Questions,* the Roman Stoic Seneca elaborated on such spiritual effects. He explained that in endeavoring to make contact with the whole of the natural universe to grasp its governing laws and processes, he came to partake in nature's very rationality. [160]Through spiritually transforming himself to internalize nature's organizing principles, he progressively ascertained that the reason informing its organization was identical with the reason that allowed him to ascertain it. The achievement of a cosmic view of the world thus engendered a critical flight from the self in which the observer penetrated nature's innermost secrets until he saw his reason in concert with nature's, eliciting a profound sense of identification with it. [161]

The Stoic variant of cosmic consciousness ultimately entailed an important ethical dimension where the attainment of a universal perspective opened up a critical perspective on human nature, bringing into view its errors and vanities.[162] By dilating the self throughout nature's infinite realm to see things from a universal perspective, the practitioner became conscious of the fact that the concerns occupying men on earth were exceedingly small and trivial.[163] Here again, the Stoic distinction of what did and did not depend on man's will came into play. In relocating human affairs in universal nature, things dependent on man's will came to reveal their ultimate insignificance relative to the necessary laws dictating the universe's eternal ways.[164] For as Hadot maintains, within the immeasurable dimension of the cosmos, human reality becomes but an anonymous, swarming mass.[165]Natural inquiry through the achievement

[160]Foucault, 281.
[161]Foucault, 290.
[162]Foucault, 105.
[163]Hadot, 266.
[164]Hadot, 245.
[165]Hadot, 245.

of a cosmic consciousness was thus self-revelatory for the practitioner, issuing in self-knowledge.

III. Goethean scientific & artistic variations on the spritual exercise of a view from above and cosmic consciousness

Goethean view from above and the intuition of a natural archetype

In meticulously surveying the appearance of spiritual exercises involving a cosmic flight of the soul to attain a view from above in Goethe's literary and poetic corpus, Hadot demonstrated the ubiquity in his thinking of the idea of a transportation of the soul engendering a universal perspective that empowered self transformation. But despite Goethe's frequent literary thematization of the exercise, where both the fictional characters of Faust and Wilhelm Meister make noteworthy recourse to it, his most detailed and illuminating account of the method occurs none other than in the context of his scientific inquiries. He elaborated the specific effects of assuming such an elevated view in his essay, *On Granite*:

> Auf einem hohen nackten Gipfel sitzend und eine weite Gegend überschauend,... In diesem Augenblicke, da die innern anziehenden und bewegenden Kräfte der Erde gleichsam unmittelbar auf mich wirken, da die Einflüsse des Himmels mich näher umschweben, werde ich zu höheren Betrachtungen der Natur hinaufgestimmt, und wie der Menschengeist alles belebt, so wird auch ein Gleichnis in mir rege, dessen Erhabenheit ich nicht widerstehen kann... Ich fühle die ersten, festesten Anfänge unsers Daseins, ich überschaue die Welt, ihre schrofferen und gelinderen Täler und ihre fernen fruchtbaren Weiden, meine Seele wird über sich selbst und über alles erhaben und sehnt sich nach dem nähern Himmel.[166]

Goethe speaks of a higher form of observing nature that transports his soul and opens up a sublime perspective on it. To achieve such a vision, he not only sought out natural elevations,

[166]HA XIII, 254.Über den Granit

scaling mountains and volcanoes, he systematically mounted towers, belfrys and other man-made monuments to gain a glimpse of the world from ahigh. But perhaps the defining feature of Goethe's practice of spiritual exercises in attaining a view from above lay in its application to his natural scientific inquiries. At several stages of observing the natural entities he investigated, he attempted to reproduce a view from ahigh on a smaller scale, intentionally ordering and arranging specimens so as to enable him to look down on a constellation of them from above. By systematically employing the technique of stepping back from a configuration of natural entities to observe it from a higher, all-encompassing perspective, he was able to intuit the essential form and features that united them. Such a higher intuition took on an epiphantic character, disclosing a universal form embracing all particular forms, resembling the revelation on nature experienced by the ancients in the wake of attaining a higher, cosmic view of particulars comprising the world.

Viewing Nature as a Whole

Goethe's practice of viewing things from above was inextricably bound up with his perspective on nature. As with the ancients' practice of physics, nature for Goethe was never merely man's environment but a universal whole of which all organic life was an integral part. Emphasizing the fundamental interconnectedness of living organisms, he was persuaded that it was incumbent on the natural inquirer to see each one as constitutively belonging to a cosmic whole:"Und so ist wieder jede Creatur nur ein Ton eine Schattirung einer grosen Harmonie, die man auch im ganzen und grosen studiren muß sonst ist jedes Einzelne ein todter Buchstabe."[167]Indeed, Goethe effectively conceived natural objects representing a microcosm of

[167]WA IV, 6, 390. Brief an Knebel, 17 November, 1784

the natural world: "Jedes Existierende ist ein Analogon alles Existierenden."[168]He thus insisted that a vision of an organic whole had to be discerned, not least, in nature's smallest manifestations: "Willst du dich am Ganzen erquicken, so muss du das Ganze im Kleinsten erblicken."[169] Notwithstanding, the apprehension of organic entities as representatives of the whole of nature was no simple undertaking in virtue of their inherent complexity: "Ein organisches Wesen ist so vielseitig an seinem Äußern, in seinem Innern so mannigfaltig und unerschöpflich, daß man nicht genug Standpunkte wählen kann es zu beschauen, nicht genug Organe an sich selbst ausbilden kann, um es zu zergliedern..."[170]The inexhaustible sophistication of organic entities called for ever new external and internal viewpoints, whereby identifying the way in which each mirrored the whole of nature turned on adopting the right perspective that kept the indissoluble unity of the universe constantly before the mind.

In an effort to do justice to natural wholes in his scientific investigations, Goethe practiced a comprehensive, peripheral view and a penetrating, in-depth view, in which he attempted to probe how a natural thing bore relations outwards to the external world and inwards within its own confines much in the vein of Stoic exercises in physical definition. Goethe emphasized the importance of representing the natural universe, revealing the affinities between his vision and that of an ancient physics: "Jeder möchte das Universum vorstellen und aus sich darstellen."[171]Such a representation occurred through "(eine) Betrachtung des Weltgebäudes, in seiner *weitesten Ausdehnung*, in *seiner letzten Teilbarkeit*."[172]Goethe thus initially took to assuming an all-embracing global view, surveying organisms within the natural world to ascertain their relations to their external environments. The observer had to take a step back to

[168]BA 18, 562. Maximen und Reflektionen Betrachtungen im Sinne der Wanderer
[169]HA I, 304. Sprüche
[170]HA XIII, 21. In wiefern die Idee: Schönheit sei Vollkommenheit mit Freiheit, auf organische Naturen angewendet werden könne
[171]GA 16, 333. Zur Farbenlehre 13, 14
[172]HA XIII, 45. Bedenken und Ergebung

gain an overview of the ways in which organic entities adapted to the natural environment they inhabited. By exploring connections with their native surroundings, he progressively became apprised of their fitting relations to the whole of nature: "Was ist doch ein Lebendiges für ein köstlich herrliches Ding! Wie *abgemessen zu seinem Zustande*, wie wahr! wie seiend!"[173]Notwithstanding, an all-inclusive view of a natural thing's affiliations to the surrounding world accounted for merely one part of the observer's efforts. Natural organisms also bore relations internal to themselves. Goethe notes, "Das geringste Produckt der Natur hat den Kreis seiner Vollkommenheit in sich und ich darf nur Augen haben um zu sehen, so kann ich die Verhältniße entdecken, ich bin sicher daß innerhalb eines kleinen Cirkels eine ganze wahre Existenz beschloßen ist."[174]Goethe was persuaded that by penetrating the inner recesses of a natural entity to probe the various relations of its constituent parts, the mindful observer could discover the ground of its true existence, whereby acquaintance with its deep structure served to disclose the measure residing within it. Hence, like Stoic exercises in physical definition that sought to get at the essence of the natural object as a whole and in its separate parts to subsequently situate it within a universal context, Goethe saw natural objects indebted to a twofold relation: one of accord with the greater world within which it was inscribed and one of agreement among the relations inhering within it, whereby such fitting outer and inner relations made living things 'Naturgemäß.'

Despite being persuaded of the need to probe nature's extensive and intensive magnitudes, Goethe leveled cautionaries against modern scientific misappropriations of both modes of observation that distorted the true relations of natural things. He warned of the deleterious effects of certain forms of scientific practice: "Die Wissenschaften zerstören sich auf

[173]WA I, 30, 142. Italienische Reise 9. Okt 1786
[174]WA IV, 8, 97. Brief an die Herzogin Louise, 12 bis 23 Dezember 1786

doppelte Weise selbst: *Durch die Breite, in die sie gehen,* und *durch die Tiefe, in die sie sich versenken*."[175]Due to a lack of measure and perspective on the veritable breadth and depth of nature, modern science propagated forms of natural investigation antithetical to its own ends. Unattentive to the real determinations intrinsic to nature's organization, it imposed human interests of systematization, control and instrumentalization. Indeed, in its comprehensive mode of surveying nature, it sought to level differences to arrive at a generic uniformity, while in its in-depth modes of inquiry, it analytically dissected and decomposed in order to consign living things to their bare elements. Allergic to such reductionism, Goethe approached nature in ways that conformed with ancient modes of natural observation, endeavoring to view organic entities from the perspective of nature as an integrated, living whole. Moreover, a view of nature that embraced its exhaustive range had to avoid erronenously bringing into connection the furthest with the nearest to attend to relations of resemblance and affiliation inhering within the continuities that characterized nature as a whole. Similarly, an infinitesmal, zeroed-in seeing was never a matter of simply resolving organic things into their constituent components, it demanded careful attention to the subordinating and coordinating relations of parts that constituted them as integrated, natural wholes.[176]

Goethe adhered to an ancient conception of physics, in which general assumptions about the nature of the universe and the laws governing it not only informed natural inquiry but compelled the investigator to bring his scientific methods in line with it. Embracing a vision of nature calling to mind ancient Stoic physical theory, in which nature was seen as a living whole with the reason immanent in it directing its development, Goethe believed that the natural universe and man were in some sense inseparable and that its governing reason served as the

[175]BA 18, 644. Maximen und Reflexionen
[176]HA VIII, 22. Inwiefern die Idee: Schönheit sei Vollkommenheit mit Freiheit, auf Organische Naturen angewendet werden könne.

touchstone for the way in which the inquirer ought to explore and investigate it. Indeed, if the Stoic sought cohere his conduct with the ordered rationality of the universe, Goethe attempted to make his mode of natural inquiry conform with it in order to disclose its essential character and workings. Here, the very fact of intensively engaging with nature led the investigator to ascertain that he was subject to the same universal laws as those governing natural organisms: "Der Mensch erlangt die Gewiβheit seines eigenen Wesens dadurch, daβ er das Wesen außer ihm als seines Gleichen, als gesetzlich anerkennt."[177]Goethe went so far as to suggest a direct correlation between the perceiving mind and the natural object, such that bringing them into correspondence enabled the observer to gain insight on nature's laws: "Es ist etwas unbekanntes Gesetzliches im Objekt, welches dem unbekannten Gesetzlichen im Subjekt entspricht."[178]Persuaded that the natural investigator's mode of knowing had to comply with nature's ways in order to carry an assurance of the truth of observed entities, Goethe pursued natural inquiry in a way that endeavored to apprehend natural phenomena from a universal perspective. Such a prospect was in turn the fruit of the practice of several spiritual exercises including observations guided by a wholistic mode of seeing natural phenomena, a participatory mode of observing physical entities that never separated from them, and a cosmic perspective deploying intuitive judgment.

Goethean precepts of natural observation guiding the observer to see phenomena from the objective whole of nature were particularly important in attaining a higher physical perspective. Persuaded that nothing in nature occured except in relation to the whole, Goethe held to the premise of never severing individual manifestations of phenomena from the meaningful context of the whole.[179]Friedrich Schiller aptly characterized such a wholistic mode of inquiry: "Sie

[177]SW 30, 458. Maximen und Reflexionen
[178]BA 18, 670. Maximen und Reflexionen
[179]Henri Bortoft, *The Wholeness of Nature: Goethe's Science of Conscious Participation in Nature* (Hudson, NY: Lindesfarne Press, 1996) 78.

nehmen *die ganze Natur zusammen*, um über das Einzelne Licht zu bekommen, *in der Allheit ihrer Erscheinungsarten* suchen Sie den Erklärungsgrund für das Individuum auf."[180]Goethe regarded organic entities and their properties as consummate wholes and not as aggregations of parts, whereby the interdependence of the parts determined how each was truly a member of and expressed the whole. He thereby insisted that the distinctiveness of different organisms was not a matter of their possession of a particular part, but rather a function of how the parts were collectively integrated into their entire makeup as a cohesive whole. Goethe was equally wary of getting bogged down by exposure to infinite specimens of a given empirical phenomena ('die millionenfach Hydra der Empirie'), the disorder and bewildering heterogeneity of which threatened to stymie the apprehension of organic totality, causing him to lose sight of the whole.[181]When confronted with such an array of particulars, he avoided isolating them, preferring to search for underlying relations and shared affinities linking them up to a natural whole, no matter how distant they initially appeared.

> In der lebendigen Natur geschieht nichts, was nicht in einer Verbindung mit dem Ganzen steht, und wenn uns die Erfahrungen nur isoliert erscheinen, wenn wir die Versuche nur als isolierte Fakta anzusehen haben, so wird dadurch nicht gesagt, dass sie isoliert seien, es ist nur die Frage: wie finden wir die Verbindung dieser Phänomene, dieser Begebenheiten?[182]

Conscientiously making recourse to association as opposed to separation and division in his investigations of nature, Goethe discovered that while bringing together entities on the basis of surface resemblances to identify underlying commonalities proved challenging, once he became accustomed to establishing the right connections, a natural totality arose of its own making:

> Bei einer jeden Erscheinung der Natur, ...man muss ...sie nicht isoliert betrachten, sondern in der ganzen Natur umhersehen, wo sich etwas Ähnliches, etwas Verwandtes zeigt: denn nur durch Zusammenstellen des Verwandten entsteht nach und nach eine Totalität, die sich selbst ausspricht

[180]Friedrich Schiller, *Schillers Leben in Briefen* ed. Helmut Koopmann (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger 2000) 456. (Schiller's Brief an Goethe 23 August 1794).
[181]WA IV, 12, 247. Brief an Schiller, 16 und 17 August 1797
[182]FA I, 25, 33. Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt

und keiner weitern Erklärung bedarf.[183]

Thus relying on a holistic perspective to make the correct associations, Goethe endeavored to raise himself above carefully configured assemblages of entities to attain an all-inclusive view disclosing immanent kinships. He thereby privileged a method that, rather than tear natural entities asunder, embedded them in a greater context, surveying them from above to achieve a comprehensive view that made possible the recognition of patterns indicative of deeper, otherwise indiscernable affinities.

Gegenständliches Sehen

But the holism arising from viewing organisms from above is but one component of Goethe's efforts to obtain a physical point of view on the natural world. Documenting his conscientious attempt to approximate nature's perspective through the practice of a 'tender empiricism,' his natural scientific writings indicate how he persistently strove to establish intimate unity between observer and the object of observation: "Es gibt eine zarte Empirie, die sich mit dem Gegenstand innigst identisch macht..."[184]The endeavor to judiciously heed the object by so to speak, uniting with it, began through a reorientation of the observer's comportment towards the world. And this, for Goethe, was a matter of seeing living things in the right way: "Was ist das Schwerste von allem? Was dir das Leichteste dünket: Mit den Augen zu sehn, was vor den Augen dir lieget."[185] Indeed, apprehending natural organisms in their own right demanded a specific form of visual attunement that turned on the distinction between an 'objective' (objektiv) and 'objectual' (gegenständlich) form of observation. Ordinarily, the observer striving for objectivity adopted a relation of detachment from the object of inquiry, remaining at one remove in order to preserve neutrality and prevent his subjective perspective

[183]FA I, 23.1, 96. Zur Farbenlehre
[184]BA 18, 564. Maximen und Reflexionen
[185]HA 1, 230. Xenien aus dem Nachlaβ 45

from interfering with a 'true' perception of it. Goethe rejected the divisive stance of observer standing over and against observed object, striving instead to achieve unity with the observed object. By closely adhering to and attentively interacting with it, he sought to overcome what he took to be an artificial barrier segregating two intertwined poles of observation. Thus persuaded that rather than withdraw from the observed object to impose distance, the observer had to achieve an intimate, albeit unprejudiced communion with it, Goethe devised an important species of spiritual exercises in 'gegenständliches Sehen.'

Developed initially in the context of his natural scientific investigations but later applied to his observations of art, 'gegenständliches Sehen' implied engaging in the labour of exhaustive observation so as to progressively coalesce with the observed object, until it permeated the observer's very faculties of perception: "Die Erscheinung ist vom Beobachter nicht losgelöst, vielmehr in dessen Individualität verschlungen und verwickelt."[186]In the course of circumspect sensory apprehension of the object's structure and organization, one no longer separated from the object of observation, the elements of the object itself penetrating perception to amalgamate thought and intuition:

> daß nämlich mein Denkvermögen *gegenständlich* tätig sei...daß mein Denken sich von den Gegenständen nicht sondere, daß die Elemente der Gegenstände, die Anschauungen in dasselbe eingehen und von ihm auf das innigste durchdrungen werden, daß mein Anschauen selbst ein Denken, mein Denken ein Anschauen sei;[187]

The foundational premise of 'gegenständliches Sehen' thus lay in the observer's adaptively molding his perceptual faculties to bring them into agreement with the observed object. For Goethe insisted that the mere seeing of the thing in no way served to promote the self (dass bloße Anblicken einer Sache kann uns nicht fördern[188]), such that disclosing the veritable nature of

[186]BA 18, 653. / MA17, 922. Maximen und Reflexionen
[187]BA 16, 384. Bedeutende Fördernis durch ein einziges geistreiches Wort.
[188]GA 16, 11. Zur Farbenlehre Vorwort

objects required a self-transformative mode of observation wherein the observer was progressively modified by the very objects toward which he directed his attention. Indeed, when Goethe famously claimed, "Jeder neue Gegenstand, wohl beschaut, schließt ein neues Organ in uns auf,"[189] he was suggesting that the observer who labored on himself to penetrate the essence of the object of his inspection, effectively fashioned himself a new organ. By exerting himself to adapt to the observed object and make it a constituent of his very being, it impressed itself on his sensory apparatus, altering and shaping its very form and function. A perceptual incorporation of objects thus served to incrementally alter the observer's constitution, equipping him with a new organ that allowed him to enjoy heightened perceptual powers capable of disclosing the object's true nature.[190]

Goethe's conception of 'gegenständliches Sehen' amounted to none other than the observer's engagement in the spiritual work of perceptual self-transformation. By solicitously participating in the observed object, adapting his sensuous cognitive faculties to assimilate it into his being, he effectuated a sensory conversion of sorts, furnishing him with a new faculty of intuition. Georg Simmel accordingly claimed that Goethe's mode of perceptually representing the object spiritually implicated the observer's entire way of being:

> für Goethe ist es *der Prozess ihres Vorstellens, die lebendige Funktion, die sie im Zusammenhange der seelischen Entwicklung ausübt.* Der Mensch muss dadurch gefördert werden, dass er diese Vorstellung denkt, sie muss sich dem einheitlichen Totalsinne seiner inneren Existenz anschliessen, und die Energie, die sie innerhalb dieser einsetzt, muss ein Moment dieser fortschreitenden Existenz selbst werden...[191]

Only in exercising his perceptual faculties to develop them in a way that mobilized the whole of his cognitive perceptual faculties, could the observer gain an intuition of the truth of the object. Goethe was thus persuaded that the natural inquirer had to adapt himself to what the

[189]BA 16, 388. Bedeutende Fördernis durch ein einziges geistreiches Wort.
[190]HA XIII, 30. Anschauende Urteilskraft
[191]Georg Simmel, *Goethe* (Nikosia, Cyprus: Verone Publishing House 2016) 32.

phenomenon had to reveal rather than make it conform to his habitual modes of perception. This implied fashioning oneself into the preeminent instrument of observation through acquiring new sensuous aptitudes. For Goethe, then, rather than rely on ever more sophisticated external instruments and scientific methods of manipulation, scientific advances ultimately depended upon the investigator's development of enhanced perceptual capacities.

But beyond the endeavor to achieve an 'objectual' view on organic entities, spiritual exercises in 'gegenständliches Sehen' were also the very medium for the practitioner's self-reflection, making manifest his inner way of being. Goethe thus explained how natural inquiry was conducive to facilitating a form of self-viewing that ultimately issued in self-knowledge: "wie ich die Natur anschaue, *zugleich aber gewissermaßen mich selbst, mein Inneres, meine Art zu sein*, insofern es möglich wäre, zu *offenbaren*."[192] Here again, access to oneself by way of natural observation required establishing a reciprocal relation between observer and observed: "Es ist ein angenehmes Geschäft, die Natur *zugleich und sich selbst zu erforschen*, weder ihr noch seinem Geiste Gewalt anzutun, sondern beide durch gelinden *Wechseleinfluss* mit einander ins Gleichgewicht zu setzen."[193] A form of natural observation predicated on reciprocity that avoided reductionist modes of seeing and remained mindful of the organism's integrity, offered a real possibility for self-knowledge. Hence, like with the ancient observer of nature, for Goethe too, know thyself and know nature were interdependent, where one perceived the natural world only within oneself and oneself only within the natural world.

Intuitive Apprehension

Finally, the cosmic dimension of Goethe's scientific practice comes to the fore in the context of his efforts to intuit the ordered whole of nature by cultivating a higher synoptic mode

[192]BA 16, 385. Bedeutende Fördernis durch ein einziges geistreiches Wort
[193]BA 18, 642. Maximen und Reflexionen

of natural observation. Goethe's inspiration for developing such an all-encompassing apprehension arose from exposure to Immanuel Kant's highly suggestive conception of the intuitive power of judgment. In his seminal essay, 'Anschauende Urteilskraft,' Goethe cites §77 of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, explicating intuitive judgment as an art of seeing organic parts from out of a prior natural whole:

> Wir können uns einen Verstand denken, der, weil er nicht wie der unsrige diskursive, sondern intuitiv ist, vom synthetisch Allgemeinen, der Anschauung eines Ganzen als eines solchen, zum Besondern geht, das ist, von dem Ganzen zu den Teilen.[194]

Kant describes a capacity, one he attributes exclusively to a divine understanding, to apprehend natural organisms by proceeding from them as wholes to their constituent parts, yielding an intuition of the universal in the particular. Intuitive judgment was realized through the perceiver's discernment of the organizational unity imposed by a natural whole on its constituent parts. The whole of the organism came into view as a complete 'Gestalt,' such that the parts were seen to belong as parts only in virtue of the whole.

Unlike Kant, Goethe did not exclude the possibility of a finite understanding's ability to approximate an intuitive mode of viewing natural organisms. Goethe was in part inspired by his reception of the work of the pre-modern philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, who himself sharing certain affinities with Stoic physics,[195]not only espoused a holistic monism in which the universe possessed an essential unity that could only be understood as a whole,[196]but also invoked a mode of cognition that proceeded from the essence of Nature as a whole to knowledge of individual things within it.[197] Such a Spinozan *Scientia Intuitiva*, through which the observer strove to grasp the living essence of the whole of Nature expressed in individual phenomena from a higher

[194]HA XIII, 30. Anschauende Urteilskraft
[195]Firmin DeBrabander, *Spinoza and the Stoics: Power, Politics and the Passions*, (London: Continuum, 2007) 121.
[196]Jon Miller, *Spinoza and the Stoics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 26.
[197]Christof Ellsiepen, *The Types of Knowledge in Spinoza's Ethics A Collective Commentary* ed. Michael Hampe, Ursula Renz, and Robert Schnepf (Leiden: Brill 2011) 145.

perspective (sub specie aeternitatis), reveals important affinities with an ancient cosmic consciousness. Indeed, to regard a natural organism under the aspect of eternity, grasping with a glance of the eye the universal idea informing its discrete singularity resonates with a cosmic viewing in which a sweeping survey of the world's multiplicity of particulars discloses its universal essence. Goethe even characterizes intuitive judgment as involving an intensification of observational capacities by means of which the observer *spiritually* participates in the nature's creative work: "durch das Anschauen einer immer schaffenden Nature zur *geistigen* Teilnahme an ihren Produktionen würdig machten."[198] Undoubtedly marking a radical departure from the mode of perception ordinarily ascribed to a finite human understanding in which a discursively guided mind encounters contingent parts in experience to synthetically unify them into totalities, in advocating the possibility of intuitive judgment, Goethe insisted that the human mind was ultimately able to intuit natural entities as prior wholes already embracing their constituent parts, attaining an all inclusive intuition of the universal in the particular.

Goethe's conception of an intuitive judgment rested on the observer's execution of a specific procedure crucially indebted to exercises surveying natural entities from above. Here, an important element in attaining an intuitive view encompassing an organism's unity in multiplicity, was Goethe's insistence upon setting up a series of experiments of a 'higher sort.' This involved an intricate process of selection in which organic particulars that appeared related were juxtaposed and arranged in continuous sequences to create what Goethe termed a natural ordering (naturegemäβe Darstellung). The ordering had to be a complete one (eine vollständige Erfahrung) achieved by creating manifold variations through diversification

[198]HA XIII, 30. Anschauende Urteilskraft

(Vermannichfaltigung).[199] The practitioner thereby constructed multiple 'Versuchsreihen', adjoining individual specimens with one another to include border phenomena in order to carve out the space of a given organism's scope of developmental possibilities. Upon subjecting this procedure to infinite repetition, Goethe deemed the outcome a higher sort of experience:

> Eine Reihe von Versuchen dagegen, die unmittelbar aneinander grenzen machen nur Eine Erfahrung unter den mannigfaltigsten Ansichten...Eine solche Erfahrung, die aus mehreren andern besteht, ist offenbar von einer höhern Art ...Auf solche Erfahrungen der höhern Art loszuarbeiten, halt' ich für höchste Pflicht des Naturforschers.[200]

Goethe's methods thus crucially depended on creating configurations conducive to achieving an enhanced visual experience of natural entities, permitting the observer to catch sight of an ordinarily imperceptible higher organizing principle ('ein höheres Prinzip') or prototypical form embracing a continuum of organic entities. Only through repeatedly surveying a series of well ordered specimens from above to achieve an all-encompassing perspective, did the unifying whole guiding consideration of the parts come into sight.[201]Hence as in the ancient exercises of viewing nature from ahigh, Goethe deployed a perspective from above compelling a series of perspicuously arranged particulars to display their immanent affinity and reveal the universal principle or archetypal form that collectively inhered in them. A mode of viewing nature embracing a breadth of natural particulars that culminated in a heightened universal intuition of their governing form was essentially akin to a species of cosmic viewing that made discernable universal laws governing the infinite diversity of nature's perceptible forms.

Goethean intuitive understanding and the ancients' cosmic viewing also shared an important ethical dimension. If in the wake of achieving a cosmic perspective, human affairs came to be seen from a higher vantage point that revealed their ultimate insignificance, in

[199]WA II, 11, 32. Der Versuch als Vermittler von Object und Subject
[200]Goethe-Handbuch: Supplemente. Band 2: Naturwissenschaften ed. Manfred Wenzel (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler 2012) 388.
[201]Chad Wellmon, "Goethe's Morphology of Knowledge, or the Overgrowth of Nomenclature," *Goethe Yearbook* 17(1) (2010) 162.

realizing a Goethean intuitive judgment, the natural inquirer was not only transported into a state of awe towards nature, he came to acknowledge its boundless character and the limits of the human capacity to unveil its intricate interdependent relations. The process of raising his thought up to the perspective of the Whole to see the universal in a carefully constructed series of particulars revealed to him nature's fundamental secret of the archetype. This disclosure had an epiphantic character overwhelming the natural inquirer with a sentiment of wonder and deference that made him cautiously agnostic about the human will to derobe nature of her mysteries:

> Das Höchste, wozu der Mensch erlangen kann,(...) ist das Erstaunen, und wenn ihn das Urphänomen in Erstaunen setzt, so sei er zufrieden; ein Höheres kann es ihm das Höchste, wozu der Mensch gelangen kann. Setzt ihn das Urphänomen in Erstaunen...so sei er zufrieden, ein Höheres kann es ihm nicht gewähren, und ein Weiteres soll er nicht dahinter suchen, hier ist die Grenze.[202]

Elsewhere, Goethe articulated something akin to the ancient feeling of reverence and piety towards nature's grandeur that came from acknowledging the ultimate limitations of natural inquiry:

> Vor den Urphänomenen, wenn sie unseren Sinnen enthüllt erscheinen, fühlen wir eine Art von Scheu, bis zur Angst..Wenn ich mich beim Urphänomen zuletzt beruhige, so ist es doch auch nur Resignation; aber es bleib ein großer Unterschied, ob ich mich an den Grenzen der Menschheit resigniere oder innerhalb einer hypothetischen Beschränktheit meines bornierten individuums.[203]

Despite ambitions of setting up an experience of a higher sort capable of shedding light on the unity of diverse organisms through intuitive judgment, Goethe came to believe that once he had expended utmost efforts to reach the limits of his cognition, there were boundaries that he ought not transgress in respect for nature's inviolable essence. Hence, like the ancient practitioner of physics who, despite pretensions to making nature's laws transparent, came to recognize the finitude of human endeavors, Goethe too acknowledged the true status of the natural investigator,

[202]GG 7, 20. Gespräche mit Johann Peter Eckermann. 18 Feb 1829
[203]BA 18, 566. Maximen und Reflexionen

respectfully resigning himself upon reaching a point beyond which he could no longer penetrate.

By probing nature's extensive and intensive dimensions through a mode of observation mindful of the true place and measure of each organic entity within nature, practicing a tender empiricism through 'gegenstandliches Sehen' and setting up experiments in observation of a higher sort facilitating the achievement of intuitive judgments, Goethe drew closer to an ancient conception of physics. Perhaps of greatest significance was his recognition that for the Greeks natural inquiry arose from out of mindful concern for their daily existence in the natural world: "Überhaupt aber entsprang die Wissenschaft für die Griechen aus dem Leben."[204] Indeed, Goethe became increasingly conscious of a form of natural investigation in sync with his daily perception of the world, where far from standing outside nature to subjugate it, he had to remain within its confines, adaptively accommodating to it, while setting aside prejudicial habits of observation and instrumental purposes to break down the barriers that separated him from it.

Artistic Intuition

Goethe was ultimately persuaded that practice consecrated to cultivating an attentive, observant relation to the natural world that strove to apprehend it as an intuitive whole carried over into the domain of the arts. He maintained:

> Es hat sich daher auch in dem wissenschaftlichen Menschen zu allen Zeiten ein Trieb hervorgetan, die lebendigen Bildungen als solche zu erkennen, ihre äußern sichtbaren, greiflichen Teile im Zusammenhange zu erfassen, sie als Andeutungen des Innern aufzunehmen uns so das Ganze in der Anschauung gewissermaßen zu beherrschen. Wie nah dieses wissenschaflichen Verlangen mit dem Kunst-und Nachahmungstriebe zusammenhänge, braucht wohl nicht umständlich ausgeführt zu werden.[205]

Goethe believed that the same premises of exploring the connections of external parts of an organism as indicators of deeper internal structures was operative in an artwork, whereby the

[204]GA 16, 325. Betrachtungen über Farbenlehre und Farbenbehandlung der Alten
[205]HA XIII, 54. Morphologie Die Absicht eingeleitet

principle aim lay in surveying it as an integral whole. Here again, the Greeks invariably provided a touchstone:

> Hatten wir nun bei der wissenschaftlichen Behandlung, wie sie von den Griechen unternommen worden, wie sie ihnen geglückt, manches zu erinnern, so treffen wir nunmehr, wenn wir ihre Kunst betrachten, auf einen vollendeten Kreis, der, indem er sich in sich selbst abschließt, doch auch zugleich als Glied in jene Bemühungen eingreift und, wo das Wissen nicht Genüge leistete, uns durch die Tat befriedigt.[206]

If ancient forms of natural inquiry dovetailed with artistic practice, for Goethe too, art was a matter of bringing an intuition of nature to a higher realization through an act of creation. For the production of artworks relied on a heightened intuitive judgment, such that upon disclosing nature's innermost secret of the archetype, the inquirer was compelled to interpret it artistically: "Wem die Natur ihr offenbares Geheimnis zu enthüllen anfängt, der empfindet eine unwiderstehliche Sehnsucht nach ihrer würdigsten Auslegerin, der Kunst."[207]The endeavor to articulate nature's archetypes in art began, as in the case of natural inquiry, with the cultivation of a holistic view of nature from above.

For Goethe, the artist's ability to interpret nature artistically stemmed from his ability to reproduce nature in its wholeness. He thus saw training in natural scientific observation a necessary prerequisite for artistic production. In rigorously studying nature, the artist came to discern its creative laws and grasp its productive processes: "Wir zuletzt beim Kunstgebrauch nur dann mit der Natur wetteifern können, wenn wir die Art, wie sie bei Bildung ihrer Werke verfährt, ihr wenigstens einigermassen abgelernt haben."[208] Hence, from the very start, the artist's task not only lay in producing art according to the instruction derived from nature's generative methods, but in aspiring to compete with its very creative capacities. Here, Goethe subscribed to the Spinozan conception of 'natura naturans,' emphasizing an organic understanding of artistic

[206]HA XIV, 40. Geschicht der Farbenlehre
[207]BA 18, 503. Maximen und Reflexionen
[208]HA XII, 46. Einleitung in die Propyläen

production that paralleled his conception of plant development. Rather than assemble components from without in mechanical fashion, the artist had to fashion his work by proceeding organically from within outwards: "denn solch ein Werk ist nicht von aussen zusammengesetzt, *es ist von innen entfaltet*."[209]The artwork arose like a plant in which individual parts sprang forth from a germ, their structure progressively unfolding from within as an integrated totality.

Goethe believed that the artist could bring to bear a mimetic-organic process of art production from seeing artistic wholes in analogy with natural ones. Invoking the aesthetic theory he jointly developed with Karl Philipp Moritz in Italy, he maintained that, on the one hand, the exemplary work of art had to reproduce as many possible relations of the whole of nature outside it. As Mortiz writes, it had to bear the imprint of nature as a whole:

> Sonst würde freilich der Zusammenhang der ganzen Natur, welcher zu sich selber, als zu dem größten uns denkbaren Ganzen, die meisten Beziehungen in sich faßt, auch für uns das höchste Schöne sein, wenn derselbe nur einen Augenblick von unsrer Einbildungskraft umfaßt werden könnte. Jedes schöne Ganze aus der Hand des bildenden Künstlers ist daher im Kleinen ein Abdruck des höchsten Schönen im großen Ganzen der Natur..... [210]

On the other hand, the work of art had to be a totality in itself containing all its necessary relations within it. Goethe notes, "Wie in dem Organismus der Natur, so tut sich auch in der Kunst innerhalb der genauesten Schranken die Vollkommenheit der Lebensäusserung kund."[211]Artworks thus bore relations outwards capturing nature as a whole and relations internal to them expressing their wholeness as consummate individuals, whereby the unity of an artwork's parts was as inviolable as that of a natural organism: "Außer den Gegenständen der Natur, die *in allen ihren Teilen wahr* und *konsequent* ist, spricht doch nichts so laut...als die echte Kunst, die ebenso folgerecht ist als jene."[212] Hence, like the natural object, an artwork's identity

[209]WA IV, 9, 72. Brief an Meyer 27. Feb 1789
[210]Karl Philipp Mortiz, *Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönen Werke in zwei Bänden*. vol 1, (Weimar: Aufbau 1973) 265.
[211]HA XI, 455. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt Bericht Dezember
[212]HA XI, 148. Italienische Reise, 13. Dez 1786

was a function of the manifold relations that mimetically reflected the whole of nature external to it, and a product of the relations internal to it that grounded its comprehensive unity and ensured its completion onto itself.

In order to realize this twofold holism, the artist had to marshal his knowledge of nature. Only in deploying his capacity to see nature as a totality, could he impose an antecedent idea of the whole in the creation of his artwork. Goethe thus invoked the example of a landscape, the character of which could only be captured provided the artist succeeded in subordinating its discrete topographical features to a single, coherent view of its nature as a whole.[213] Hence, rather than conceive artistic production as a mode of composition, applying a set of techniques to fuse together disparate elements of line, shape, light, color and perspective, Goethe maintained that the artwork's organization had to be a purposive 'Zusammensetzung im Allgemeinen.'[214] In order to realize such an integrated whole, the artist applied artistic principles of unity that dictated the relationship between the parts so that they meaningfully cohered with one another, displaying no inconsistent intentions.[215]A prior intuition of the compositional whole guided the arrangement of the parts, whereby the artist emphasized the important parts that gave the whole its character so that the artwork was neither a product of piecing together an array of affiliated elements like a puzzle nor of combining the diverse ingredients of a recipe. No such piecemeal aggregation sufficed to guarantee the agreement of its parts. By merely cumulating constituent elements, there was no guarantee of the coherence that made every line and figure occupy its rightful place, harmoniously relating to the others as an integrated totality. The artist therefore had to determine how to coordinate and subordinate the constitutent parts of his work: "(er)

[213]HA XII, 32. Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil
[214]HA XII,77. Einleitung in die Propyläen
[215]HA XII, 58.Über Laokoon

arbeitet den Gegenstand in reinem inneren Zusammenhange aus, findet die untergeordneten Motive."[216]Goethe invoked the technique evinced in the renowned sculpture-group, the *Laocoon*, wherein each figure assumed a specific position, establishing the unity of the remaining ones to yield an integrated whole: "So brachten die Künstler durch Mannigfaltigkeit ein gewisses Gleichgewicht in ihre Arbeit, milderten und erhöhten Wirkung durch Wirkungen, und vollendeten *sowohl ein geistiges als ein sinnliches Ganze*."[217]The genuine artwork was thus the expression of the artist's grasp both of a natural unity and an artistic one, the former sensible, the latter spiritual, arising from the ability to see individual elements, not as disperse and isolated, but as constitutive of an integral totality, that bore the mark of a single dominant unifying idea.

Goethe elaborated an alternative conception of artistic production that rested on a dialectical method of reconciling polarities to achieve a higher artistic unity. By bringing together opposing creative tendencies of 'simple imitation' and 'mannerism' to synthesize them, a higher unity Goethe dubbed 'style,' could be realized.[218] Here, the artist commenced his task by cultivating his ability to select an appropriate artistic sujet. By Goethe's lights, the ability to choose the proper mimetic object was a capacity that emerged exclusively as a result of meticulously observing organisms in nature prior to embarking upon their actual reproduction. The artist set out to train his ability to see nature’s organic wealth both in its extensive breadth as well as in its minute details, refining the evaluative distinctions at play in apprehending nature's boundless heterogeneity. Once he had exhausted efforts at due and detailed observation, he strove to reproduce an array of diverse entities, completing a lengthy and repeat process of simple imitation. This in turn equipped him with a capacity to differentiate among countless

[216]HA XII, 46. Einleitung in die Propyläen
[217]BA 19, 135 Über Laokoon
[218]BA 19, 79. Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil

instantiations of an organism to select the most beautiful specimen of its organic type.[219]Goethe thus maintained that the capacity to recognize the exemplary rose was simply the natural outgrowth of repeatedly reproducing different individual roses to cultivate selective discrimination. Indeed, the very caliber of the artist rested on his capacity to select the choiceworthy mimetic object: "bei der Wahl des Gegenstandes überhaupt die Tiefe des künstlerischen Genies beurteilen lässt."[220] Indeed Goethe underscores the significance of selecting the proper mimetic object, invoking the consequences of a failure to do so: "was ist auch wichtiger als die Gegenstände, und was ist die ganze Kunstlehre ohne sie! Alles Talent ist verschwendet, wenn der Gegenstand nichts taugt. Und eben weil dem neuern Künstler die würdigen Gegenstände fehlen, so hapert es auch so mit aller Kunst der neuern Zeit."[221] Once the artist made his selection, his task became one of raising the mimetic object to an enhanced unity through his own inventive latitude: "Indem der Kunstler irgendeinen Gegenstand der Natur ergreift, so gehört dieser schon nicht mehr der Natur an."[222]The artist expressed his creative aptitude by bringing to bear his own organizational principles to present the natural object under a particular aspect. Loathe to simply adopt nature's diction, he strove to give form to an original perspective: "es verdrieβt ihn, der Nature ihre Buchstaben im Zeichnen nur gleichsam nachzustabieren..."[223] Such a capacity drew on his ability to see the integrity of the elements constitutive of an organic whole, emphasizing certain facets among countless others to convincingly depict the object in a specific manner. By modifying aspects of the mimetic object and inventing others, he made manifest his signature vision.

The culmination of mastering a form of artistic production moving between contrary

[219]HA XII, 32-33. Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil
[220]HA XII, 68. Einleitung in die Propyläen
[221]GG 4, 306. Gespräch mit Johann Peter Eckermann, 3 Nov 1823
[222]ibid. 46.
[223]BA 19, 78. Einfache Nachahmung der Nature, Manier, Stil

foundational tendencies of simple imitation and mannerism, lay in raising them to achieve a higher aesthetic idea constitutive of style. According to Goethe, style rested on the most profound base of knowledge[224]: "man kann sagen: dass der Kunstler ihn in diesem Augenblick erschaffe, indem er...erst den *höhern Wert hineinlegt*."[225]Here, the object's enhanced quality stemmed from the artist's attempt to bring to light the natural object's universal essence as a particular manifestation, whereby unlike natural entities affected by diverse genetic and environmental contingencies, art was not prey to the chance happenstance that complicated a natural organism's manifestation of form. Indeed, Goethe maintained that, more often than not, nature's creative processes failed to fulfill their highest potential: "Ihre Intentionen sind zwar immer gut, allein die Bedingungen sind es nicht, die dazu gehören, sie stets vollkommen zu Erscheinung gelangen zu lassen."[226]While nature was governed by formative achetypes comprehending the generic and specific form towards which each individual existence strove, it more or less fulfilled them, whereby unfelicitous conditions frequently prevented the organism's consummate manifestation. In contrast, in order for art to convey nature’s underlying law of organic types, the artist simply carried the particular, unbeset by arbitrary influences potentially obstructing its realization, to perfected form. For in the sphere of art, there need not be any divergence between how an organism is and how it ought to be. Moreover, if contingencies could frustrate nature's intentions, even when it managed to avoid deficient forms, Goethe was persuaded that organic laws never achieved their highest possibility within nature's confines alone. Rather, it was up to the artist to bring an organic particular to a greater degree of visible perfection than nature itself allowed. The artist thus assisted nature in attaining its highest

[224]HA XII, 31. Einfache Nachahmung, Manier, Stil
[225]HA XII, 46. Einleitung in die Propyläen
[226]GG 6, 102. Gespräch mit Johann Peter Eckermann, 18 April 1827

perceptible realization, whereby the purpose prevented from attaining complete expression in nature, acquired, in the artwork, its ultimate realization. It was none other than the ancient artist who exemplarly manifest the ability to endow nature the higher form dormant within it:

> Wer aber etwas Grosses machen will, muss seine Bildung so gesteigert haben, dass er gleich den Griechen im Stande sei, *die geringere reale Natur zu der Höhe seines Geistes heranzuheben, und dasjenige wirklich zu machen, was in natürlichen Erscheinungen, aus innere Schwäche ode aus äußerem Hindernis, nur Intention geblieben ist*.[227]

Goethe thus privileged ancient classical art, that incarnating a 'gesteigerte Natur,' exhibited unparalelled virtuosity and harmony of forms faithful to and yet exceeding nature:

> (Der Kunstler versucht)...in die Tiefe der Gegenstände...zu dringen...um in seinen Werken nicht bloß etwas leicht- und oberflächlich Wirkendes, sondern, wetteifernd mit der Natur, etwas geistig Organisches hervorzubringen und seinem Kunstwerk einen solchen Gehalt, eine solche Form zu geben, wodurch es natürlich zugleich und übernatürlich erscheint.[228]

Never venturing outside nature's confines, the artist's spiritually enhanced techniques ultimately transcended nature's creative intentions to bring to bear consummate form.

That the artist be attuned not only to nature’s principles of unity, but endow his own organizing principles of creative unity to yield a second spiritual nature, in turn had consequences for the artwork's reception. In order to truly estimate a work of art, Goethe maintained that the beholder had to appreciate its twofold unity. This implied renouncing two forms of art reception situated at opposite ends of the spectrum, arising from misconceptions regarding an artwork's objective and subjective facets. On the objective side, the beholder had to avoid confounding simple imitation with a natural realism that aspired to establish the artwork's perfect equivalence with the mimetic object. For the artist's task was by no means one of seeking to reproduce nature with a precision and accuracy that served to deceive the beholder as to the

[227]GG 6, 356. Gespräche mit Johann Peter Eckermann, 20. Okt. 1828
[228]BA 19, 178. Einleitung in die Propyläen

artwork's identity as a human artifact. Such art reduced the beholder to a vulgar form of art reception in which he ran the risk of mistaking a stilllife for reality.[229] Goethe thus maintained: "Die höchste Aufgabe einer jeden Kunst ist, durch den Schein die Täuschung einer höheren Wirklichkeit zu geben. *Ein falsches Bestreben aber ist, den Schein so lange zu verwirklichen, bis endlich nur ein gemeines Wirkliche übrig bleibt*."[230] Hence, if art endeavored to create a semblance of nature, the beholder nevertheless had to recognize the way in which the mimetic object had been transformed by an interpretative process with its own structuring principles. Indeed, Goethe was persuaded that the mistake of aesthetic reception that adjuged the quality of a given work exclusively in virtue of its approximation of reality, was that it relegated the artistic medium to a purely subsidiary role by focusing on nature merely as subject matter, while failing to attend to the way in which art exercised its own powers to bring nature to life. The ideal beholder was thus none other than the artist himself: "Der wahre Liebhaber sieht nicht nur die Wahrheit des Nachgeahmten, sondern auch die Vorzüge des Ausgewählten, das Geistreiche der Zusammenstellung, das Überirdische der kleinen Kunstwelt; er fühlt, dass er sich zum Künstler erheben müsse, um das Werk zu genießen."[231]The exemplary beholder recognized the way in which the artist *rivalled* rather than *reproduced* nature.

The failure to appreciate an artwork's twofold unity could also occur as a result of problems arising on the subjective side of art reception. Indeed, Goethe claimed that only a select few were inclined to see art for what it was, while the majority were prone to a subjectivistic, contingent form of appreciation in which they 'thought random thoughts and enjoyed their own feelings' in the course of beholding art, while neglecting to appreciate how the work endowed

[229]HA XII, 68. Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit der Kunstwerke
[230]HA IX, 487. Aus meinem Leben Dichtung und Wahrheit
[231]HA XII, 72. Über Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit der Kunstwerke

particular form to a universal idea.[232] Goethe insists: "Wir vermischen so schnell unsere Empfindungen, unsere Meinung, unser Urteil mit dem, was wir erfahren."[233]Conversely, the fault could lie with the methods deployed by the artist himself. Indeed there were artists who employed the medium of art purely as a means of conveying their own particular ideas and emotions, and others who deliberately aimed to curry favor with the viewer. Goethe adjudged both approaches antithetical to art reception, ultimately leading to its debasement. He thus repudiated works that either expressed the artist's subjectivity or aimed to elicit the beholder's subjective pathos, unambiguously maintaining, "Wir kämpfen *für die Vollkommenheit eines Kunstwerkes,in und an sich selbst, jene denken an dessenWirkung nach außen, um welche sich der wahre Künstler gar nicht bekümmert*, so wenig als die Natur wenn sie einen Löwen oder einen Colibri hervorbringt."[234]Not only did the artist have to avoid concerning himself with the impression his artwork was liable to make on its viewers, the beholder himself had to defeat the temptation to succumb to subjective affects such as empathy, fear, awe or delight, in order to come to appreciate the way in which the artist committed a universal idea to a particular artistic form.

The apprehension of the universal in the particular in turn occured in a higher sense in the medium of the artwork, whereby Goethe held a specific view regarding the beholder's discernment of it. Goethe effectively insisted that the beholder ascertain the varying degrees of lucidity of an artwork's form across different instantiations to achieve an intuition of its universal archetypal form. This was achieved in lieu of a rigorous process of observation analogous to the scientific observer’s intuition of the natural archetype, where the beholder began by gaining

[232]HA XII, 85. Über Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit der Kunstwerke
[233]BA 19, 175. Einleitung in die Propyläen
[234]WA IV, 46, 221. Brief an Carl Friedrich Zelter, 29. Jan 1830

exposure to a wide-range of artworks. This implied both acquaintance with vastly different works of art, as well as with various reproductions of one and the same work, whereby prior to comparing different works, the beholder had to learn to appreciate the merit of a single one. Goethe emphasized the need to discriminate between works that expressed the same universal form in order to be able to gauge how authentically they articulated it. If the original artwork was adequate to its universal form, there was a considerable discrepancy separating an unexceptional copy that yielded an inchoate intuition of form and an exemplary reproduction that made it transparent. In the context of observing plaster casts of statuary in Italy, Goethe thus related how the process of perspicuously arranging sculptures enabled him to distinguish the virtuosity of exemplary forms: "Wenn du nur einen Abend bey uns seyn solltest unter den vielen Gypssachen, wenn man *die besten Sachen neben einander setzen kann und sich dann das fürtreffliche vom Guten so sehr, ja unendlich absondert*. Ich spreche nicht aus wie glücklich ich bin, daß *ich da zu sehen anfange, wo ich Zeitlebens nur getappt habe.*"[235] Acquaintance with the degrees of perfection a given artform could assume provided a glimpse into a continuum of form manifestations tantamount to a natural ordering of organisms ranging from deformed to well formed specimens. Traversing such a trajectory of forms immediately made discernable the lacklustre copy on one hand, and the masterful imitation on the other. For Goethe then, familiarity with both deficient and praiseworthy instantiations of an artwork was the very condition of discerning the universal form embodied in the original.

Beyond the training that enabled estimation of an original artwork, the beholder also had to cultivate a sense discrimination ranging over works ressembling one another. Once again, like in his scientific inquiries, Goethe employed a comparative methodology that sought to identify

[235]WA IV, 8, 322. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 19 Jan 1788

constancies in aesthetic form through ordering and arranging related artworks in a perspicuous series. By constructing 'Versuchsreihe' of artworks with similar sujets, whether Roman landscapes or depictions of a Madonna and child, placing them side by side in order to visually traverse them forwards and backwards, he came to obtain a higher intuition of the universal form embracing the series comparable to the apprehension of a natural archetype encompassing well arranged organic particulars. Admittedly, the unwieldy size of most paintings made this method cumbersome if not unfeasible. Goethe therefore took to procuring print reproductions of artworks that could be ordered and arranged with relative ease. Upon his return to Weimar, he would create numerous portfolios of prints and drawings, meticulously organizing them, so that in flipping through a carefully constructed series, he could achieve something in the way of an overview disclosing the quintessential form uniting its members. Through an ordering process bringing artworks into constellations designed to tease out similarlity and difference upon repeatedly surveying them, Goethe succeeded in obtaining a higher intuition of the universal form underlying each school of affiliated works.

The higher intuition of form encompassing a sequence of well arranged artworks ultimately issued from the exercise of an intuitive judgment. Here, if intuitive judgment in natural investigation guided the observer's apprehension of biological forms to yield a vision of organic wholes, so also intuitive judgment in aesthetic reception made cognizeable the artistic form that underlay the artwork's apprehension as an enhanced whole.[236]Indeed, Goethe identified the artistic counterpart of the natural archetype that mediated the apprehension of the empirical and the universal in an organism, in the form of what he designated the 'symbolic,' in the sphere

[236]For further illumination on the Goethean concept of the symbol see Pfotenhauer, “Weimar Classicism as Visual Culture,” The Literature of Weimar Classicism, Simon Richter, Ed. (Rochester: Camden House, 2005), 265-293; S. Heidi Krueger, “Allegory and Symbol in the Goethezeit: A Critical Reassessment,” in The Age of Goethe Today: Critical Reexamination and Literary Reflection, Gertrud Bauer Pickar and Sabine Cramer, Eds. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1990), 50-68.

of art. In an illuminating letter addressed to Schiller, he elaborated on the various ways in which symbolic objects were the analog to nature's archetypes, orienting an intuition of the universal form inhering in an array of particulars:

> Ich habe daher die Gegenstände, die einen solchen Effect hervorbringen genau betrachtet und zu meiner verwunderung bemerkt dass sie eigentlich *symbolisch* sind, das heiβt, wie ich kaum zu sagen brauche, *es sind eminent Fälle, die, in einer charakteristischen Mannigfaltigkeit, als Repräsentanten von vielen andern dastehen, eine gewisse Totalität in sich schließen, eine gewisse Reihe fordern, ähnliches und fremdes in meinem Geiste aufregen* und so von aussen wie von innen *an eine gewisse Einheit und Allheit Anspruch machen.*Sie sind also, was ein glückliches Sujet dem Dichter ist..[237]

As Helmut Hühn maintains, through a sequence-mediated synthesis that elicited 'similar and unfamiliar instances' in the perceiving mind, related objects came to possess, in a neighborly reciprocal way, the power of gesturing towards other cases of a kindred nature that together referred to a higher universality.[238] Goethe thus underscored the importance of arriving at a higher synoptic view, referring variously to the universality perceptible through such an overview as an archetype or idea that intimated the kinship of works that appeared at first sight unrelated: "so ist auch ein Überblick, ein Seitenblick über und auf verwandte Gegenstände höchst nützlich, vorausgesetzt, daß der Künstler fähig ist, sich zu Ideen zu erheben und die nahe Verwandtschaft entfernt scheinender Dinge zu fassen."[239] Symbolic objects were thus not examples standing in for a whole, but were seen in their capacity to act as representatives of other particulars that emanated a higher universality.[240]In obeying the relation of part to whole rather than the logic of subsumption, their characteristic multiplicity was condensed into an intuitably perceptible, higher unity. Finally, the crystallization of particulars bespeaking the universal was accessible exclusively through an intuitive grasp.

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[237]FA 31, 388-389. Brief an Schiller, 16-17 August 1797
[238]Helmut Hühn, "Comparative Morphology and Symbolic Mediation in Goethe" ed. Helmut Hühn and James Vigus in *Symbol and intuition : comparative studies in Kantian and Romantic-period aesthetics* (London: Legenda/Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Pub, 2013) 87.
[239]BA 19, 180. Einleitung in die Propyläen
[240]BA 19, 180. Einleitung in die Propyläen

In his explanation of the symbolic as a self-contained sensually appealing representation of the universal, Goethe importantly designated objects occasioning the symbolic felicitous subject matter for the poet, whereby they were no less the appropriate object for the visual arts. And it is here that an affinity is discernable between a Goethean symbolic artwork conveying a multiplicity of representative objects as a higher intuition and an ancient view from above issuing in a cosmic consciousness. The similarity becomes apparent when Goethe maintains that the truth of poetry depends on conveying a higher, synoptic perspective of the diverse, interrelated particular destinies unfolding on earth. He explains of 'die wahre Poesie': "Sie läβt die verwirrten Irrgänge der Erde in Vogelperspektive vor uns entwickelt daliegen."[241]The symbolic artwork arose through an act of condensing a multiplicity of related particulars into a single sensuous whole, imbuing it with the imprint of the universal. The reception of such a symbolic work in turn implied the beholder's attainment of an elevated perspective that activated his synthetic capacity to grasp a higher unity and catch a glimpse of the eternal. [242]Thus calling to mind the ancient spiritual practitioner's cosmic view arising from the traversal of the universe's extensive range in order to ascend to a higher universality encompassing its manifold particulars, Goethe's conception of art reception involves, in like manner, the beholder's synoptic apprehension of the artwork through its embedment in the cosmos to see it as a higher totality and grasp the universal idea of perfection shining through its concrete particularity. The Goethean beholder of art effectively engaged in artistic perception characterized by an ascending movement that activated a synthetic overview over an array of particulars to attain what Ludwig Wittgenstein fittingly characterized as the seeing of the work of art 'sub specie aeternitatis.'[243]

[241]HA IX, 370. Dichtung und Wahrheit
[242]WA IV, 12, 209. Brief an Schiller, 29 Juli 1797
[243]Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Notebooks 1914-1916" translated by G.E.M Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell.1961) 83

Résumé

Goethe's mode of proceeding in the arts and sciences, admitting no division between the precepts guiding how he routinely interacted with nature and the way he investigated or artistically interpreted it, reveals his affinities with ancient philosophy. Never conceiving science as a mere search for knowledge, his persisting concern for universalization and his concomitant sense of himself as an integral part of the cosmos impacted both his mode of scientific practice and his everyday way of being in nature. Goethe's appreciation of artwork's consummating nature's symmetry, balance and unity was in turn a mere extension of this basic posture of attempting to harmonize his activities with nature's ways. Notwithstanding, achieving correspondence between ways of doing and living in the natural world was but one facet of Goethe's accomodation to nature in the arts and sciences. Indeed, perhaps no one better understood this than Friedrich Schiller, who writes of Goethe's fundamentally integrative attitude that while unmistakably organic in spirit, nonetheless fell short of the Greeks:

> (...) Wären Sie als Grieche (...) geboren worden, und hätte schon von der Wiege an eine auserlesene Natur und eine idealisirende Kunst Sie umgeben, so wäre Ihr Weg unendlich verkürzt, vielleicht ganz überflüssig gemacht worden. Schon in die erste Anschauung der Dinge hätten Sie dann die Form des Nothwendigen aufgenommen, und mit Ihren ersten Erfahrungen hätte sich der grosse Styl in Ihnen entwickelt.[244]

Not having been born a Greek brought up intuiting nature's universal forms and wielding a style capable of artistically expressing it, Goethe had to devise methods and techniques that could approximate such a vision. His art of living thus importantly rehabilitated ancient spiritual techniques of physical description, holistic viewing and seeing the world from above, productively assimilating them into his practice of the arts and sciences. Moreover, Goethe went beyond mere borrowings, establishing spiritual techniques entirely of his own making, the

[244]Friedrich Schiller, *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe* vol 1 (Stuttgart: J G Cottaschen Buchhandlung 1881) 95. Brief an Goethe, 23. August 1794

detailed elaboration of which comprises the task of the subseqent chapters. For now, it suffices to note that premised on probing the natural laws of polarity and intensification (Polarität, Steigerung), they involved systematically examining diverse oppositions found in nature as well as its drive towards complexity underwriting the processes of organic formation and artistic production.[245] For, as Daniel Steuer explains, for Goethe, in all cases of natural and artistic formation "polarities are mediated in a process of repetition with variation, leading to an intensification and, as the developmental end-point, a form which rests in itself."[246]In thus attending to and productively harnessing nature's formative laws, Goethe not only endeavored to grasp the fundamental nature of organic and artistic form, he sought to overcome obstacles encountered in natural classification and aesthetic appraisal, the reconceptualization of which he was intensively preoccupied with during his stay in Italy. The aspiration of the subsequent chapters thus lies in demonstrating how Goethe's deployment of polar and intensified exercises in observation aided him to develop a taxonomic method avoiding an artificial discursive categorization of natural entities, while allowing him to ground aesthetic judgments of taste in the arts without the application of theoretical rules. By forging an innovative repertoire of spiritual exercises he raised the stakes of his investigations of nature and art, giving new purpose and meaning to ancient spiritual practice. Indeed, Goethe developed a know-how of gegenständliches Sehen, honing it through spiritual exercise to apply his way of seeing to reinterpret the arts and sciences: "Da ich keine vollständige Idee von Italien mitnehmen kann, will ich wenigstens das was ich sehe mit eignen Augen und nach eigner Art sehen. Es wird mir mit diesem Lande wie mit meinen Lieblingswissenschafften gehn."[247] As the principle work that

[245]Hadot, 244.
[246]Daniel Steuer, "In defence of experience: Goethe's natural investigations and scientific culture," *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe*. ed. Lesley Sharpe, (Cambridge: CUP, 2002) 165.
[247]WA IV, 8, 105. Brief an Charlotte von Stein 29 Dez 1786.

documents his innovative rehabilitation of spiritual exercises in the arts and sciences, it is imperative to turn now to a discussion of the *Italian Journey.*

IV. The Italian Journey as the fount of Goethean art of living

Reading the *Italien Journey* as a spiritual text in the Ancient philosophical tradition

In his work, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Pierre Hadot underscored the importance of careful hermeneutic analysis of the literary form of ancient spiritual texts, maintaining that they constituted a genre of their own characterized by specific, identifiable features.[248] Indeed, Hadot critiques the textual exegesis of modern day scholars who, neglecting to attend to the textual specificity of ancient philosophical texts, misread them, applying inappropriate concepts to account for features such as redundancy and lack of consistency. In order to account for such textual aberrancies, modern exegetes often employed prejudicial methods, including the attribution of psychologistic motives to an ancient author foreign his work's underlying intent and purpose.[249]In order to avoid such interpretive errors, Hadot underscored the need for historical contextualization, illustrating the way in which the practical function of a spiritual text had direct consequences for its literary form.

In acknowledgement of Hadot's concern to do justice to the literary form of spiritual texts to appreciate their veritable purposes, my objective in this final section lies in determining the extent to which Goethe's *Italian Journey* conforms to ancient literary models of spirituality. In order to grasp the spiritual purposes informing Goethe's journey, it is necessary not only to canvass the actual character of his way of life in Italy, but to examine the principle attributes of

[248]Hadot, 54.
[249]Hadot, 180.

the text offering an account of it. By parsing the *Italian Journey* in terms of its affinities with the methods and rhetorical conventions characterizing spiritual sources, I seek to show that it bears numerous affinities with an ancient literary tradition that lends itself to reading it as a spiritual text.

The *Italian Journey* belongs to Goethe's mature works, published in three separate installments between 1816-17, based on events that took place some thirty years earlier during 1786-87. Despite the significant interlude of time separating the actual journey from its publication, Goethe relied upon a substantial corpus of documentary writings originating during his travels to realize his subsequent literary rendering. The first part of his account documents his sudden departure from the Weimar Duchy to witness, first-hand, the cultural patrimony he had been exposed to since childhood. Bearing a straightforward narratival structure, it more or less relates the trajectory of events as they occurred, drawing heavily from Goethe's journal contemporaneous with the journey. The second part of the text recounts Goethe's travels in the less well charted areas of Naples and Sicily, documenting the natural scientific insight he won from exposure to Italy's exotic wealth of Mediterranean vegetation. Notwithstanding the significance attributed to this leg of his travels, Goethe exercised considerable license in retrospective editing, having gone out of his way to destroy original texts from this period.[250] The final, Roman sojourn marks Goethe's comparatively sedentary residency in Rome where he joined the ranks of an artist colony to undertake an apprenticeship in the visual arts. Due to a paucity of source material from this period, Goethe adopts a much looser narratival form, alternating between correspondences, summarizing reports and interpolated texts, some originating from his own hand and others of foreign authorship.

[250] Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe The Poet and the Ag*e vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford UP: 1991) 467.

While the *Italian Journey* appears to straddle between the two literary forms of autobiography and travel literature, its significant deviation from both genres and its subversion of the conventions demarcating each, suggests the utility of invoking another paradigm. At first glance, the alternative I suggest, namely the tradition of ancient spiritual texts, looks to be of comparatively foreign origin. Nonetheless, three considerations serve to legitimate reading the *Italian Journey* as a spiritual text. Firstly, the *Italian Journey* is, in fact, the very product of a form of spiritual exercise. Goethe's authorship of the original letters and journal entries upon which the text is based, importantly represent a species of spiritual exercises in writing. What is more, Goethe's subsequent project of reediting and recomposing original material to endow the *Italian Journey* literary form, represents a further spiritual exercise of writing. Secondly, the *Italian Journey* exhibits a heuristic method of self-instructive techniques that bear important overlaps with spiritual exercises designed to reform the practitioner's selfhood. Indeed, the text relates Goethe's systematic enactment of a series of self-shaping exercises by means of which he claims to effectuate a dramatic rebirth inaugurating a radical new way of life. Finally, the text's formative objective is not merely confined to relating the trajectory of Goethe's particular transformation per se, but aims to persuade putative readers to follow in his footsteps. This is born out by the text on a rhetorical level, that like ancient spiritual texts, is informed by a protreptic elements designed to instruct and exhort readers to alter their way of living in order to recommend a conception of life based on embracing specific beliefs and fundamental behaviors.[251]In the subsequent chapters, I thus argue that what is ultimately at stake in the *Italian Journey* is not Goethe's specific transformation, but the universal change that can be wrought in a generic self through the practice of self-transformative exercise. Prior to exploring these three

[251]Hadot, 22.

identifiable spiritual dimensions of the *Italian Journey*, whether the origins of the text, its overriding purpose and methods, or its evincement of specific rhetorical codes and conventions that draw it into the ambit of spiritual texts, it is instructive to examine how it diverges from the two literary genres to which it has been typically ascribed. My discussion is not intended to offer an adjudication on matters of literary genre, but to demonstrate that in placing the *Italian Journey* outside the tradition to which it has consistently been interpreted, new light can be shed on its meaning.

Any first time reader of the *Italian Journey* immediately discerns its autobiographical quality. Notwithstanding, while Goethe initially intended the text serve as an integral component of his autobiography, he ultimately elected to keep it separate from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and make it a self-standing work in its own right. The reason for Goethe's decision most certainly bears upon the text's lack of conformity with his own standards of historically informed biographical writing, the purpose of which he unambiguously articulated in the preface of his autobiography. Here, Goethe made explicit his view of the biographer's agenda, maintaining that his role consisted in chronicling the succession of events comprising the development of the individual by embedding it into the context of his times. The biographer essentially sought to identify the characteristic features of the age to analyze its causal influence, illustrating the way in which it obstructed and promoted the individual's development to constitutively shape his worldview.[252] The unique history of an individual thus had to be presented in its connection and interrelation with the collective historical narrative constituting his horizon of acculturation.

With its governing idea of a rebirth, its rhetoric of upheaval and revolution, in which Goethe categorically insisted on a radical caesura in the continuity of his development, the

[252]HA IX, 9. Aus meinem Leben Dichtung und Wahrheit

Italian Journey significantly departs from a conception of biography intended to shed light on the individual's relation to his indigenous, historical circumstances. Goethe essentially divorces himself from the contingencies of his past to begin his life anew in Italy, leaving behind his native cultural frame of reference to challenge the interpretive horizon of his self-understanding. Indeed, one can argue that the entire premise of the *Italian Journey* lies in ascertaining the form of an individual identity that transcends the historical passage of time. Goethe ultimately attempts to become a 'new man' through assimilating a trans-historical cultural matrix, forming himself exclusively through Italy's 'Klassischer Boden,' as the repository of a 'cultural greatness which was, is, and will forever be.'[253] In order to overcome his sense of amorphousness, he turns his back on a 'gestaltlose Deutschland' to find guidance in a 'formreichen Italien,'[254]discovering an example to be emulated in its immutable, classical forms: "Die Gestalt dieser Welt vergeht. Ich möchte mich nur noch mit den bleibenden Verhältnissen beschäftigen."[255] Goethe recognized that like with the form of the self, the structures of reality were subject to ceaseless modifications. Notwithstanding, there were exceptional forms that persisted through the world's change, just as there were well formed dimensions of an individual's personhood that remained impervious to external influence. Italy thereby furnished Goethe with the contrast between diffuse, transitory forms and consummate, unchanging forms, through which to mold himself. The *Italian Journey* thus marks a shift in emphasis from seeing the individual as a historical being both assimilating and influencing his times, to seeing the individual as disposing over a form to some degree unbounded by historical context. Such a form demarcated the space of formative possibilities, whereby the individual endeavored to achieve a universal form that

[253]HA XI, 386. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 23 Aug 1787
[254]MA 12, 69. Schicksal der Handschrift
[255]HA XI, 386. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 23 August 1787

persisted through historical change.

Within this context, the lynchpin of Goethe's travels lay in his endeavor to observe nature and culture from the perspective of eternity, determining how the past persisted in the forms of the present (Dauer im Wechsel), to establish a frame of reference through which to grasp how his own form transcended the particular influences of his times. Italy's forms thereby functioned as a catalyst for a radically new way of seeing things. In his observations of nature, Goethe pursued a genetic method, coming to conceive vegetative growth as a successive modification of a single underlying form that persisted through the organic cycle's perpetually fluctuating change. The whole of nature was in turn a play of infinite variations on an abiding prototypical form containing the entire range of its possible instantiations. Meanwhile, in his observations of art, Goethe identified further transhistorical forms that persisted through change. In architecture, he traced a trajectory of building styles to locate a prototypical 'Bauform' enduring through the concatenation of Greco-Roman, Gothic and Neo-classical structures. In painting, he observed a continuum of artists belonging to different schools, that inheriting a perennial tradition, attempted to preserve originary forms while incrementally modifying them to pass on innovations to successors.[256]Against the guiding premise of identifying persistence in change, Goethe's 'rebirth,' far from premised on exchanging one set of contingent, historical conditions for another, sought rather a trans-historical context through which to determine those aspects of the self which were malleable and dispensable and those which were lasting and inviolable. It is in this vein that he claimed, "ich finde mich immer mehr in mich zurück und lerne unterscheiden, *was mir eigen und was mir fremd ist*."[257]By bringing to the fore a dialectic between transitory

[256]Goethe would later emphasize the importance on his entire worldview of such a genetic mode of proceeding in a letter to Friedrich Jacobi: "Dabey kam mir zu statten daβ ich von jeher, beym Anschauen der Gegenstände, auf dem genetischen Weg mich am besten fand..." WA IV, 15, 4. Brief an Jacobi, 2. Jan 1800

[257]HA XI, 386. Zweiter römishcer Aufenthalt, 23 Aug 1787

and enduring organic and historical forms, the *Italian Journey* thus significantly departs from the historically bound craft of biography Goethe advocates in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Evincing a perspective that eclipsed the historical, namely a classical worldview in which eternal forms persevered through the historical progression of change, the *Italian Journey* clearly distinguishes itself from a Goethean conception of autobiography.

But if the *Italian Journey* fails to conform to Goethe's self-professed standards of autobiographical writing, simply classifying it among one of many examples of 18th century travel literature is not without its own difficulties. Goethe authored his *Italian Journey* against a venerable tradition of 18th century travel literature, the two principle variants, namely rationalist objectivist and subjective sentimentalist, serve as foils against which to evaluate it.[258] Rationalist travel guides typically demonstrated the author's exhaustive command of local knowledge, providing erudite historical expositions of cultural sites, detailed descriptions of geographic conditions, illuminating explications of indigenous customs and often even insightful commentary on native political culture. Despite such a precedent, Goethe refused to meet the expectations of a readership accustomed to an all-encompassing informative account that methodically guided them through an established itinerary. He thus abandoned orthodox reportage conventions that aspired to relay objective facts in the most comprehensive manner possible,[259]eliciting noteworthy disapprobation from his contemporaries for being prejudicially selective in his observations of art due to his exclusive focus on Italy's classical patrimony to the neglect of its Proto-Renaissance, Medieval and Baroque heritage. Notwithstanding, Goethe's intention was never one of experiencing and relating the totality of influences shaping Italy's

[258]For an account of Goethe's own acquaintance with travel writing see Arthur G. Schultz,"Goethe and the Literature of Travel," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 48 (1949), 445-468.

[259] See Camillo von Klenze's account of the Italian Journey as a counter-narrative to Enlightenment travel guides in the vein of D.J.J. Volkmann's Historisch-Kritische Nachrichten von Italien of 1770. Camillo von Klenze, *The interpretation of Italy during the last two centuries: a contribution to the study of Goethe's "Italienische reise"* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1907).

patrimony, but rather of retrieving the Greco-Roman world as it could be disinterred from its monuments, artifacts and ruins. His selective method reflected his need to explore the Classical in lieu of what he took to be its preeminent authority on the development of artistic form. Goethe's account thus importantly distinguishes itself from rationalist travel literature in that he refused to equate objectivity with meticulous and exhaustive fact transmission, seeking rather to capture a higher objectivity that did justice to the objects of his observations. Indeed, the text of the Italian journey repeatedly attempts to dissuade readers from judging what they observe without dispensing with native prejudices and accounting for the culturally specific factors conditioning various objects.[260]Unlike many authors of travelogues from this period, Goethe probed Italy with neither the pretense of already understanding it nor the intention to evaluate it against his native standards. His unprejudiced sociological insights on the Lazzaroni in Naples, duly informed by the conditions engendering culturally specific behavior and unique in its refusal to disparage a peoples widely considered uncivilized at the time, exemplifies the disciplined, objective mode of observation he favored. Informed by a higher notion of objectivity that avoided operating with the superficial opposition between the foreign and the familiar, Goethe's methods significantly distinguish his account from orthodox travel literature.

But if Goethe consciously distanced himself from Enlightenment travel literature's pedantic claims of objective knowledge, he equally rejected the self-stylizing, subjectivist strain of the much in vogue sentimental journeys of his day. With the publication in 1768 of *A sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, Laurence Sterne had set a precedent that significantly shifted the focus of travel narratives from the exposition of a cultural itinerary to the traveler's portrayal of himself. It is tempting to align the *Italian Journey* with such antecedents

[260]HA XI, 455. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Dez.

and to read it as a purely psychological account of Goethe's attempt to combat his insecurities as a poet to discover himself anew in Italy. Nonetheless, Goethe ultimately recoiled from Sterne's predilection for psychological self-analysis, opting for a diametrically opposed narrative strategy. Conscientiously distancing himself from a self-referential 'cult of the personality' centering on the author's personal tastes and mannners, he adopted an impersonal objectivity that strove to eliminate the excessive reflexivity of an authorial voice that at once narrated his journey and figured as the protagonist of the narrated account.[261]Goethe went so far as to insist that the objects of the traveler's observations and not his reactions to them, had to take center stage in any legitimate account of travel. His specific conception of objectivity is encapsulated in the statement: "Ich dagegen hatte die Maxime ergriffen, mich soviel als möglich zu verleugnen und das Objekt rein, als nur zu tun wäre, in mich auf zunehmen."[262] By thus authoring his *Italian Journey* through systematically suppressing subjective opinion in an effort to apprehend the true nature of observed objects, Goethe's account ultimately reveals itself as an exploration of the possibility of an object mediated self-understanding. In elaborating the ways in which observations of natural and artistic objects progressively enabled him to access his inner life and mode of being, Goethe demonstrated that objects were not reflections but rather objective correlates of the self, intuiting the forms of which aided in grasping the form of one's own development. Indeed, the imperative of valorizing objects of observation was part and parcel of Goethe's new approach to observation in Italy. Heinrich Wöfflin captures the central premise of such 'gegenstandliches Sehen,' when he writes of the salient attribute of the *Italian Journey*: "Das Ich schweigt. Er hat sich gewöhnt, die Erscheinungen objektiv aufzufassen, nicht über die Dinge

[261]Lilian Furst, "Goethe's Italienische Reise in its European Context." in ed. Hofmeister *Goethe in Italy, 1786-1986*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988) 122.
[262]BA 16, 12. Tag- und Jahresheft 1789

zu sprechen, sondern die Dinge selbst sprechen zu lassen."[263]Goethe's distinct conception of objectivity, failing to comply with both rationalist and sentimental variants of travel literature, thus tempers the prevailing view that the *Italian Journey* represents simply one more example of the genre.

Beyond its possession of features setting it apart from the categories of autobiography and travel literature, further considerations bearing on the thematic tasks of scientific inquiry and artistic training animating Goethe's travels suggest the necessity of exploring an alternative conception of what he was up to in the *Italian Journey*. To begin with, Goethe admits that in neglecting a central dimension of his developmental trajectory, his autobiography left a gap that needed rectification. Claiming that his historical conception in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* failed to avail the ways in which natural scientific and artistic practices constitutively shaped him as an individual, he maintained:

> Außer diesem blieb mir auch noch zu gedenken, wie ich mich in Wissenschaften und andern Künsten bemüht, und was ich in solchen fremd scheinenden Fächern, sowohl einzeln als in Verbindung mit Freunden, teils im Stillen geübt, teils öffentlich bekannt gemacht.

But if Goethe had simply intended to complete his autobiography, he need only have integrated his account of his scientific and artistic engagement in Italy, that is, unless his agenda in authoring the *Italian Journey* was something altogether other than one of merely recounting the events that impacted his development as natural inquirer and artist. Indeed, the role he envisaged his *Italian Journey* playing becomes clearer in virtue of examining the texts he authored in the immediate wake of his journey. Upon returning from Italy, Goethe formulated, with a certain urgency, systematic accounts of the insights he derived on form, in a series of three essays

[263]Heinrich Wöfflin, "Goethes italienische Reise: Festvortrag." in *Das Werk: Architectur und Kunst*. 14 : 1 (Zürich: Verlag Gebr. Fretz A.G. 1927) 6

published between 1788 and 1790; *Essay explaining the Metamorphosis of Plants, Simple Imitation of Nature, Manner, Style,* and *Roman Carnival*. He maintained that the purpose of these essays was to provide a résumé of the two years in Italy he dedicated to uninterrupted observation and reflection, whereby his intention had been to form new aptitudes by way of determining how nature lawfully generated its organic products, how the Greek masters proceeded in the production of art, and how society developed as a combination of necessity and contingency.[264] Noteworthy is that all three texts evince a pronounced methodological strain, the first explicating guidelines for natural scientific observation, the second elaborating principles governing artistic production and the third illustrating the laws conditioning the emergence of social custom. The immediate fruit of Goethe's formative journey are thus texts explicating a set of rules governing natural, artistic and social formation, that together constitute a remarkably coherent doctrine of form (Formlehre). Indeed, what sets apart Goethe's mode of practicing natural investigation and art reception in Italy is his subsequent reflection upon and elaboration of the methods that guided his engagement in these respective domains. Goethe effectively worked out his practical experiences in a general and systematic fashion, transposing them onto a theoretical register. Through the labour of abstraction, he furnished a discourse of sorts, drawing up rules to guide natural scientific and artistic activity. That discourse should be the fruit of practice, formulated exclusively after having been tried and tested, is consistent with the premise of ancient philosophy as spiritual training in which the lessons learned in life were consecrated to writing only in order to affirm experience as the teacher of life.[265]Goethe's essays thus serve to codify specific rules that he derived from his observations in Italy. It would not be until three decades later however, in rereading and editing his letters, journal entries and these very essays,

[264]HA XIII, 102. Morphologie: Schicksal der Handschrift
[265]Gur Zak, *Petrarch's Humanism and the care of the self,* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2010)103.

that Goethe would ultimately embark on the project of producing something on the register of a full-fledged spiritual narrative.

If there are reasons militating against reading the *Italian Journey* exclusively as an example of the commonly invoked genres of autobiography or travel literature, the *Italian Journey* evinces a central feature of spiritual texts in that it is arguably itself the product of concrete spiritual exercise. Indeed, Goethe effectively revived the ancient spiritual exercise of writing in the very process of authoring his text. For the epistolary exchanges that serve as the foundation for his literary recomposition, are none other than a mode of self-writing as an exercise that functions spiritually at various levels. To begin with, writing home to his Weimar intimates served as a mode of examining his conscience, whereby Goethe openly exposed his thoughts and activities to an array of correspondents as a way of getting clear of his intentions and compelling himself to change in important ways. Admittedly, the motives that drove him to reveal the details of his way of life in Italy varied depending on his interlocutor. In the case of his patron the Duke of Weimar, Goethe's correspondence assumed a justificatory character, wherein he strove to legitimate his extended sabbatical by calling attention to the progress he had made. Moreover, he set an agenda for further goals, offering his benefactor a promissory note for their realization, while seeking to validate his previous experiences to reinforce his commitment. Meanwhile, the tenor of Goethe's correspondence with Charlotte von Stein takes on a different inflection of apology and defense. With its protestations and assurances of loyalty interspersed in his account of daily events, it serves a purgatory function that suggests a desire both to exonerate himself of fault and to palliate the blow of his departure. Progressively the emphasis shifts towards a mode of spiritual bookkeeping in which Goethe is eager to announce triumphs and relish in success, while equally in need of working through the causes of his failures. Indeed, the

value of an interlocutor who could readily appreciate his toil for self-improvement and with whom he could share self-revelations, cannot be underestimated.[266]Finally, in the case of the letters addressed to his friend Herder, the content and tone of Goethe's remarks betray a disciple seeking to distance himself from his former mentor who adopts measures to strengthen his resolve against challenges to his authority. Indeed, many of the subjects Goethe explores during his journey originate from his collaborative studies with Herder in Weimar. Notwithstanding, once he acquires first-hand acquaintance with Italy's Greco-Roman patrimony and its wealth of Mediterranean plantlife, Goethe begins to speculate anew concerning their origins and formation, drawing conclusions of his own that often proved at odds with the hypotheses formely put forward by his mentor.[267]With its eclectic range of functions, from self-justification and an examination of conscience to spiritual bookkeeping and consolidating independence of mind, in each case, letter writing served as a vehicle for Goethe's self-transformation. With its salient purpose of aiding him to fundamentally reform his identity, the epistolary correspondences comprising the *Italian Journey* thus represent a form of writing as spiritual exercise.

Upon further scrutiny of the principle document underpinning the *Italian Journey*, Goethe's *Tagebuch*, one discovers an ensemble of texts resembling a type of spiritual writing existing in antiquity. Hypomnemata or personal notes and reflections written day-to-day, often accompanied by a running commentary served as a record of the author's quotidian life and was the product of spiritual exercises in self-writing.[268]Indeed, Goethe's *Tagebuch*, a dated journal made up of entries chalked full of personal observations conforms to the genre of hypomnemata. With its addresses to Charlotte von Stein interspersed among its entries, it also bears traces of

[266]Richard Shusterman, "Philosophy as a Way of life as Textual and more than textual practice," ed. Michael Chase in *Philosophy as a Way of Life Ancient and Moderns Essays in honor of Pierre Hadot.* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2013) 47.
[267]Goethe's reaction to his receipt of a copy of Herder's *Über Gott und göttliche Dinge*, which he is quick to dismiss as a 'merkwürdiges Buch,' is symptomatic of his increasing skepticism of Herder's way of thinking. see Italienische Reise 1 Dez 1787 Bericht
[268]Hadot, 179.

epistolary correspondence. But if the text's mode of exposition periodically evinces a dialogical character, the questions posed, cautionaries given and exhortations made are essentially addressed by Goethe to none other than himself. Goethe has enlisted Stein in his cause, making her a witness to a soul-searching process in which he appeals to her in order to prevent himself from falling astray of his ambitions. Exchange with the other thus functions as the very condition that makes dialogue with oneself possible, whereby the *Tagebuch*'s interdependence of self and other serves as a mechanism for self-discipline,[269]its entries ultimately represent an inner spiritual exercise of self-scrutiny, in which Goethe is all the while subjecting his conscience to interrogation.[270]

If Goethe's letters and journal served as an important vehicle for self-examination at the time of their composition, once he embarked upon the project of reediting them for the purpose of publication, they became both the object and means of meditation. Indeed, that the *Italian Journey* is overlayered with abundant afterthoughts and commentary reveals that the activity of re-reading and rewriting texts written decades earlier, served as a medium for self-reflection. An exegesis of his own writing effectively enabled him to recollect the various forms of training previously undergone and the lessons learned from past experiences, leading Goethe to revisit the rules and precepts that guided his former conduct with a certain degree of critical distance. As with hypomnemata, which provided its authors with resources to develop more systematic treatises presenting arguments aiding to overcome weakness and combat difficulty,[271]Goethe's meticulous excavation of his former writings served to resuscitate past strategies pertinent for self-transformation. Moreover, a comparison of what remains of Goethe's original letters with the

[269]Shusterman, 47.
[270]Hadot, 91.
[271]Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. (New York: The New Press 1997) 273.

Italian Journey, reveals that Goethe recasts the dialogical character of his original correspondence in hopes of engaging a future audience, such that he systematically frames his observations in ways that attempt to exhort putative readers to reexamine their way of life. Such a reformulation of rules and precepts was ultimately intended to invite readers to commit themselves to a self-ameliorative struggle. Goethe's purpose in composing the *Italian Journey* thus comes strikingly close to the ancient notion of establishing a general guide for spiritual transformation, justifying its placement alongside an ensemble of texts designed to compel readers to partake in spiritual practice.

If the overall purpose enunciated in the *Italian Journey* is unmistakably spiritual, the method it enjoins also bears spiritual features. Forty years after the conclusion of his journey, Goethe announced that he intended to revisit the texts documenting his landmark travels in order to adumbrate "wie hier der Grund meines ganzen nachherigen Lebens sich befestigt und gestaltet hat."[272]If his countless remarks attesting to the self-transformative character of his journey are to be taken seriously, then it is likely that his decision to re-edit and publish his account was in some measure an attempt to convey to readers the methods that had made possible his dramatic transformation. Indeed, the journey's guiding motifs of a radical rebirth (Wiedergeburt) and a new life (neues Leben) lend themselves to an analysis of the spiritual character of his experiences. Moreover, the regulatory premise of suppressing a native identity and traveling incognito to assimilate a new cultural horizon 'auf *klassischem Boden,'* corroborates the inherently spiritual premises informing Goethe's journey. By realizing a radical rupture with his past to lay new foundations through an alternative upbringing, by the end of his travels, Goethe ultimately concluded that he had undergone many a metamorphoses between Weimar and

[272]WA IV, 45, 46. Brief an Carl W. Göttling, 8 Nov 1828

Palermo ("*zwischen Weimar* und *Palermo hab*' ich *manche Veränderung gehabt*").[273]

In conjunction with his insistent thematization of the pivotal spiritual themes of 'renaissance' and 'vita nuova,' Goethe's journey was likewise marked by a pronounced emphasis on the notion of exercise as the foremost and indispensable means of effectuating self-transformation. With ubiquitous invocations of the notion of exercise (Übung) permeating the account of his travels, he eventually concludes: "Welch ein *früh wissendes* und *spät übendes Geschöpf* ist doch der Mensch!"[274]Moreover, Goethe not only conceived the notion of exercise in its commonplace meaning of practice makes perfect, "Nur durch geregelte Übung könnte man vorwärts kommen,"[275]he endowed it a wide range of semantic inflections. If he strove to discover Italy through intimate acquaintance with its phenomenal objects, experiencing natural organisms and artworks through the oppositions operating within perception, the active play of the imagination and the receptive intuition of symbolic wholeness, an organism's biological type or an artwork's universal form became perceptible exclusively through the travail of exercises in self transformation. Exercise thus represents the touchstone to unlocking the character of Goethe's philosophical art of living in Italy.

The *Italian Journey* further bears the imprint of a spirituality in its exhibition of a clear therapeutic agenda, marked by Goethe's self-diagnosis of a sickness of the passions and pursuit of various forms of treatment to cure himself. In the course of a rehabilitative journey, he discovers that while some suffering is compatible with life, most is self-induced and irrational and can be defeated by adopting the appropriate attitudes and responses. Goethe thus authors what essentially amounts to a healing narrative, offering a host of salutary precepts designed to

[273] HAXI, 241. Italienische Reise Zweiter Teil, 8. April 1787
[274]HA XI, 209. Italienische Reise Zweiter Teil 17. März 1787
[275]HA XI, 172. Italienische Reise 17. Februar 1787

rectify a range of affective dysfunctions. The principle remedy he deploys is one premised on regulating unruly passions that are the cause of faulty judgment leading to suffering that is ultimately avoidable. [276]Through the discipline of assimilating habits of self-control to constrain intransigent affects, Goethe shows how to avoid illegitimate sources of pain and cultivate a balanced temper. Moreover, a significant part of his therapeutic agenda involves appeasing his fixation with certain aspirations in order to liberate himself from forestalled passions so that the fulfillment of estranged desires comes to afford peace of mind. In thus performing various forms of rehabilitative work on himself, Goethe effectively furnishes his readers with remedies for their own potential ailments, alerting them to a range of available coping mechanisms that, once made habitual, could ameliorate and even defeat suffering.

In an effort to enjoin readers to convert to a new way of living, the *Italian Journey* likewise elaborates a host of mechanisms aimed at altering false beliefs and abandoning misguided perspectives to acquire a new worldview. Goethe thus demonstrates the way in which he systematically discards judgments that fail to promote constructive behavior, while adopting new values conducive to rational interaction with the world. For instance, when dealing with obstacles, Goethe persuaded himself that being part of natural necessity, they transpired independent of his will and were essentially unavoidable. As such, it was better to submit rather than balk at them and avoid adjudging his fate as good or evil in virtue of their occurrence. Goethe thus systematically raised himself above life's vicissitudes by cultivating indifference to things beyond his power. At the same time, he guarded against transient things that threatended to divert his attention from pursuing what was important. Putting an end to the postponement of worthwhile endeavors, he undertook duties and labours appropriate to his nature that were

[276]Mike W. Martin, *Happiness and the good life* (New York: Oxford UP, 2012) 34.

meaningful. By engaging in activities not as means but exclusively as ends in themselves, he converted his former self-preoccupation in Weimar into meaningful self-occupation (Tätigkeit) in Italy, all the while downplaying difficulties and embracing his good fortune. Goethe ultimately ceased to take things in life for granted, cultivating gratitude towards nature for equipping him with the necessities, while endeavoring to appreciate readily accessible sources of satisfaction. By thus adopting constructive values revolving around his own spiritual development and self-flourishing, Goethe came to recognize that happiness lay in effectively integrating rational habits that aided in avoiding life's disappointments and disruptions to realize what was most valued."[277]The *Italian Journey* thus elaborates the measures and techniques Goethe employed to defeat beliefs that misled him as to what mattered in life. In so doing, he implicitly encouraged his readers to likewise adopt constructive beliefs helping them to advance on the path to a satisfying way of life.

But perhaps Goethe's most singular purpose in the *Italian Journey* arose from his self-enlistment in 'eine Schule des Sehens,' in which he set out to fundamentally alter his mode of observation. Indeed, a large number of the entries comprising his work crystallize around the function of instilling correct habits of seeing, whereby the aspired after mode of observation arises through training vision to adhere to the object of observation in diverse, often challenging ways. Indeed, in focusing on the substantive content of Goethe's countless remarks on vegetation, artwork and the Italian people rather than the particular way in which he apprehended them, readers of the *Italian Journey* consistently overlook the deeper structure of the text. In fact, it furnishes a systematic, second-order discourse elaborating a specific mode of apprehension, what Goethe calls 'gegenständliche Sehen,' designed to progressively permit the circumspect

[277]Martin, 67.

observer to perceive the true character and fundamental forms of observed objects. In providing a running commentary on the way in which he directs, alters, and shapes his faculties of observation, the *Italian Journey* reveals itself as Goethe's endeavor to instruct readers on how to go about seeing things, rather than informing them about what he actually saw in Italy.

The *Italian Journey* evinces specific pedagogical and rhetorical conventions reminiscent of those characterizing ancient spiritual texts. Firstly, it exhibits an incremental approach designed to guide the reader step-by-step towards reforming his visual aptitudes, wherein detours, starts and stops and digressions are taken for granted and are part and parcel of the attempt to bring the reader to alter his perspective and adopt an object-centered frame of mind.[278]Secondly, Goethe employs protreptic language entailing repetitions, redundancies and formulaic expressions aiding the reader's retention of diverse exercises. Thirdly, he prompts the reader to absolve a specific itinerary of observation, the outcome of which is of less significance than actually partaking in the process. In order to sustain his agenda, Goethe perpetually recalls and reactivates fundamental rules, suggesting novel ways of marshaling the imagination, memory, attention and judgment to keep the aim of seeing the world in its concrete objectual wholeness constantly before the mind. Finally, in bearing a distinctly procedural character, rather than explicate the doctrinal premises informing his exercises, Goethe merely encourages their practical execution, elaborating on the exploration of fundamental oppositions and intensifications needed to reform and cultivate perceptual faculties.[279]This is not to say that there are no dogmatic imperatives that inform the task of appropriating 'gegenstandliches Sehen.' Indeed, Goethe's very advocacy of such a form of observation was based on his repudiation of the rational philosophy of his times, enjoining withdrawal from the sensible world in favor of

[278]Hadot, 20.
[279]Hadot, 64.

disembodied forms of reflection. He accordingly devised a contrary method that assimilated traditional philosophical imperatives including the discipline of desire and the need to differentiate between adequate and inadequate representations to withhold assent from the latter, by embedding them in embodied exercises in sensuous cognition emphasizing a corporeal, physical grasp of the world. By thus reappropriating traditional philosophical doctrine in novel ways to integrate them into his practical exercises in gegenständliches Sehen, Goethe offers his readers a method capable of radically altering their ways of seeing.[280] A heuristic aimed at reforming observation thus importantly ties the *Italienische Reise* together, giving it internal coherence and defining it as a spiritual text.

In the final analysis, the tensions that riddle the *Italian Journey*, making it defy easy generic categorization open up a horizon for interpretation; one alternative being to read the work as a spiritual guide in the ancient tradition. Indeed, the *Italian Journey* exhibits diverse criteria that endow it the character of a spritual text: its provenance lies in the practice of spiritual exercises in writing, its central intent and purpose rests on compelling spiritual transformation, while its procedural logic and rhetorical features contribute to this overriding objective. Within this context, the advantage of a spiritual reading of the *Italian Journey* is that it furnishes a genuinely explanatory account of Goethe's self-proclaimed rebirth, making transparent wherein it consisted. Indeed, the *Italian Journey*'s fundamental organization can thus be said to revolve around Goethe's efforts to make his ostensible rebirth intelligible, whereby he carefully documents the passage from a deformed to a well-formed self by way of conveying the spiritual methods he employs to effectuate change.[281] Finding himself at a crucial crossroads, his aim in traveling to Italy involved no mere change of location or assumption of a new vocation, but a

[280] Hadot, 18.
[281] Hadot, 17.

veritable 'conversion' to a radically other worldview requiring the assimilation of new beliefs, convictions and systematic ways of behaving that marked a clear rupture with his previous existence. Such a transformation and reconstitution of identity could in turn only occur by way of absolving a practical regimen of spiritual exercises designed to fundamentally modify the practitioner's way of living. In presenting Goethe's decision to radically change the direction of his life and pointing the way to its realization, the *Italian Journey* ultimately alerts readers to a method and procedure enabling them to effectuate their own self-transformations. It furnishes them with the resources to commence a whole new way of life premised on the practice of an art of living in the spirit of the ancients.[282]

[282]Hadot, 30

Chapter 2 Goethe's Italian Journey: a therapeutic journey in the spirit of the ancients

> "Das Ziel meiner innigsten Sehnsucht, deren Qual mein ganzes Inneres erfüllte, war Italien, dessen Bild und Gleichnis mir viele Jahre vergebens vorschwebte, bis ich endlich durch kühnen Entschluß die wirkliche Gegenwart zu fassen mich erdreistete." *Kampagne in Frankreich 1792 - Zwischenrede*

Goethe's legendary journey to Italy, between September 1786 and June 1788, has elicited various designations from a grand tour and extended vacation to more weighty appellations of a hegira, an aesthetic education or a pilgrimage to classical antiquity.[1] Speculation as to the reasons behind his abrupt departure equally abound, with conjectures ranging from a mid-life crisis and crippling bout of writer's block to disenchantment with the oppressive political duties of Weimar administration and despondency owing to an unrequited, romantic interest. Years after his voyage, Goethe composed a memoir of sorts wherein he stylized himself a fugitive, hazarding a clandestine escape from the Weimar Duchy to travel through Italy incognito, in search of a self-liberating apprenticeship in the arts. In a tour de force exploration of Padua, Venice, Vincenza and a host of other Italian cities, he finally set foot in Rome, where he allegedly experienced a spiritual rebirth that allowed him to recover his true calling as a poet. But however one characterizes Goethe's journey and whatever motivations one attributes to it, the consensus remains that on the eve of his departure for Italy, he was afflicted by failing health, overwrought nerves and a spent identity, all trace of which had vanished by the time of his return to Weimar nearly two years later.

While scholars have widely acknowledged Goethe's Italian convalescence and rebirth, systematic inquiries into the nature of his rehabilitation are nonetheless wanting. This chapter

[1]Gretchen L. Hachmeister, *Italy in the German Literary Imagination: Goethe's "Italian Journey" and its Reception by Eichendorff, Platen and Heine* (Rochester: Camden House, 2002) 34.

thus seeks to revisit Goethe's voyage through Italy from a new perspective; one of a therapeutic journey in the spirit of the ancients, wherein he systematically deployed a set of self-healing techniques and curative strategies to restore his ravaged health.[2] I endeavor to demonstrate that Goethe's recovery from a kind of sickness of the soul was made possible through his penetrating observations of ancient remains on Italy's classical ground. Animated by the living reminders of a robust, Greco-Roman culture, Goethe set out to assimilate a 'classical form of life,' the mainstay of which, I argue was a therapeutics of the passions that radically reoriented his way of living. Though Goethe commenced his journey diagnosing his affliction with a malaise of the soul, the trajectory of his travels evinced progressive recovery bearing the imprint of remedial measures reminiscent of ancient therapeutic norms. Such curative principles not only served to divest him of disabling passions, it led to a process of spiritual rebirth and self-flourishing, whereby the cultivation of self-sufficiency, harmony with nature and a joyful affirmation of the present ultimately secured him 'classical health.'

If Goethe's journey is to be understood, in part, as a rehabilitative journey in ancient therapeutic terms, his ubiquitous pronouncements on the salutary effects of Italy's '*Gegenwart des klassischen Bodens,'* demands revisiting the widely held assumption that classical ground was simply the historico-geographical setting for his spiritual recovery.[3] I thus attempt to show that Goethe was unable to dissociate Italy's wealth of ancient architecture from the spiritual form of life that once animated it and the cultural wisdom that lay at its foundations. Classical ground, was for Goethe, in many respects, a repository for a timeless, ancient wisdom offering a set of

[2]A therapeutic approach has been applied to Goethe's literary works. For instance, Hans-Jürgen Schings has proposed interpreting Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* in terms of a dialectic of suffering and healing, whereby he draws on a therapeutic semantics of “Heilung” or “Genesung.” See Hans-Jürgen Schings, "Agathon-Anton Reiser-Wilhelm Meister. Zur Pathogenese des modernen Subjekts im Bildungsroman" In: ed. Wolfgang Wittkowski : *Goethe im Kontext. Kunst und Humanität, Naturwissenschaft und Politik von der Aufklärung bis zur Restauration*, (Tübingen: Niemeyer 1984).42-68.

[3]Wilfried Barner, "Altertum, Überlieferung, Natur: Über Klassizität und autobiographische Konstruktion in Goethes 'Italienischer Reise'," *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 105 (1988): 71.

fundamental norms of conduct that pointed the way to spiritual well-being. Indeed, Goethe's derivation of behavioral norms from his experiences in Italy is corroborated by his promulgation of notions of the healthy ('das Gesunde'), and the cheerful ('das Heitere') as quintessentially 'classical.'[4] Moreover, in repudiating associations of the classical with what was merely timeworn, he endowed it unmistakable connotations of health: "Klassisch nenne ich *das Gesunde*...das Alte ist nicht klassisch, weil es alt ist, sondern weil es *stark, froh, gesund ist*."[5] As one commentator argues, Goethe's formulation of the classical is laden with normative significance from which to extract invaluable, medical insights.[6] For Goethe then, the classical reaches beyond the precints of a historical epoch, geographical locale or aesthetic style, ultimately providing a model for spiritual renewal and healthy self-development. Systematic analysis of the semantic import of the regenerative power of classical soil as well as the crucial notion of 'classical health' lies at the heart of my interpretation of Goethe's travels as a fundamentally therapeutic enterprise.

Within the context of my claim that the Italian journey can be fruitfully interpreted as a classical, therapeutic venture, I further suggest that Goethe's way of life in Italy conformed to ethical doctrines characteristic of Hellenistic ancient philosophy. The adherents of this philosophical tradition were concerned primarily with three features of human existence: they were preoccupied with achieving immunity from the vagaries of time, they typically sought to detach themselves from practical politics, and they espoused a strong belief in individual

[4]For further discussion on the health connotations of Goethe's conception of the classical see Erich Jenisch, "Das Klassische nenne ich das Gesunde und das Romantische das Kranke." Goethes Kritik an der Romantik. *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 19 (1957) 50-79.
[5]Johann Peter Eckermann, Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens, ed. Ernst Beutler (Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1948) 332. (4 April 1829)
[6]Paul Bishop, *Nietzsche and Antiquity: his reaction and response to the classical tradition* ed. Paul Bishop (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004) 404.

responsibility for happiness.[7] Not only did these concerns mark Goethe's travels in Italy, the manners, habits and outlook he adopted closely converged with a Hellenistic therapeutics of the passions. Such therapeutic methods were cultivated within an essentially eudaimonistic framework, wherein medicine and self-formation formed an interlocking whole. Therapy thus aided both in overcoming various, widespread types of human suffering and in achieving a measure of self-flourishing.[8] By way of elaborating Goethe's recourse to curative practices of self-cultivation in terms of Hellenistic therapeutic doctrines, I show that healing and flourishing were the two salient concerns shaping the contours of his journey through Italy.

Finally, I seek to demonstrate that the curative strategies Goethe employed in Italy were not only Hellenistic in spirit, they bore striking similarities with Stoic and Epicurean practices aiming to regain the soul's health and cultivate spiritual development. The reader should bear in mind that while I evince the close affinities between Stoic and Epicurean therapeutic practices and Goethe's process of self-healing in Italy, I am by no means suggesting that he sought to convert to Stoicism or Epicureanism during the course of his travels. If Goethe did not explicitly mention either school in accounts of his journey, the influences I am suggesting are of a much more nuanced nature, wherein kinships and connections are latent and implicit. My purpose is to show how quintessentially Stoic and Epicurean themes informed Goethe's way of life in Italy, such that his journey can be characterized in terms of an art of living in the Hellenistic spirit. Indeed, an ancient art of living conceived as a process of developing skills needed to lead a good life assumed both a moral dimension, as evinced by Stoicism, in which the practitioner was obliged to live up to certain principles and exhibit virtue, and a hedonistic aspect as manifest in

[7]Lawrence & Charlotte Becker, *Encyclopedia of Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2001) 702.
[8]Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 3.

Epicureanism, in which one cultivated the ability to take pleasure from life. [9] But if Goethe's mode of existence in Italy took on both moral and hedonistic features, the parallels I attempt to draw with Stoicism and Epicureanism are not without precedent, whereby the eminent scholar of classical philology, Pierre Hadot, unequivocally qualified Goethe as "half Stoic, half Epicurean."[10] While it may strike the reader as curious that I should draw parallels from two, rival philosophical schools that took pains to define themselves in opposition to one another, Stoicism and Epicureanism share fundamental features, whereby they are at bottom, self-referential philosophies that offer comprehensive visions regarding how to live life effectively. My recourse to them as a means of elaborating what I take to be a journey informed by ancient therapeutic concerns, is motivated by the fact that they redress life's everyday trials and tribulations through a salutary art of living.[11] Indeed, both schools exhibit a strong commitment to removing diseases of the soul through reforming habitual attitudes to alter perceptions of reality in a fundamental revaluation of life.[12] In drawing on a repertoire of Stoic and Epicurean methods, I am able to provide an explanatory account of Goethe's recovery in terms of the deployment of specific, remedial techniques that significantly changed his apprehension of the world in ways that justify his claim to spiritual rebirth.

More specifically, I attempt to show that, at its essence, Goethe's Italian journey was a curative one crucially resting on the ancient imperative to be mindful of the present. In order to bring to light and focus on their favored values, Stoics and Epicureans systematically invoked the notion of heightened attention to existence in the present.[13] Within the context of diverse variations on the theme of living in the service of the present, I suggest that Goethe pursued a

[9]Ruut Veenhoven, "Arts-of-Living," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 4 (2003): 373
[10]Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a way of life: Spiritual Exercise from Socrates to Foucault* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996) 230.
[11]John Sellars, *The Art of Living The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2033) 66-67.
[12]Nussbaum, 328.
[13]John Lachs, *Stoic Pragmatism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2012) 38.

therapeutic balancing of duty and delight, whereby such an interplay of polarities is best captured in Stoicism's dutiful mastery of the self and Epicureanism's cultivation of prosaic, everyday sources of happiness. I maintain that Goethe shared Stoicism's emphasis on the virtue of disciplining disobedient impulses to assume duties in harmony with one's nature. I likewise endeavor to show that he embraced Epicureanism's belief in a life well lived as one characterized by everyday, present-at-hand pleasures marked by the absence of pain and distress. Goethe's journey through Italy can thus be said to importantly document the practice of a therapeutic savoir-faire in the ancient spirit based on the Stoicist premise of subduing the passions and the Epicurean injunction to embrace the simple joys of existence.

I. Goethe's Malaise of the Passions

In proposing to examine the methods he employed to cure himself in ancient, therapeutic terms, Goethe's illness itself must be interpreted based on ancient premises. According a central role to pathologies arising from disarrayed passions, the ancients essentially provide the descriptive resources required to diagnose the nature of Goethe's self-professed infirmity.[14] They essentially deemed human nature prone to overdetermination by rebellious passions that instilled false evaluative beliefs, prodigious efforts of which had to be expended to reign in and master their influence. Indeed, unruly passions that oppressively dictated the course of life were likened to a disease that necessitated intense and thoroughgoing treatment. Within this context, Goethe's malady of the soul, manifesting many of the signs and symptoms of unhealthy subjugation to the passions, lends itself to analysis in terms of the diverse afflictions of the affects catalogued by the ancients.

[14]Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," *Technologies of the Self A Seminar with Michel Foucault* ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (London: Tavistock Publications, 1988) 20.

As his first decade of tenure in the Weimar Duchy drew to a close, Goethe exhibited acute exhaustion and psychological instability symptomatic of a malaise of the passions. Ten years earlier, in 1776, he had enthusiastically accepted the Duke Karl August's alluring offer to serve not only as Weimar's official, court poet but as a political advisor of sorts, charged to intervene in a host of important, administrative matters.[15] Notwithstanding his inexperience in matters of governance, Goethe was eager to engage in the art of politics. He enthusiastically writes on the eve of his arrival in Weimar: "regieren!"[16] Indeed, his expectations of engaging in a new domain of practical, socially relevant activity were far from disappointed as he quickly acquired the prerogative to intervene in a host of sensitive political matters. Eventually appointed one of three ministers in the Duchy's highest political organ, the Privy Council, for an outsider with no former, political experience, Goethe made impressive strides and was entrusted with diverse portfolios that seemed to bode the inceptions of a brilliant political career.[17] But despite no want of personal zeal, by 1786, over-exertion in the onerous duties of administration and an obsessive longing to try his hand at the figural arts left Goethe in a state of emotional turmoil. The resulting psychological imbalance had twofold origins of submission to inordinate duty and subjection to disarrayed passions.

From the very inceptions of his political career, Goethe conceived his function as a task demanding the dedication of the best of state administrators, such that his commitment to the Duchy's communal welfare often went beyond the call of duty. Betraying a steadfast sense of responsibility, he announced early on in his tenure in 1780:

> Das Tagewerk, das mir aufgetragen ist, das mir täglich leichter und schwerer wird, erfordert wachend und träumend meine Gegenwart. Diese Pflicht wird mir täglich teurer, und darin

[15]Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age Volume II: Revolution and Renunciation, 1790-1803* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000) 56.
[16]WA I, 51. Tagebüch 8. Oktober 1777
[17]H. G. Haile, *Artist in Chrysalis A biographical Study of Goethe in Italy*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974) 3.

> wünscht' ich's den größten Menschen gleich zu tun und in nichts Größerem. Diese Begierde, die Pyramide meines Daseins, deren Basis mir angegeben und gegründet ist, so hoch als möglich in die Luft zu spitzen, überwiegt alles andere und lässt kaum augenblickliches Vergessen zu. Ich darf mich nicht säumen; ich bin schon weit in Jahren vor, und vielleicht bricht mich das Schicksal in der Mitte, und der babylonische Turm bleibt stumpf unvollendet.[18]

Referring to his political obligations in terms of a daily task demanding his every waking presence, Goethe was attentive to temporal exigencies, insisting that time was of the utmost essence in the execution of his duties. Indeed, he saw his political function as serving to test the foundations of his own capacities, whereby he would aspire to go beyond the objective management of affairs to spearhead genuine reform.[19] But while implicated in governance at almost every level, the actual leverage Goethe exercised in Weimar was often of a restricted nature. Disposing over neither natural resources nor an industrial base, the Duchy suffered from persisting budgetary constraints, whereby the administration struggled to marshal the funds necessary for daily functioning, much less those needed for reform and renovation. Despite a paucity of means, Goethe was charged with superintending road construction, the regulation of rivers and fire containment such that by 1779, virtually the entire infrastructure of the Weimar Duchy was under his oversight.[20] At the same time, witnessing injustices arising from a political apparatus that preserved the feudal interests of the governing classes at the expense of the needy, Goethe set about to reform an inefficient and in many ways regressive tax system.[21] He maintained of his efforts to ameliorate economic difficulties, "Man soll tun was man kann, einzelne Menschen vom Untergang zu retten."[22]In an effort to procure a source of untapped wealth and a wellspring of employment that would raise the morale of the Duchy's

[18]WA IV, 298. Brief an Lavater, Sept 1780
[19]Katharina Mommsen maintains that Goethe's political engagement was governed by a maxim of 'opferbereite Menschenliebe' and 'uneigennütziges Wohltung. see Katharina Mommsen, *Goethe's art of Living* (Victoria, B.C.: Trafford Publishing, 2003) p.56.
[20]T. J. Reed, *Wolfgang Goethe The Flight to Italy* (Oxford: Oxford UP 1999) x.
[21]Ekkehart Krippendorf, *Politik gegen den Zeitgeist* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1999) 10.
[22]WA IV, 4, 289. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 12 Sept 1780

underprivileged, Goethe became invested in a bid to reopen and revitalize the long closed mines of Illmenau. Amid such efforts, he was regularly confronted with the delicate problem of vested interests that institutionalized sources of spending. The entrenched privileges of the local nobility, civil servantry and the Duke's prized militia consumed inordinate revenues and impeded genuine reform. Moreover, though himself wary of embroilment in European conflicts that distracted from his priority of ameliorating the Duchy's living conditions, Carl August's increasing desire to involve Weimar in international affairs, saddled Goethe with further financial obligations. Faced with demands disproportionate to his resources, his hands were hopelessly tied.[23]

Within the context of less than satisfactory administrative conditions, Goethe's political engagement was exacerbated by an ethics of duty that drove him to privative forms of self-renunciation for the sake of the good of the public. Early on in his career, he made a principled distinction between governance and pleasure, deeming them fundamentally irreconcilable: "Herrschen und genießen geht nicht zusammen. Genießen heißt, sich und andern in Fröhlichkeit angehören; herrschen heißt, sich und anderen im ernstlichsten Sinne wohltätig sein."[24] But if Goethe saw the two domains as being mutually exclusive, governance would increasingly become a source of oppression, while pleasure all but disappeared from his quotidian existence. The more he came to grasp the realities of political practice, the more he was persuaded that personal privation was the necessary condition for efficacious governance. As early as 1780, he thus insisted, "Niemand als wer sich *ganz verläugnet* ist werth zu herrschen und kann

[23]Georg Lukács similarly interprets Goethe's departure for Italy as resulting from his failed attempts at social reform in Weimar: "Wir müssen wieder die Verdienste [Franz] Mehrings hervorheben, der erkannt hat, daß Goethe nicht aus Liebesenttäuschung, nicht infolge der Krise seiner Liebe zu Charlotte von Stein nach Italien floh, sondern darum, weil sein Versuch, das Weimarer Fürstentum nach den Prinzipien der Aufklärung gesellschaftlich zu reformieren, am Widerstand des Hofes, der Bürokratie und Karl Augusts gescheitert ist." Georg Lukács, 'Goethe und seine Zeit', in: *Deutsche Literatur in zwei Jahrhunderten*, 7 (Neuwied: 1964) 41- 184.
[24]BA 18, 620. Maximen und Reflexionen

herrschen."[25]Such an ethos of uncompromising dedication showed little sign of abating in the succeeding years, with Goethe writing to Lavatar in 1782, "Von mir hab ich dir nichts zu sagen als dass ich mich meinem Beruf aufopfre, in dem ich nichts suche, als wenn es das Ziel meiner Begriff wäre."[26]Indeed, Goethe's unremitting committment seemed vindicated with the opening of the Illmenau mines in 1783, whereby he persisted in maintaining, "Allein wer andre wohl zu leiten strebt, muß fähig sein viel zu *entbehren.*"[27] But with time, the positive connotations of unconditional devotion increasingly took on the resignatory character of self-sacrifice. A decisive shift in tone is revealed in his avowal to Jacobi in 1784, "ich bin ein armer sclave der Pflicht mit welcher mich das schicksal vermählt hat..."[28] Indeed, he complained the following year to Herder of being the victim of enslavement analogous to Ixion's afixment to a fiery wheel that rolled in all directions.[29] If the ethical category of self-renunciation had, from the onset, heavily influenced Goethe's thinking on political administration, it steadily took on a distorted character. Increasingly frustrated with the unsatisfactory character of his benevolent efforts to aid others, he maintained: "Daβ es doch ein fast nie befriedigter Wunsch ist Menschen zu nutzen."[30] Mired in a seemingly intractable state of affairs, Goethe gave vent to the futility of his predicament in the wake of his obligation to marshal recruits for Weimar's contribution to the European balance of power: "Denn ich sage immer wer sich mit der Administration abgiebt, ohne regierender Herr zu seyn, der muß entweder ein Philister oder ein Schelm oder ein Narr seyn."[31] Having gone to Weimar in search of practical experience that would permit him to escape the stigma of a poet once removed from reality, by 1786, Goethe felt the sobering effects

[25]FA II, 29, 262. Aus Goethe's Tagebuch, 13. Mai 1780
[26]GB 1, 403. Brief an Lavatar, 29. Juli 1782
[27]BA 1, 371-377 / MA 2.1: 82-87 Ilmenau Gedicht
[28]GB 1, 435. Brief an Jacobi, 3. März 1784
[29]WA IV, 7, 15. Brief an Herder, 20. Februar 1785
[30]GB 1, 387. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 2. April 1781
[31]GB 1, 514 Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 9. Juli 1786

of governance that had taken its toll in a series of exacting, self-renunciations.

Beyond his subjugation to self-defeating resignations issuing in disillusionment, Goethe's emotional impasse was due, in part, to his sense of depletion and premature aging, arising from occupational burnout. Possesssing a conscientious work ethic, Goethe diligently fulfilled his obligations, often overreaching himself. With time, he complained that giving counsel, dictating orders and monitoring others had come to monopolize his existence, such that he began to suffer a distortion of worldview from existing at one remove from life. Indeed, governance, implying the constant necessity of considering things in terms of official, state interest, invariably exacted a price. Obliged to delegate away private aspects of his life to accept the service of others, Goethe's self sufficiency was eroded, giving way to stagnation and inertia. He noted, "denn gewiss man wird durch anhaltende Bedienung vor der Zeit alt und unfähig."[32] By the end of his political service, Goethe suffered from a growing sense of dislocation and lack of proximity to life that threatened his very well-being. The thirty-seven year-old, who ought to have been in the prime of his life, complained of a paralyzing sterility, the sole cure for which, he insisted, was a sabbatical in Italy. After nearly a decade of trying his hand at the machinery of governance, a considerable aberration and sacrifice for a self-professed poet, Goethe was not only alienated by a function that seemed predicated on parochial, political demands, he suffered a privation of life owing to exhaustion from official duties.

In addition to his disenchantment with the static and taxing way of life characterizing political governance, Goethe was afflicted by an uncontainable desire to undertake a serious apprenticeship in the arts. Having received drawing lessons at a tender age, he quickly developed a facility for the figurative arts, such that by the time he reached university, he avidly sought

[32]WA III, 1, 150.Tagebuch der Italiänischer Reise, 5. Sept 1786

instruction from the reputed art historian, Friedrich Oeser. One of his most memorable experiences during this period was a trip to the Dresden art gallery that apprised him of a knack for painterly seeing permitting him to seamlessly alternate between the scenes of daily life and renown paintings that had become engraved in his visual memory.[33] Later, in the course of his political engagements in Weimar, a passion for drawing was frequently aroused by travel in connection with his official duties across the Thuringian countryside. Assailed by a feverish desire to sketch his natural surroundings, he regretted the perpetual interference of professional obligations, lamenting the necessity of suppressing his artistic inspiration: "Ich habe diese Zeit wieder einen Access vom *Zeichenfieber* gehabt, das aber durch die bittre Rinde des Lebensholzes bald wieder vertrieben worden ist."[34]Molested by ungratified passions, he began to toy with the idea of disowning his political responsibilities to placate artistic desires that increasingly assumed chronic dimensions. Only by transforming a nagging passion into a basic pleasure in harmony with his nature, could he hope to regain a modicum of peace of mind.

Thus chafing under the weight of the artistic influences of his youth, while hankering after an apprenticeship in the arts that continuously eluded him, Goethe conceived his relation to the figural arts as one characterized by a series of forced renunciations that had repeatedly impeded his will. The overwhelming compulsion to draw that periodically threatened to sabotage his daily committments, was symptomatic of a sickness of artistic deprivation that he had endured since adolescence: "Ich liege an dieser *Krankheit* von Jugend auf krank, und gebe Gott, dass sie sich einmal auflöse."[35] Having never pursued formal schooling in the fine arts, Goethe felt oppressed by the consciousness of his half-baked abilities, questioning whether he

[33]HA XI, 85. Italienische Reise, 8. Okt 1786 "Meine alte Gabe, die Welt mit Augen desjenigen Malers zu sehen, dessen Bilder ich mir eben eingedrückt, brachte mich auf einen eignen Gedanken."
[34]WA IV, 6, 133. Brief an Carl Ludwig von Knebel, 3 März 1783
[35]HA XI, 397. Zweiter Romischer Aufenthalt, 15 Sept 1787

might not possess an untapped talent that had long lain idle. The lingering regret of having prematurely foresaken his artistic desires increasingly fueled his determination to rectify his circumstances: "Von Jugend auf war mir dieses mein Trieb und meine Plage, jetzt, da das Alter kommt, will ich wenigstens das Erreichbare erreichen und das Tunliche tun, da ich so lange verdient und unverdient das Schicksal des Sisyphus und Tantalus erduldet habe."[36]Beholden to a state of existential thirst that forever remained unsatisfied, while forced to persist in mere artistic dabblings that bore the aspect of a struggle in vain, Goethe was gripped by the need to redress his protracted abstension from serious training in the fine arts.

As his first decade in Weimar drew to a close, Goethe thus suffered from a series of involuntary renunciations and a malaise of agitated passions that, infecting his identity, called for drastic therapeutic measures. The need to heal a soul captive to political interests that had exacted one too many a sacrifice and the desire to subdue unappeased, artistic passions that had a crippling effect on his daily morale, convinced Goethe that the sole remedy lay in a curative journey to Italy. He insisted that the central motivation for his travels involved pursuing a twofold rehabilitation that would permit him to recover his veritable nature: "*mich von den phisische moralischen Übeln zu heilen* die mich in Deutschland quälten und mich zuletzt unbrauchbar machten; *sodann den heisen Durst nach wahrer Kunst zu stillen*..."[37] The goals of overcoming privative forms of renunciation and placating insistent, artistic desires implied embracing norms inhering in a robust, classical form of life that Goethe took to be informing Italy's Greco-Roman patrimony. Indeed, his account of his journey is replete with exclamations articulating the exhilaration he felt living amidst classical environs, the buildings and monuments of which emanated a vigor and vitality unknown to him. He characteristically proclaimed of its

[36]HA XI, 352. Zweiter Romischer Aufenthalt, 27 Juni 1787
[37]WA IV, 8, 326. Rechenschaftbericht an Carl August 25 Januar 1788

salutary influence: "Froh empfind' ich mich nun auf klassischem Boden begeistert."[38] Goethe's enthusiasm for classical ground was, in part, due to his perception of its diametric opposition with conditions in Weimar. Just prior to his departure for Italy, he remarked on the Duchy's feeble foundations: "Hier geht's übrigens im Alten. Schade für das schöne Gebäude das stehen könnte, erhöht und erweitert werden könnte und leider *keinen Grund hat*."[39]But if Weimar's infrastructure seemed comparatively flimsy and unfounded, Goethe's admiration for Italy's resilient, architectural patrimony went much beyond the metaphor of solid groundwork. The values instilled in its architectural foundations pointed to a flourishing culture inspiring Goethe to adopt a therapeutic mode of living that sought to internalize a set of ancient convictions, perspectives and ways of responding to daily existence that would aid him in becoming happy and healthy.

Goethe's Art of Healing: Classical Rebirth

If Goethe's efforts to remodel the Weimar Duchy had been less than successful, leaving him with the unsavory feeling of having merely tinkered with the facade for want of proper foundations, he was determined to avoid mere cosmetic expedients in his aspirations to refashion his selfhood in Italy. Little wonder then, that he invoked the idea of radical rebirth, wherein a clean slate would spare him of architectural makeshift. Goethe spoke of such an overhaul of the self in explicitly therapeutic terms, wherein an important aim of his efforts lay in mending a soul aggrieved by the passions. The first step towards taming his unruly affects lay in achieving the right balance between conservation and alteration in the task of self-remodeling. Indeed, Goethe's rebirth, rooted in his normatively underpinned observations of Italy's classical ground, was to be one in which the defining feature was a reconciliation of opposing forces of

[38]MA 3. 2 Italien und Weimar 1786-1790, Römische Elegien 5. Elegie S. 47
[39]WA, IV, 7, 80 Brief an Knebel 1 Sept 1785

permanence and change. For Goethe, the classical essentially implied a certain transcendence of temporal contingencies through a process of ongoing rejuvenation. He initially claimed that the mere fact of setting foot in Rome amidst its cultural patrimony marked his rebirth: "An diesen Ort knüpft sich die ganze Geschichte der Welt an, und ich zähle *einen zweyten Geburtstag, eine wahre Wierdergeburt*, von dem Tage da ich Rom betrat."[40] Goethe saw his arrival in Rome as an important caesura, inaugurating an existential revolution of sorts, whereby his aspirations to be born again were intended to materialize in surroundings connotative of the origins of world history. But despite its status as the cradle of western civilization, Rome was far from a static world in terminal decline. On the contrary, it seemed to exhibit its eternal youth through a perpetual process of cultural regeneration that led it to persist through the endless rise and fall of empires and papal successions. In thus retaining immutable aspects while ceaselessly undergoing adaptive change, Rome offered an example worthy of emulation. Goethe maintained:

> Wenn man so eine Existenz ansieht, die zweitausend Jahre und darüber alt ist, durch den Wechsel der Zeiten so mannigfaltig und vom Grund aus verändert und doch noch derselbe Boden, derselbe Berg, ja oft dieselbe Säule und Mauer, und im Volke noch die Spuren des alten Charakters, so wird man ein Mitgenosse der großen Ratschlüsse des Schicksals...[41]

As the symbol of eternal renewal, Rome furnished Goethe with a palpable image of a timeless, indestructible patrimony evincing an ever-changing dynamic of metamorphosis through time. Ultimately likening Rome to a phoenix rising out of its own ashes, Goethe's ascertainment of its exemplary trajectory of ongoing resurrections undoubtedly informed his designation of 'Klassischer Boden' as "die sinnlich geistige Überzeugung, daß hier das Große *war, ist* und *sein wird*."[42] The chosen soil of western civilisation, Rome incarnated the timelessness of classical

[40]HA XI, 146. Italienische Reise 3. Dez 1786
[41]HA XI, 129. Italienische Reise, 7 Nov 1786
[42]HA XI, 455. Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt Bericht Dez 1787

ground, its greatness transcending the historical contingency of its ancient culture through a perennial dialectic of immutability and change. By making recourse to radical self-reformative measures, Goethe would endeavor to achieve just such a synthesis of permanence in change to bring to realization his own personal rebirth.

II. The ancient therapeutics of presence

Surrounded by an enduring Greco-Roman patrimony, Goethe's resolve to be reborn and rise above the passage of time led him to employ strategies resembling those exercised in ancient therapeutic practice, most notably in its emphasis on mindful attention to the present. Indeed, Hellenistic philosophical schools such as Stoicism and Epicureanism were steeped in the logic of valorizing the present, premised on the conscientious endeavor to prevent each moment from becoming a series of distractions, disruptions or delays, so as to concentrate on the potential residing in the immediate present. As one commentator maintains, "the kernel of Stoic and Epicurean anthropological thinking is an attitude to time, according to which each moment of existence must be treated as sufficient unto itself..."[43]The ability to make the moment self-sustaining and thereby redeem its value, was in turn the key to securing happiness. Notwithstanding, within the context of the everyday, solicitous awareness of the present could not be taken for granted. Accustomed to living life as a temporal continuum, humans habitually looked backwards and forwards, becoming oblivious to the claims of the present to unwittingly let them slip by. Indeed, perhaps no writer has more forcefully captured the fundamental insight behind the ancient injunction to attend to the present, than the renown, classical philologist, Friedrich Nietzsche. He remarks in characteristically trenchant terms, "Wer sich nicht auf der Schwelle des Augenblicks, alle Vergangenheiten vergessend, niederlassen kann, wer nicht auf

[43]Andrew Cusack, *Wanderer in Nineteenth Century German Lieterature* (Rochester: Camden House, 2008) 33.

einem Punkte, wie eine Siegesgöttin, ohne Schwindel und ohne Furcht zu stehen vermag, der wird nie wissen was Glück ist."[44] Nietzsche suggests that the enabling condition of happiness in the present lay in the strength of will permitting one to abide at the threshold of time in defiance of an irrecuperable past and unknowable future. Heeding the present required suppressing concern with the past likely to elicit self-defeating emotions including guilt, regret, or shame, while extinguishing doubts about the future liable to induce apprehensions of an unwelcomed event or fear of a desired state's failure to materialize. If solely the present was subject to alteration, brooding over the past or obsessing over the future not only jeopardized one's ability to effectively respond to the present, it ultimately undermined the very happiness that could be experienced within it.

Goethe's Therapeutics of Presence

The therapeutic precept that served as the linchpin for Goethe's self-curative process in Italy was none other than the ancient doctrine of narrowing the focus of attention to life's immediate present. In the wake of his tenure in Weimar, Goethe increasingly felt the implications of allowing the ceaselessly unfolding opportunities in the 'here and now,' pass him by. His therapeutic search for 'classical health' thus importantly centered on cultivating the fortitude of mind required to overcome temporal vulnerabilities antithetical to making the most of life's immediacy. Indeed, he insisted that the designation of the classical implied a certain ascendency over time that avoided squandering the moment in rumination on a concluded past or apprehensions over unknowable, future adversities. Nietzsche accordingly formulated the idea of a Goethean man, who manifesting Olympian resolve in the face of life's vicissitudes, relinquished a defunct past and siezed an unpredictable future in unperturbed absorption with the

[44]Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* (München: Hanser Verlag 1954) 212.

present.[45] While mastery of the present thus proved the guiding tenet of Goethe's spiritual awakening in Italy, it remained an abiding concern throughout the entirety of his existence.

Goethe became increasingly conscious of the value of mindfulness to the present, in virtue of his idiosyncratic mode of perceiving Italy's Greco-Roman patrimony as an expression of the form of life that animated it. The awareness of a need to redeem his immediate existence was thereby achieved through the apprehension of specific values imbued in Italy's 'Klassischer Boden.' Goethe essentially perceived the trappings of a civilization, wherein a diverse array of buildings and monuments served as reminders of men having consecrated themselves to life in the present. Despite leaving behind little trace of their private affairs, the Romans had taken care to bequeath posterity with a wealth of civic architecture revealing a culture intent on affirming the present. Not content to commit their practical wisdom exclusively to writing, they went out of their way to enshrine it in the visible monuments expressive of their daily way of life. [46] Constructing remarkable facilities accomodating civic life, including imposing acqueducts conveying water from afar to supply baths, latrines, and fountains, august temples providing ceremonial spaces of communal worship, or a host of public amenities such as baths, amphitheatres and racetracks, the Romans responded to the quotidian needs of the populace in grandiose fashion. Goethe insisted, "Wasserleitungen, Bäder, Theater, Amphitheater, Rennbahn, Tempel! Und dann die Palläste der Kayser, die Gräber der Großen – *Mit diesen Bildern hab ich meinen Geist genährt und gestärckt*."[47] Goethe recognized that magnificent structures oriented foremost towards enhancing day-to-day life to make the most of immediate existence, nourished an affirmative outlook on life. Built on a scale and proportion that ennobled ordinary existence,

[45]Nietzsche, 216.
[46]WA IV, 8, 57. Brief an Knebel, 17. Nov 1786 "Von dem Privat Leben der Alten sind wie bekannt wenig Spuren mehr übrig, desto größer sind die Reste die uns ihre Sorge fürs Volck, fürs allgemeine und ihre wahre weltherrliche Größe zeigen..."
[47]WA IV, 8, 57. Brief an Knebel, 17. Nov 1786

they elevated man in his execution of prosaic activities. In articulating the glory of the present and furnishing the populace a means of enhancing their quotidian way of life, Greco-Roman constructions exemplified a culture categorically bound to the present.

The classical forms that permeated Italy's landscape were not only magnificent expressions of a civilization that affirmed communal life in the present, their remarkable robustness made them persist through time so that they stood afirm serving their original purposes, centuries after their creation. Goethe maintained, "Heut' hab' ich die Nymphe Egeria besucht, dann die Rennbahn des Caracalla, die zerstörten Grabstätten längs der Via Appia und das Grab der Metella, das einem erst einen Begriff von solidem Mauerwerk gibt. *Diese Menschen arbeiteten für die Ewigkeit*..."[48] The impressive contributions of ancient masonry revealed an array of towers, gates, masoleums and fortresses characterized by their abiding presence. Entrenched in the Roman landscape, they were built to resist the vagaries of time to last for an eternity. Goethe conveyed the visceral effects of observing such resilient, enduring structures: "Wer sich mit Ernst hier umsieht und Augen hat zu sehen, muß solid werden, *er muß einen Begriff von Solidität fassen, der ihm nie so lebendig ward*."[49] In witnessing the products of a superhuman effort to withstand the test of time, the outside observer could not but stand in awe of a civilization marked by its unwavering firmness, wedded to mundane existence. The concrete images of a palpable present that eclipsed past and future, awakened Goethe to a classical ethos that extended the products of man's will through time to affirm life in the present.

Throughout the course of his journey, Goethe elaborated innumerable examples of Greco-Roman architecture that seemed to embrace and valorize the present. Roman monuments

[48]HA XI, 134. Italienische Reise, 11. Nov 1786
[49]HA XI, 134. Italienische Reise, 10. Nov 1786

displayed a typically pagan attitude of embracing life, be it in good or in bad, especially in the face of death. Upon encountering a Roman graveyard inVerona, Goethe was led to reflect on the difference between ancient and Christian tombstones. The latter, depicting figures awaiting resurrection with supplicating gazes directed towards the heavens were expressions of an intrinsic longing to escape the present to achieve redemption in an afterlife. Ancient tombstones, in contrast, conveying an everydayness that bore no trace of yearning for transcendence, displayed a natural presence perfectly at home in the world. Goethe explained:

> Die Grabmäler sind herzlich und rührend und stellen immer das Leben her...Da stehen Vater und Mutter, den Sohn in der Mitte, einander mit unaussprechlicher Natürlichkeit anblickend. Hier reicht sich ein Paar die Hände. Hier scheint ein Vater, auf seinem Sofa ruhend, von der Familie unterhalten zu werden. Mir war die unmittelbare Gegenwart dieser Steine höchst rührend...Hier ist kein geharnischter Mann auf den Knien, der eine fröhliche Auferstehung erwartet. Der Künstler hat mit mehr oder weniger Geschick nur *die einfache Gegenwart der Menschen hingestellt, ihre Existenz dadurch fortgesetzt und bleibend gemacht.* Sie falten nicht die Hände, schauen nicht in den Himmel, sondern sie sind hienieden, was sie waren und was sie sind. Sie stehen beisammen, nehmen Anteil aneinander, lieben sich...[50]

By making the spirit of life live on in the composition of the tombs themselves, the ancient artist depicted an innerworldly suspension of the present, suggesting life's ongoing continuation in reverence for existence. A master of outward, surface appearances, his works seamlessly corresponded with the world's bounded existence to immortalize the lived moment. But not only ancient tombstones breathed the spirit of life, even ancient sarcophogie were decorated with vivid images celebrating existence. Goethe thus praised the high reliefs ornamenting the Hippolytus sarcophogus in Grigent, claiming that it represented a pure glorification of existence. Elsewhere, he remarked of an ancient tomb that seemed to overcome death in that its ashes still appeared to delight in life: "So überwältigt Fülle den Tod; und die Asche da drinnen Scheint, im stillen Bezirk, noch sich des Lebens zu freun." Hence, for Goethe, far from mourning death, the

[50]HA XI, 41 Italienische Reise, Verona 16 Sept 1786

ancients sought to reconcile life and death, whereby tombs and graves were made to inspire genuine commitment to existence rather than to foster bereavement or encourage the desire for salvation. In marked contrast, the modern artist, driven by the artistic imperative of expressing the limitless reaches of otherwordly spirituality, typically portrayed the abdication of mundane life, depreciating the lived present and revealing the ultimate transience of mortal existence. Such divergences in funereal presentation betrayed the gap separating ancient and modern conceptions of allegiance to the present.[51] Goethe later elaborated on the fundamental difference separating two, fundamentally contrasting attitudes: "Wirft sich der Neuere...fast bei jeden Betrachtung ins Unendlichen...so fühlten die Alten...sogleich ihre einzige Behaglichkeit innerhalb der lieblichen Grenzen der schönen Welt. Hierher waren sie gesetzt, hierzuberufen, hier fand ihre Tätigkeit Raum, ihre Leidenschaft Gegenstand und Nahrung."[52]Ancient burial monuments thus embodied a 'vivere memento,' dispelling thoughts of man's fate beyond death and replacing them with intimations of the singularity and fullness of each moment of individual existence.[53] Goethe insisted that ancient artists had little difficulty immortalizing the deeds of their contemporaries precisely because they faithfully adhered to every aspect of life in the present: "weil jene handelnden Personen...mit allem Sinn, aller Neigung, aller Kraft auf die Gegenwart wirkten; daher es einem gleichgesinnten Darsteller nicht schwerfallen konnte, eine solche Gegenwart zu verewigen."[54] Undistracted by untold promises of the otherworldly, the ancients circumscribed themselves within the world's finitude, their only concern being one of devoting their energies in efforts to redeem the present.

[51]In his Bildungsroman *Wilhelm Meister,* Goethe himself would transpose the credo of memento vivere in a symbolic work of architecture by bringing to bear a classical mausoleum, that despite being burial chamber consecrated to the past, transcended time and the very finitude of death to figure equally as a chamber of future and present.
[52]BA 19 481.Winkelmann und sein Jahrhundert
[53]Cusack, 33.
[54]BA 19, 48.Winkelmann und sein Jahrhundert

Goethe essentially identified a normative standard informing ancient culture, brought to expression in Italy's Greco-Roman architecture. He related the indelible impression ancient monuments left on him,

> Hier nun das Wundersamste des Alterthums, dem der sehen kann, mit Augen zu sehen; die *Gesundheit nämlich des Moments* und was diese werth ist…Würde gefragt was sie vorstellen? so wäre man vielleicht in Verlegenheit zu antworten; einstweilen möchte ich sagen: diese Gestalten geben uns das Gefühl: *der Augenblick müsse prägnant und sich selbst genug seyn* um ein würdiger Einschnitt in Zeit und Ewigkeit zu werden.[55]

The ancients saw the secret to life residing in the capacity to live in the present by making it self-sustaining. Consecrating themselves to activities at hand to make full use of life's immediate deliverances, while checking illegitimate beliefs that enslaved one to past regrets or future anxieties, they strove to endow value to the moment to make it sufficient onto itself.[56]Past and future influenced the present only insofar as to rectify errors through learned lessons or take precautions for forthcoming ventures, without forfeiting the spontaneity needed to make due on opportunities in the present. Acutely aware that everything required for a fruitful life lay in 'the here and now,' the ancients were persuaded that one need only sieze the occasion, whereby the resolute embrace of the opportune moment (Kairos) could touch eternity.[57] The capacity to affirm each moment of life revealed a characteristically ancient vitality of spirit, such that Goethe was persuaded that ancient tombs, temples and amphitheatres could not have arisen were they not, at bottom, articulations of their creator's healthy deference to the ever-renewed present. Indeed, their timelessness instilled in him the belief that through embracing the present as the raw material for productive activity, man could attain a measure of immortality. The noble simplicity

[55]WA IV, 46, 109-110. Brief an Zelter, 19 Okt 1829
[56]Hadot, 220.
[57]Michael Jaeger,"Kairos und Chronos-oder: Der prägnante Moment ist flüchtig. Antike Philosophie, klassische Lebenskunstlehre und moderne Verzweiflung." In *Prägnanter Moment Studien ur deutschen Literatur der Aufklärung und Klassik* (Würburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002) 411.

and calm grandeur of monuments that had endured for centuries, was testament to the fact that creative activity faithful to the present could surpass temporal existence to achieve something that bore the stamp of eternity. By embracing the present as germinal and rich in significance, the passage of time could be reconciled with the claims of eternity.[58] Thus deriving important, salutary effects from apprehending robust structures in the service of each instant of existence, Goethe strove to put his inspiration into therapeutic practice, resolving on a rebirth predicated on an array of therapeutic techniques aimed at making the most of the present.

Goethe's endeavor to valorize the present, essentially involved the mediation of what Pierre Hadot calls two opposite, but inseparable poles of man's spiritual life: the Stoic demands of moral conscience and an Epicurean joy in existence. Alternating between tension and relaxation, duty and serenity, discipline and blitheness, Goethe synthesized characteristically Stoic and Epicurean attitudes in a therapeutic mode of artistic training that aimed to shape his soul in ways that could vindicate each moment of his existence. Through realizing a host of measures recalling Stoic and Epicurean therapeutic teachings including self mastery, the accomplishment of duties, agreement with nature, the revaluation of pleasure and the cultivation of friendship, Goethe's artistic learning process became the medium through which he defeated the tendency to allow the passions to dictate his purposes and divert his attention from the concerns of the present. Indeed, once he reached Italy's classical ground, his habit of languishing in the past and setting hopes on the future gave way to exclusive concern with the present.

Stoic duty to the present: the imperative of self-reliance

Within the context of cultivating an allegiance to life in the present, reverberations of

[58]Nicholas Rennie, *Speculating on the Moment: The Poetics of Time and Recurrence in Goethe, Leopardi, and Nietzsche* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005) 45.

Stoic, ethically disposed living permeated Goethe's apprenticeship in the arts in Italy. Here, a central Stoicist aspect of affirming the present involved cultivating independence. Goethe exhibited a pronounced will to assume responsibility for his fate in Italy that bore affinities with the Stoic prerogative to self-reliance.[59]If the Stoics believed that dependence on others was detrimental to one's well-being, Goethe was persuaded that his malaise of the soul was partly a function of having forfeited his sovereignty to others during his long stint of public service.[60] He thus began his journey by taking a host of purely practical measures intended to assert his will in matters he had previously delegated to others. As unprecedented as it was for someone of his stature, he elected to travel through Italy alone and unaccompanied by means of public transportation. In so doing, he was obliged to fend for himself, accommodating to the post coach's unreliable schedule, coping with idiosyncratic travelers and improvising in the face of unexpected obstacles. Left entirely to his own devices, he had to attend to even the most mundane tasks, be it exchanging currency or settling his lodgings. He saw a return to menial tasks in Italy, a kind of exercise in reclaiming his self-sufficiency: "Es ist mir eine gute Übung allein zu seyn, da ich für mich selbst sorgen, alles selbst thun muß, nachdem ich mich solange habe gängeln und bedienen lassen."[61]Goethe's willingness to subject himself to all form of practical inconvenience to reclaim lost autonomy was not without curative value. He noted the therapeutic effects ensuing from a regime of self-service, "Schon jetzt, dass ich mich selbst bediene, immer aufmerksam, immer *gegenwärtig* sein muss, gibt mir diese wenigen Tage her eine ganz andere Elastizität des Geistes."[62]Doing things on his own promoted the recuperation of a long lost agility of mind, permitting Goethe to renew attention to 'the here and now' and engage

[59]Arnold I. Davidson, "Spiritual Exercises and Ancient Philosophy: An Introduction to Pierre Hadot," *Critical Inquiry* 16 (3) (1990): 478.
[60]J. M. Cooper, "Stoic Autonomy," ed. J. Cooper. *Knowledge, Nature and the Good: Essays on Ancient Philosophy*, (Princeton: Princeton UP 2004) 123.
[61]WA IV, 8, 28. Brief an Seidel, 18. Sept 1786
[62]HA XI, 24. Italienische Reise, 11. Sept 1786

with his immediate circumstances.

Goethe's resolve to become self-reliant during his protracted stay in Italy was likewise manifest in his assessment of things deemed either worthy of pursuit or persistent avoidance. Indeed, if Stoic therapeutic practice stipulated learning to delineate what was in the reach of one's powers and what remained a function of uncontrollable circumstance, Goethe set out, in similar fashion, to test his capacity for self-determination. He intentionally refused letters of invitation that might benefit him during his travels, insisting that denying himself the privileges that came with his Weimar credentials permitted him to take the liberties required to appreciate his new environment in a free, unconstrained fashion: "Ich bin wohl und sehe auf diese Art fast mehr, als wenn ich mit mehreren Umständen und Empfehlungen reiste."[63] Even when entering territories to which few Italian travellers dared to venture, Goethe insisted on exploring the outmost reaches of Italy entirely on his own. Hazarding a five-day journey by boat from the coast of Naples to Sicily, he insisted that the absence of intermediaries served to encourage practical resourcefulness. He remarked in hindsight of the benefits of cultivating an ethos of self-reliance: "Ich bin durch Sicilien gegangen, ohne Empfehlungsschreiben und ohne Garde, und bin doch durchgekommen, es geht Alles, wenn man sich zu schicken und zu finden weiß."[64]The determination to go unaided in travel thus gave Goethe a clear sense of what he was capable of achieving, whereby ascertaining the scope of his capacities was the first step in regaining the power to assert his will in the present.

Reaccustomed to dealing with life's immediate practicalities, Goethe exhibited certain features reminiscent of Stoic exercises in subduing the passions to enable dutiful engagement

[63]WA IV, 8, 34. Brief an Seidel, 14 Okt 1786
[64]WA IV, 8, 219. Brief and Friedrich von Stein, 26 Mai 1787

with the present. Here, laboring in the arts essentially became the vehicle through which he practiced a form of therapeutic training that aided him to overcome their dictates. If the ancients had envisaged the disciplining of the passions as analogous to the schooling an artisan underwent to develop the skills of his trade, Goethe realized the therapeutic aim of restraining his impulses by cultivating craftsmanship in the arts.[65] Learning to curb excessive desires, runaway emotions, and misdirected impulses in the very process of acquiring the technical know-how of drawing, painting and sculpting, artistic self-instruction essentially became a means of liberating him from the yoke of the passions, whereby such training incorporated what amounted to a kind of Stoic duty of circumpect, concentrated attention on the present. For the Stoic, exercising such vigilance implied never losing sight of what was important through endeavoring to remain imperturbable in the face of impulses that threatened to interfere with one's purposes.[66]The key to realizing one's ends lay in maintaining self control by establishing absolute dominion over the affects to master the circumstances insofar as possible.[67] The Stoic thus systematically discriminated what did and did not depend on the will, refusing to allow things that lay beyond control to become a source of disturbance.[68] Cultivating an attitude of impassive detachment, he remained indifferent to the past, letting bygones be bygones, while unfazed by future uncertainties, he abstained from speculation and worry, setting out dutifully to make the most of the present.

Determined to put an end to regrets of past neglect, while intent on satisfying the insistent urge to fulfill his fundamental, artistic needs, Goethe conceived his apprenticeship in the arts as involving a duty to subdue the passions. He recognized the necessity of steadfastly working

[65]Richard Parry, "*Episteme* and *Techne*", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.) online, internet March 3, 2015. Available: http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/episteme-techne/
[66]John Lachs, *Stoic Pragmatism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2012) 38.
[67]F.H. Sandbach, *The Stoics* (New York: Norton, 1975) 61.
[68]J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: CUP 1969) 121.

through his desires in order to extinguish their obsessive hold on him: "Meine Kunstkenntnisse, meine kleinen Talente müssen hier ganz durchgearbeitet, ganz reif werden, *sonst bring' ich wieder euch einen halben Freund zurück, und das Sehnen, Bemühen, Krabbeln und Schleichen geht von neuem an*."[69] Rejecting a mere halfhearted attempt in the arts that would invariably induce renewed agitation and yearning, Goethe sought to satisfy his desires once and for all through a trying regime of artistic training. Such aspirations required constant efforts to combat rebellious passions and defeat weakness of the will in order to maintain mindful dedication to the present. Goethe essentially had to hold to his artistic purpose no matter what the result, maintaining his commitment from one moment to the next and guarding against negative incursions of the past and future. Here, he was particularly susceptible to anticipation interfering with his ability to adhere to the moment. Keeping his desires within reasonable limits, he sought to avoid impatiently getting ahead of himself in the expectation of instantaneous results. Moreover, accountable solely to himself, he was obliged to continuously reanimate his industry and reinforce self-discipline in order to sustain the necessary endurance. Only by cultivating a resoluteness of purpose could he capitalize on lessons learned and constructively prepare for obstacles arising on the path to mastery. Goethe thus remained on guard, ceaselessly restraining his impulses to ensure that they never got the better of him. He explained his endeavor to avoid defeatist passions occasioned by difficulties met with during his apprenticeship: "Still und *ohne weiter zu dencken und zu grübeln benutz ich jeden Tag* und eile mir die nötigsten Kenntnisse zu erwerben, suche ein wenig mich *in Übung* zu setzen."[70] Goethe thus saw his efforts to temper his clamorous, artistic inclinations through vigilant monitoring and disciplined schooling a matter of exercise, which was not without consequence: "Ich fühle erst was Gelegenheit und

[69]HA XI, 353. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Ende Juni 1787
[70]WA IV, 8, 322. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 19 Jan 1788

Unterricht...einer dringenden Neigung aufhelfen."[71] Training in the arts thus became a means of achieving the self command needed to dedicate himself to the present, whereby Goethe rigorously combatted self-defeating passions that threatened to undermine his efforts to right the past and bear fruit in his artistic laborings.

Goethe's perseverence and unremitting self-discipline issued in daily perceivable improvements that gave meaning to his life in the present. Making every effort to tap into available opportunities, he allowed no instant to go to waste: "Es vergeht kein Tag, an dem ich nicht eine neue Kenntniß erwerbe oder irgend eine Fähigkeit ausbilde."[72] Elsewhere, he similarly noted, "Kein Tag vergeht, daß ich nicht in Kenntnis und Ausübung der Kunst zunehme."[73]Goethe assimilated the rigorous, daily routine of the artist in Italy, habituating himself to the tedious repetition of committing what he saw to paper, day in and day out without interruption: "Ich werde täglich fleißiger und treibe die Kunst, die eine so ernsthafte Sache ist, immer ernsthafter."[74]Indeed, the more seriously he took his artistic training, the more he circumscribed himself in the immediate present, whereby artistic training came to engross his energies so fully, making him attuned to productive potential of each instant: "Ich bin nun auf einem Punckte, wo ich alle meinen *Fleiß auf die Gegenwart concentriren muß*."[75] Absorbed by the artistic task before him, wherein distractions could no longer penetrate, Goethe's unwavering industry served to arrest time and make him unaware of its passage: "Wenn man mich außer mir selbst herausbringen könnte, müßten es diese Tage tun, aber ich falle immer wieder in mich zurück, und meine ganze Neigung ist auf die Kunst gerichtet."[76] Enjoying conditions that allowed him to

[71]GB II, 73. Brief an Knebel, 21 Dez 1787
[72]WA IV, 8, 265. Brief an Schnauss, 1 Okt 1787
[73]HA XI, 381. Zweiter Romischer Aufenthalt, 11. August 1787
[74]WA IV, 8, 234. Brief an Carl August, 6-7 Juli 1787
[75]WA IV, 8, 249. Brief an Knebel, 18 Aug 1787
[76]HA XI, 414. Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt, Castel Gandolfo, 8 Okt 1787

labor to his heart's content, Goethe was able to toil away at the arts without unnecessary disturbance: "Ich bin in einer recht wunderlichen Lage und will mich eben zusammennehmen, jeden Tag nutzen, tun, was zu tun ist, und so diesen Winter durch arbeiten."[77] Such unalloyed immersion in the present could not but lead to progress, wherein Goethe's undeviating attunement to his artistic purposes led to noteworthy advancements on a daily basis: "Jeden Tag geht mir ein neues Licht auf..."[78] By taking his artistic laborings one day at a time, Goethe achieved a presence of mind absorbed in artistic training, helping him to reap the rewards of the labor of each instant.

Throughout the course of his journey, Goethe employed a further means of reinforcing a Stoic ethic of dutiful commitment to the present, namely through the exercise of a therapeutic mode of correspondence. One important way in which the Stoics made themselves answerable to the present was through regularly giving an account of their daily ongoings. The recollection of the day's activities served as an exercise in taking stock of oneself, subjecting one's habitual way of doing things to scrutiny.[79] Goethe accounted for his occupation in Italy in precisely this manner, committing the events of each day to writing in the form of meticulous journal entries and innumerable letters home that served to chronical his artistic training. Producing detailed resumes of his daily routine, he implicitly drew up a balance sheet, evaluating how he executed certain activities in terms of how he ought to have done them.[80] Indeed, despite facing an ever steeper learning curve, Goethe deemed it imperative to establish accountability: "Nun wird es mir immer schwerer von meinem Aufenthalte in Rom *Rechenschafft* zu geben. Denn wie man die

[77]HA XI, 410. Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt, Frascati, 2 Okt 1787
[78]HA XI, 414. Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt, 8 Okt 1787
[79]Foucault, 162.
[80]Foucault, 163.

See immer tiefer findet je weiter man hineingeht.“[81] But if written recapitulation was meant to keep tabs on his progress, it also served to recall the principles that ought to govern his artistic training. Goethe thereby addressed injunctions to himself that were intended to reactivate a spiritual attitude of a dutifulness to the present. By putting into words the principles that guided his practice, he effectively wrote for himself, in writing to others. Moreover, the cultivation of an unusual number of epistolary relations meant that he continuously rearticulated his efforts to different individuals, keeping his artistic task constantly before him. Years later, Goethe formulated the benefits derived from such daily, written self-surveillance, emphasizing the way in which it attuned one to the value of the present:

> Wir schätzen ohnehin die Gegenwart zu wenig, tun die meisten Dinge frohnweise ab, um ihrer los zu werden. *Eine tägliche Übersicht des Geleisteten und Erlebten* macht erst, daβ man seines Thuns gewahr und froh werde; sie führt zur Gewissenhaftigkeit; Fehler und Irrtümer treten bei solchen *täglichen Buchführung von selbst* hervor, die Beleuchtung des Vergangnen wuchert für die Zukunft. *Wir lernen den Moment würdigen*, wenn wir ihn alsobald zu einem historischen machen.[82]

The repetitive remarks of the letters documenting Goethe's artistic labors in Italy, can thus be seen as a form of self-examination in which the constant, thorough review of his work routine served to identify errors and shortcomings while reinforcing his committment to fruitful activity in the present.

Not restricted to achieving immunity from past regrets or future anxieties, while consolidating new habits of duty, Goethe's mindful comportment towards the present also exhibited adherence to something resembling a Stoic agreement with nature. Persuaded that universal reason inhered in nature, serving to organize and direct its purposes, the Stoic reflected upon nature's rational arrangement of things, recognizing that he had cause to bring his way of

[81]WA IV, 8, 145. Brief an Weimarer freundekreis, Rom, 25. Jan 1787
[82]GG 6, 172. Gespräch mit dem Kanzler Friedrich v. Müller, 23. Aug 1827

life within its bounds.[83] Moreover, the corollary to such living in accordance with universal nature, was living in accord with one's own, particular nature. Indeed, the Stoic adapted himself to nature's arrangements in lieu of an awareness of himself as an integral constituent of it, whereby realizing the truth within him, was one way of satisfying the truth residing in the nature of things as a whole.[84] Such an attempt to agree with nature, effectively implied overcoming cultural constraints that served to thwart indigenous growth. For the Stoic, nature encompassed a radical norm of human flourishing that stood in opposition to cultural forces thought to impede natural, human development.[85] Through making selections in life on the basis of what belonged to or was foreign to one's character, the Stoic strove to make his endeavors fitting to his innate potential.[86]

If Goethe was persuaded that Weimar's court culture and administrative ethos had warped his character and worked against his inborn aptitudes, in Italy, he sought a radical rebirth that would bring him in agreement with nature. By taking measures to effectuate wide-ranging reforms, he set out to retrieve the essential bent of his own nature. Hence, while many accounts of the Italian journey interpret the pivotal notion of rebirth a residue of Goethe's early Pietist leanings,[87] its import lies rather in something akin to the ancient, therapeutic belief that cultural forces seen to restrict and undermine an individual's innate, developmental trajectory had to be surmounted to approximate an indigenous nature. Indeed, Goethe believed that a renewal of his selfhood implied the recuperation of certain, inviolable facets of his identity and the relinquishment of artificially imposed dimensions. The governing logic of rebirth was based on

[83]Mark Holowchak, *The Stoics: A guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum Int'l Publishing Group, 2008) 174.
[84]J. M. Cooper, "'Eudaimonism, the Appeal to Nature, and 'Moral Duty' in Stoicism'", ed. Engstrom and Whiting *Aristotle, Kant and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996) 59.
[85]Nussbaum, 32.
[86]R. W. Sharples, *Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics: An Introduction to Hellenistic Philosophy* (London: Routledge1996) 46.
[87]Richard Block, *The Spell of Italy Vacation, Magic, and the Attraction of Goethe* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2006) 205.

what he termed a critical, unselving (Entselbstigung) that could prepare the way for renewed selving (Verselbstung). Such reformative efforts essentially involved emancipation from alien influences and reacculturation to enterprises constitutive of one's second nature. Hence, long before his departure for Italy, Goethe repeatedly pointed to the necessity of recuperating activities that comprised the essence of his being: "Wie viel wohler wäre mir's, wenn ich von dem Streit der politischen Elemente abgesondert den Wissenschaften und Künsten, *wozu ich geboren bin*, meinen Geist zuwenden könnte."[88] Goethe's rebirth thus involved a radical return to his origins, the aim of which was to rid himself of cultural deformations antithetical to the flourishing of his nature. In order to reverse false tendencies, he initially set out to renounce an array of received ideas: "Das gesteh ich aber auch daß ich mich aller alten Ideen, alles eignen Willens *entäussere* um *recht wiedergeboren und neu gebildet zu werden*."[89] Goethe had no scruples about dismanteling an identity that had long failed to give proper expression to his natural predispositions, relishing in the disownment of features bearing an alien provenance: "Je mehr *ich mich selbst verleugnen* muss, desto mehr freut es mich."[90] Deeming the forced renunciation of artistic activities prejudicial to his well-being, he embraced the belief that natural aptitudes demand their own attainment. Indeed, throughout the course his apprenticeship, Goethe confirmed the existential import of honoring inborn abilities to recover undivided attention to his artistic talents: "Ich fange nur erst an zu leben, und verehre meinem Genius."[91] The fulfillment of his natural identity as an artist thus became the telos of his new life in Italy.

Goethe initially strove to bring himself in agreement with nature by determining what to pursue and forgo in his artistic schooling as a function of what he owed to his nature. If the

[88]WA IV, 5, 336. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 4. Juni 1782
[89]WA IV, 8, 107. Brief an Herder, 29. und 30. Dez. 1786
[90]HA XI, 149. Italienische Reise, 20. Dez 1786
[91]WA III, 1, 330.Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, 29 Okt 1786

relinquishment of administrative and political imperatives had cost him no great effort, reestablishing accord with his own artistic nature demanded a certain amount of critical, self-scrutiny. Goethe's departure for Italy effectively marked a period in which, a decade after his arrival in Weimar, he had failed to make inroads in his literary output, such that his credentials as a poet continued to subsist almost exclusively on the meteoric success of his youth, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.[92] Already in 1781, one critic proferred a damning verdict of Goethe's literary career: "he has given what he has given; he is now as unfruitful for the public as the desert sand."[93] Despite such pronouncements of artistic infertility, Goethe had reached an agreement with the Göschen publishing house in Leipzig to publish the first edition of his collected works. Charged with the task of editing his writings, he was invariably confronted with an accumulation of fragments that betrayed a persistent failure to consummate poetic form and seemed to confirm his literary impotence. He pointed to the gravity of his situation on the eve of his departure for Italy: "Da ich mir vornahm meine Fragmente drucken zu lassen, hielt mich für todt, wie froh will ich seyn, wenn ich mich durch Vollendung des angefangenen wieder als lebendig legimitieren kann."[94] Goethe's lengthy tenure as a court poet undoubtedly played no small part in alienating him from his literary calling. Churning out quantities of festive verse (höfischer Festdichtung) demanded for every conceivable royal occasion, he had become accustomed to producing work that made no pretense to being great literature. Forced to subordinate his creative talents to the demand for entertainment of paltry literary value, he cynically remarked of one such undertaking: "Die letzten Tage der vorigen Woche hab ich im Dienste der Eitelkeit zugebracht. Man übertäubt mit Maskeraden und glänzenden Erfindungen oft eigne und fremde Not...so

[92]GG 7, 8. Gespräche mit Johann Peter Eckermann 10.2. 1829 "Über seine ersten Jahre in Weimar. Das poetische Talent im Konflikt mit der Realität, die er, durch seine Stellung zum Hof, und verschiedenartige Zweige des Staatsdienstes, zu höherem Vorteil in sich aufzunehmen genötigt ist. Deshalb in den ersten zehn Jahren nichts Poetisches von Bedeutung hervorgebracht."
[93]Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and his Age Volume II Revolution and Renunciation (1790-1803)* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 391.
[94]WA IV, 8, 82. Brief an Carl August, 16 Dez 1786

schmücke ich die Aufzüge der Torheit."[95] With ceremonial demands thus playing their part in bringing the artistic momentum needed to consummate long incubating, serious, poetic projects to a premature standstill, on the eve of his departure for Italy, Goethe was all too aware of having strayed from the path of his natural calling.

By uprooting himself from Weimar, Goethe hoped to discover conditions more amenable to his innate talents, whereby a large part of his apprenticeship in Italy consisted in probing his endowment to ascertain the potential of his artistic nature. But rather than subject his poetic abilities to direct scrutiny, Goethe embarked upon the unchartered territory of the figurative arts, that whilst an altogether different craft, brought his artistic nature into relief, compelling him to interrogate his abilities in order to determine what lay genuinely within the ambit of his powers. Such a process of self-inspection involved the adoption of a typically Stoic process of heightened vigilance and watchfulness aimed at repossessing abilities from the grips of bad habit.[96] Indeed, the corrective impetus of Goethe's journey is evidenced by his confession, "Gewiß ich hoffe auf dieser Reise *ein Paar Hauptfehler*, *die mir ankleben*, *loszuwerden*."[97] Notwithstanding his will to self-reform, Goethe was well aware that purging himself of past influences was no simple undertaking due to the tenacity of inveterate tendencies that often dictated intrinsic ability: "Denn sonst ist doch die Geburt und Gewohnheit ein mächtiges Ding."[98] But despite the difficulties inherent to self-reform, Goethe was far from closing his eyes to his weaknesses. He considered his amateurism in the arts to be one of his chief defects, symptomatic of the relatively effortless way in which he had brought his early works to fruition: "da mir das Feuer der Jugend manches ohne groβes Studium gelingen lieβ." The consequence being that he had grown

[95]WA IV, 5, 55. Brief an Lavater, 19 Februar 1781
[96]Nussbaum, 339
[97]WA III, 1, 150. Tagebuch der italiänischen Reise, 5. Sept 1787
[98]WA III, 1, 288.Tagebuch der italiänischen Reise, 10. Okt 1786

accustomed to a characteristically unsystematic mode of proceeding that gave free reign to his creative powers:

> Ich habe recht diese Zeit her *zwei meiner Kapitalfehler*, die mich mein ganzes Leben verfolgt und gepeinigt haben, entdecken können. Einer ist, daß ich nie das Handwerk einer Sache, die ich treiben wollte oder sollte, lernen mochte. Daher ist gekommen, daß ich mit so viel natürlicher Anlage so wenig gemacht und getan habe. Entweder es war durch die Kraft des Geistes gezwungen, gelang oder mißlang, wie Glück und Zufall es wollten, oder wenn ich eine Sache gut und mit Überlegung machen wollte, war ich furchtsam und konnte nicht fertig werden. Der andere, nah verwandte Fehler ist, daß ich nie so viel Zeit auf eine Arbeit oder Geschäft wenden mochte, als dazu erfordert wird. Da ich die Glückseligkeitgenieße, sehr viel in kurzer Zeit denken und kombinieren zu können, so ist mir eine schrittweise Ausführung nojos und unerträglich. Nun, dächt' ich, wäre Zeit und Stunde da, sich zu korrigieren. Ich bin im Land der Künste, laßt uns das Fach durcharbeiten, damit wir für unser übriges Leben Ruh' und Freude haben und an was anders gehen können.[99]

If Goethe had indulged his artistic inspiration, his lack of will to invest in appropriating true skills of craftmanship, his tendency to rely on natural disposition and felicitous circumstance, to abandon projects that resisted completion and never to expend more resources on a given task than was absolutely necessary, became liabilities to mastering the figurative arts. Expressing persisting anxieties owing to a consciousness of his own ineptitude, he remarked, "Ich weiß zu sehr, wie ängstlich es ist, wenn man eine gewiße Fähigkeit in sich spürt und einem *das Handwerck gänzlich mangelt*, sie auszulaßen und auszuüben."[100]Indeed, throughout the course of his apprenticeship in the arts, Goethe repeatedly articulated the necessity of overcoming his perfunctory ways to master the fundamentals to avoid, at all cost, mere 'Pfuscherey': "Ich hoffe diesmal will ich diese Lehre gründlich lernen, an der ich so oft nur oberflächlich gearbeitet habe."[101] Elsewhere he similarly noted, "Ich halte mich immer ernshafter an die Kunst, mit der ich Zeitlebens nur gespielt habe."[102]Prepossessed by the idea of recasting himself in the image of

[99]HA XI, 368. Italienische Reise, Rom 20 Juli 1787
[100]WA IV, 8, 239. Brief an Carl August, 11 August 1787
[101]WA IV, 8, 309. Brief an Friederich von Stein, 18. Dez 1787
[102]WA IV, 8, 311. Brief an Knebel, 21. Dez 1787

a new man in harmony with his artistic nature, Goethe abandoned his cavalier approach to art, facing up to his deficiencies to embrace deep-seated reform.

In an effort to combat insecurities arising from a lack of technical competence and a want of fundamental skills in the arts, Goethe engaged in a critical process of self-dismanteling much in keeping with the ancient, therapeutic emphasis on eradicating a foundation of errors, bad habits, deformations and well-ingrained dependencies, to pave the way for change.[103] Indeed, Goethe's will to rectify shortcomings, frequently expressed in architectural metaphors, reflected the normative influence of the classical ground surrounding him. Likening himself to an architect, who realizing he has laid a poor foundation, is forced to demolish what he has built in order to erect his tower anew, he explained:

> Ich bin wie ein Baumeister, der einen Turm aufführen wollte und ein schlechtes Fundament gelegt hatte; er wird es noch beizeiten gewahr und bricht gern wieder ab, was er schon aus der Erde gebracht hat, seinen Grundriss sucht er zu erweitern, zu veredeln, sich seines Grundes mehr zu versichern, und freut sich schon im voraus der gewissern Festigkeit des künftigen Baues.[104]

While Goethe was averse to sudden ruptures, preferring to see his development a product of uninterrupted continuity, he nevertheless recognized the need to raze a deficient infrastructure in order to establish adequate groundwork. Rebirth required drastic measures; it was essentially a laborious undertaking, necessitating a rigorous process of reeducation: "Die *Wiedergeburt*, die mich von innen heraus umarbeitet, *wirkt immer fort*. Ich dachte wohl, hier was Rechts zu lernen; daß ich aber so weit in die Schule zurückgehen, daß *ich so viel verlernen, ja durchaus umlernen müßte* dachte ich nicht."[105] Goethe realized that he had been prone to allow inconsistencies to accrue without rectification, while neglecting the essentials that left him with deficits that meant

[103]Foucault, 94.
[104]HA XI, 149. Italienische Reise 20. Dez 1786
[105]HA XI, 149. Italienische Reise 20. Dez 1786

that certain skills could not be relied upon. He insisted, "Ich sehe auch wohl, was und wie man studieren muβ, um über gewisse Schwierigkeiten hinauszukommen, unter deren Last man sonst sein ganzes Leben hinkriecht."[106] Progress was slow to materialize precisely because he was continually forced to retrace his steps to remedy insufficiencies, "...ich bin fleißig und würde mehr zu Stande bringen, wenn ich in manchen Sachen nicht *wieder von vorne anzufangen hätte*."[107]Rebirth thus largely amounted to a reformative enterprise, demanding a sweeping modification of inadequacies to ensure the acquisition of dependable, sound aptitudes.

Once he had sufficiently eradicated past errors, Goethe faced the subsequent task of refashioning his identity. Indeed, the prospect of raising a durable edifice demanded structured efforts to establish incorrigible foundations:

> Jeder, der nun endlich Rom erreicht hat...spürt nur gar zu bald daß er wieder *zurück lernen* muß, daß er seinen *Grund tiefer graben stärcker und breiter legen muß*. Er muß den Aufwand an Zeit und Kräften erst in die Erde verstecken, um in der Folge, wenn das Glück will, sein Gebäude aufführen zu können.[108]

Goethe subjected himself to disciplined, structured procedures in order to wean himself of his tendency to rely on makeshift solutions, pursue whims of inspiration or jettison intractable dimensions of a work-in-progress. "Ich...gehe nun *Schritt vor Schritt darauf hin, langsam aber sicher, als wenn es mein Metier werden sollte* und *so, daß ich einen festen Grund habe*..."[109] Abandoning his previous aversion towards rules of the classical canon, he increasingly recognized the necessity of traversing an orderly, methodic trajectory based on the application of tried and tested, ancient principles. Harboring no illusions regarding the gap separating the dabbler and the true lover of arts, he maintained that the former was relegated to ad hoc

[106]HA XI, 350. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 16. Juni 1787
[107]WA IV, 8, 317. Brief an Christian Gottlob Voigt, 29. Dez 1787
[108]WA IV, 8, 300. Brief an Carl August, 7, 8 Dez 1787
[109]WA IV, 8, 266-67. Brief an Knebel, 3. Okt 1787

expediency, while the latter disposed of productive laws equipping him with the latitude to realize his intentions. Thus increasingly disposed to conform to the guidelines of established, ancient models, Goethe remarked of the satisfaction he derived from rule-bound execution: "Der Geist wird zur Tüchtigkeit gestempelt, gelangt zu einem Ernst ohne Trockenheit, zu einem gesetzten Wesen mit Freude."[110]Goethe thus endeavored to consolidate reliable aptitudes conforming to ancient laws of production that left no trace of dilettantism. His will to eliminate flaws and ameliorate deficiencies implied no minor alteration or superficial remodeling, but a thoroughgoing overhaul of the propensities that he had long relied upon in the process of art production.

Once he recommenced his artistic training on solid footing, Rome's classical ground disclosed the measure of art, confirming the virtue of ancient principles in agreement with nature. For the ancients, nature's generative methods guided the realization of artistic ends, whereby the artist's adaption of his productive activity to nature's rational purposes resonated closely with the Stoic enjoinment to bring oneself into agreement with nature. Indeed, Goethe incessantly indicated the 'Naturgemäß' character of Greco-Roman architecture, indicating the wisdom of human artistry conforming to nature's ways. He thus praised the Tempel of Minerva at Assisi for being the product of fashioning in accordance with what nature laid bare: "...das löblichste Werk stand vor meinen Augen, das erste vollständige Denkmal der alten Zeit, das ich erblickte. Auch hierin waren die Alten *so groß im Natürlichen*. Der Tempel steht auf der schönen mittlern Höhe des Berges, wo eben zwei Hügel zusammentreffen..." [111] In situating the temple at the intersection of two hills that created a natural plaza, Goethe insisted that the ancient architect essentially read off nature's intentions. Such a mode of fashioning in accord with nature's

[110]HA XI, 134. Italienische Reise, 10 Nov 1786
[111]HA XI, 116. Italienische Reise, 25 Okt 1786

promptings was also exhibited in the construction of the ancient theatre at Taormina. Goethe maintained that upon finding two summits linked by a semicircular space, the ancients set about to assist the natural shape of the terrain to fashion it into an amphitheatre. Praising ancient methods of building upon nature's rational purposes, he pointed to the theatre's perfect harmony with its environs:

> Wenn man die Höhe der Felsenwände erstiegen hat, welche unfern des Meeresstrandes in die Höhe Steilen, findet man zwei Gipfel durch ein Halbrund verbunden. Was dies auch von Natur für eine Gestalt gehabt haben mag, die Kunst hat nachgeholfen und daraus den amphitheatralischen Halbzirkel für Zuschauer gebildet; Mauern und andere Angebäude von Ziegelsteinen, sich anschließend, supplierten die nötigen Gänge und Hallen. Am Fuß des stufenartigen Halbzirkels erbaute man die Szene quer vor, verband dadurch die beiden Felsen und vollendete das ungeheuerste Natur- und Kunstwerk.[112]

The ancient architect effectively brought to realization what remained a mere intention in the natural phenomenon. His virtuosity lay in the ability to discern nature's designs, developing and consummating what was already found in it to seamlessly adapt it to his artistic aims.

Beyond the skillful manipulation of natural topography to recreate nature's objectives, ancient artists were also guided by the laws according to which nature expressed itself through human agency. Goethe illustrated this phenomenon through invoking the example of the Roman amphitheatre in Verona. He hailed it the perfect concretization of the natural, human tendency to assemble at a height in order to obtain an optimal view of things. Whenever there was something on display, humans instinctively climbed atop one another, piled up barrels and created elevations to form a crater conducive to gaining a perspective from ahigh. The builders of ancient amphitheatres simply reproduced the spatial constellation that humans were naturally inclined to assume, fashioning man-made structures that arose as natural phenomena. Roman

[112]HA XI, 295. Italienische Reise zweiter Teil, Taormina, 7 Mai 1787

amphitheatres were thus the quintessential expression of human needs met by means of art mimicking the necessity that occured in nature.[113] Moreover, natural need and artistic purpose dovetailed in the form of the perfect symmetry of a circle, wherein the spectator, furnished with a bird's eye view irrespective of his location, experienced himself at one with the whole of nature. Goethe ultimately insisted that Roman amphitheatres could not be fully appreciated as works of 'second nature' without viewing them fully occupied, wherein each spectator was perceived through a prior architectural whole, his bodily presence serving both as its immanent measure and providing the natural decor for a structure otherwise barren of ornamentation. The integrative coherence of the amphitheatre's parts was not the result of a piecemeal aggregation of disparate elements, but of the architect's imposition of nature's higher, synthetic unity.

Goethe further ascertained the intertwined ancient imperatives of nature's intentions ordering the creation of artistic form and artistic form fulfilling natural purposes, in the Roman acqueduct at Spoleto:

> Das ist nun das dritte Werk der Alten, das ich sehe, und immer derselbe große Sinn. *Eine zweite Natur*, die zu bürgerlichen Zwecken handelt, das ist ihre Baukunst, so steht das Amphitheater, der Tempel und der Aquadukt. Nun fühle ich erst, wie mir mit Recht alle Willkürlichkeiten verhaßt waren...[114]

The acqueduct's ten arches, forming a bridge offering passage over a valley between two mountains, also served as a conduit for Spoleto's water supply. Fulfilling a dual function, it exhibited perfect agreement between content and form, its purposiveness devoid of all trace of arbitrariness. Goethe insisted, "Alles Willkürliche, Eingebildete fällt zusammen, da ist die Notwendigkeit..."[115] Indeed, ancient structures had natural necessity built into them: "Diese

[113]HA XI, 41. Italienische Reise Verona, 16 Sept 1786
[114]HA XI, 120-121.Italienische Reise, Terni, 27 Okt 1786
[115]HA XI, 167. Zweite römischer Aufenthalt 6 Sept 1787

hohen Kunstwerke sind zugleich als die höchsten Naturwerken von Menschen nach wahren und natürlichen Gesetzen hervorgebracht worden."[116] Apprehending the laws according to which nature fashioned its own products, the ancient artist essentially reproduced its organizing principles, generating forms that brought its necessary laws to visibility. Indeed, Goethe ultimately concluded that the ancient artist was as conversant with the laws of nature as with the artistic laws of his trade: "Soviel ist gewiss, die alten Künstler haben ebenso große Kenntnis der Natur..."[117] Recognizing that order and harmony was exhibited to the highest degree in nature's organization, the ancient artist brought his creative capacities into strict conformity with it, whereby his attunment to nature's guiding intelligence effectively mirrored the Stoic will to bring his conduct in agreement with the wisdom inhering in nature.

Goethe's observations of Greco-Roman architecture helped him to clearly perceive the rationality of nature's generative processes, whereby he was increasingly persuaded that the nature of things as a whole provided a reliable basis for his formative enterprises. Indeed, nature and art were united in their primary function of form generation: "Die höchste und einzige Operation der Natur und Kunst ist die Gestaltung."[118] Goethe thus sought to emulate nature's methods, deploying classical principles of harmony, symmetry, order and consistency to create artworks that were prior wholes subordinating their constitutive parts, exhibiting a seamless congruence of content and form. Adhering to nature's principles to guide his art production in Italy, he insisted "...hab ich auch eine Combination der Kunst mit meiner Vorstellungs Art der Natur gefunden."[119] Goethe was not only persuaded that nature's laws equipped the artist to create consummate artistic forms, he came to believe that producing artworks according to

[116]HA XI, 394. Zweite römischer Aufenthalt, 6 Sept 1787
[117]HA XI, 394. Zweite römischer Aufenthalt, 6 Sept 1787
[118]WA IV, 20, 192. Brief an Zelter, 30. Okt. 1808
[119]WA IV, 8, 267. Brief an Knebel, 3. Okt 1787

nature's formative mode of production endowed them with permanence. Hence,"ein köstlicher Tempel der Minerva, zu Zeiten Augusts gebaut, noch vollkommen erhalten dastehe,"[120] the Verona amphitheatre remained "so gut erhalten!", while the arches of the Spoleto Acqueduct "...stehen von Backsteinen ihre Jahrhunderte so ruhig da, und das Wasser quillt immer noch in Spoleto an allen Orten und Enden."[121]Goethe similarly maintained of the Vestatempel, the Cestius pyramid and the Caecilia Mattela tomb: "diesen Menschen arbeiteten für die Ewigkeit."[122] By employing nature's principles, ancient artists monumentalized the present to create works that outstripped the past and eclipsed the future. Goethe thus repeatedly maintained that his allegiances lay with such enduring, classical forms: "Die Gestalt dieser Welt vergeht und ich möchte mich nur mit dem beschäftigen, was bleibende Verhältnisse sind..."[123]Classical works that could outlast the vagaries of time convinced Goethe that nature provided the touchstone for abiding artistic endeavors, whereby he brought his artistic methods in agreement with nature in the spirit of the Stoics.

The Stoic hallmarks of circumspect self-supervision and dutiful disciplining of the passions as well as constant resolve to accomplish duties in accord with one's nature, significantly marked Goethe's therapeutic journey in Italy. Acquainting himself with the precise nature and scope of his will, Goethe endeavored to become self-reliant. Once he had secured a measure of self-sufficiency, he moved to reign in various self-defeating passions, recognizing that emotional self-mastery was crucial not only to surmounting difficulties in the arts but in defeating the setbacks of life at large. Deeming himself reborn on classical terrain, Goethe strove to overcome his dilletantism in the arts, rooting out deficient habits and pursuing a systematic

[120]HA XI, 115. Italienische Reise, 25. Okt 1786
[121]HA XI, 120. Italienische Reise, 27. Okt 1786
[122]HA XI, 134. Italienische Reise, 11.Nov. 1786
[123]HA XI, 385. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt 23. Aug 1787

method of production in accordance with nature to achieve artistic competencies beyond reproach. The result was a rebirth that ultimately brought him back into sync with his own nature: "Denn es legt sich nun auseinander, und die Kunst wird mir wie eine zweite Natur..."[124]Through his perspicacious observations of Greco-Roman architecture, Goethe succeeded in ascertaining nature's rationality, modeling his own artistic production on its generative methods and thus doing away with artificial cultural constraints and endeavoring to harmonize with his own innate capacity for self-flourishing.

But perhaps the most valuable Stoic lesson Goethe assimilated during his artistic apprenticeship was one of a duty to the present. Learning to appreciate how an inhibiting past or anxieties about the future could be transcended through continuously renewed toil to vindicate the present, Goethe diligently cultivated attention to the present. Moreover, in coming to terms with his passion for the arts, he was able to revive his poetic productivity in the present, such that by the end of his journey, he succeeded in surmounting a tenacious bout of writer's block that had long prevented his works from reaching completion: "meine Schriften kommen nach und nach, so habt ihr den Begriff von mir *als eines abwesend Lebenden*, da ihr mich so oft *als einen gegenwärtig Toten* bedauert habt."[125] Honoring presence for Goethe was thus importantly a matter of being alive to it. Such a capacity to animate the moment was in turn rooted in the notion of dutiful activity ('Tätigkeit'). Goethe's belief in the efficacy of dutiful engagement with the present was such that even after his journey, he regularly thematized the importance of 'die Pflicht des Tages', never ceasing to emphasize the need to exert oneself daily to make due on life's immediate necessities and opportunities. Embedding exhortations such as 'Fahrt fort in unmittelbarer Beachtung der Pflicht des Tages' in his educative novels, the idea of heightened

[124]HA XI, 383. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 11. Aug 1787
[125]HA XI, 381. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 11 August 1787

attention to the demands of the day became the linchpin for his pedagogical vision. But perhaps nowhere does Goethe more clearly elaborate the ideal of a quintessentially ancient ethic of a duty to the present, than in his essay dedicated to J.J. Winckelmann. Goethe maintained: "*Wir finden ihn immer in Tätigkeit, mit dem Augenblick beschäftigt*, ihn dergestalt ergreifend und festhaltend, *als wenn der Augenblick vollständig und befriedigend sein könnte*, und ebenso ließ er sich wieder vom nächsten Augenblicke belehren."[126] Invoking his capacity to become absorbed in the activity of the moment, making it complete and satisfying so that each subsequent moment served to further instruct him, Winckelmann embodied for Goethe, the epitome of the ancient ethical duty of attentiveness to the present.

Epicurean happiness in the present

Goethe's Italian journey can also be seen to evince a classical form of life through its assimilation of methods reminiscent of Epicurean therapeutic doctrines. For the Epicurean, it was the cultivation of a capacity for happiness that enabled one to embrace life in the present. Goethe's perspective on happiness can be seen in light of the idea of rebirth progressively giving way to acquiring a new upbringing. He insisted, "Wenn ich bei meiner Ankunft in Italien wie *neu geboren war, so fange ich jetzt an, wie neu erzogen zu sein*."[127] Goethe effectively sought to bring himself up anew by assimilating the local wisdom of Italy's classical ground, the mainstay of which included various strategies to secure happiness on a daily basis. Going to great lengths to become native to his new surroundings, he had no intention of remaining a foreigner in exile, taking pains "nach den jedesmaligen Gewohnheiten zu erkundigen und zu richten."[128] Indeed, Goethe claimed that bringing himself up anew ultimately implied acquiring a second nature by

[126]HA XII, 117. Winckelmann
[127]HA XI, 445. Zweite römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 21 Dez 1787
[128]HA XI, 308. Italienische Reise, Messina, 13 Mai 1787

doing 'as if' he had been born and raised in Italy: "Ich lasse mir's gefallen, *als wenn ich hier geboren und erzogen wäre*."[129]To be born and bred in Italy implied adopting the values, customs and ways of behaving that prevailed on its classical terrain, many of which exposed Goethe to a new way of thinking about happiness.

The acquisition of a new upbringing attuned to the demands of happiness, initially involved Goethe's retreat from society to escape from social forces that had stunted his development and impeded his well-being. If Epicurean therapeutics encouraged seclusion from mainstream society as the precondition for serious, spiritual training, in Italy, Goethe deliberately retreated from the world at large in hopes of insulating himself from trivial mundane influences. Much in the vein of the Epicurean belief that therapeutic practice began by way of self-sequestration from the everyday cares of the Polis, Goethe ventured forth into the world only to deliberately avoid the influence of society. He remarked of the paradoxical nature of his self-imposed seclusion: "Freilich scheint es ein wunderlich Beginnen, daß man in die Welt geht, um allein bleiben zu wollen."[130]Notwithstanding, Goethe was convinced that retreat from quotidian reality held the key to a return to his native element: "dann werde ich in der freyen Welt...leben, und in glücklicher Einsamkeit, ohne Nahmen und Stand, der Erde näher kommen aus der wir genommen sind."[131]In order to recuperate his roots, he sought to escape from the world's intrusiveness. Indeed, Goethe's self-segregation from society was so complete, that by the end of his travels he exhibited clear signs of alienation from reality: "So entfernt bin ich jetzt von der Welt und allen weltlichen Dingen, es kommt mir recht wunderbar vor, wenn ich eine Zeitung

[129]HA XI, 25. Italienische Reise, Trient, 11. Sept 1786
[130]HA XI, 185. Italienische Reise, Naples, 1 März 1787
[131]WA IV, 8, 6. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 23 August 1786

lese."[132]Despite a certain loss of touch with events transpiring in the world, Goethe insisted that self-seclusion provided the solitude indispensable to reorienting himself towards immediate sources of self-fulfillment.

By turning his back on the world, Goethe effectively set out to renounce his past in order to focus exclusively on the present. Indeed, despite his self-stylized account of an unpremeditated, dramatic flight to Italy, Goethe's departure marked a meticulously orchestrated period of vacancy premised on his deliberate severance of former social ties. Concealing his whereabouts from his Weimar intimates for as long as possible after his departure, Goethe was all too aware that, were he to divulge his intentions of leaving Weimar to any one of the three principle actors in his life, namely his patron, the Duke Carl August, his sentimental intimate, Charlotte von Stein, or his mentor, Johann Herder, he risked incurring obligations that would detract from his agenda of bringing himself up anew in Italy. His patron might exact a promise to pay official visits while abroad, his soulmate was likely to stipulate the duration of his travels, while his mentor might advise him to absolve a specific itinerary. Convinced that the demands of reeducation necessitated a decisive break with the past, Goethe took every precaution to cut himself off from former social influences. But while he had little difficulty ignoring his countrymen while in Italy, the challenge lay in maintaining detachment from his erstwhile, Weimar companions:

> Fremde Deutsche konnt' ich vermeiden, so nah verbundene, verehrte, geliebte Personen aber hätten mich durch eignes Irren und Halbgewahrwerden, ja, selbst durch Eingehen in meine Denkweise gestört und gehindert...so erhielt ich mich doch über Tag und Stunde weislich im Ungewissen und fuhr unablässig fort *in der sorgfältigsten Benutzung der Zeit*.[133]

Acknowledging that preoccupation with social influences from the past threatened to jeopardize

[132]HA XI, 385. Zweite römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 23 Aug 1787
[133]HA XI, 429. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt Berichte Oktober

the productive use of his time in Italy, Goethe made a sustained effort to banish former allegiances from his mind. Indeed, letting go of the past had a liberating effect insofar as it extricated him from expectations that had long weighed upon him: "Schon habe ich viele Ideen, auf denen ich fest hielt, die mich und andre unglücklich machten, hingegeben und bin um vieles freyer."[134] An implacable resolve to keep inhibiting reminders of the past at arm's length, allowed Goethe to devote his energies to self-reform in the immediate present.

A further, practical expression of Goethe's will to ward off the past and commit to the present, lay in his attempt to emancipate himself from his established identity by traveling through Italy incognito. In order to avoid being recognized either as an emissary of the Weimar court or the acclaimed author of *Werther,* Goethe deliberately relinquished his identity, adopting a fictional one, first as a traveling merchant from Leipzig, and later, upon taking up residency in Rome, as the German painter, Phillipo Miller. The strategy of traveling incognito was no temporary, cosmetic expedient, with Goethe going to great lengths to maintain his painter persona throughout the duration of his travels.[135] Even towards the conclusion of his journey, when pressed by the governor of Messina to divulge his true identity, he explained, "Ich wich diesem Verlangen höflich aus, indem ich ihn bat, mir eine Grille zu verzeihen: Ich wünsche nämlich, auf Reisen bloß als Mensch angesehen zu werden**...**Er versuchte alles mögliche, mich aus meinem Inkognito hervorzuziehen, welches ihm nicht gelang..."[136] Goethe's refusal to expose his true identity attests to his unflagging determination to escape from preconceptions about who he was that might jeopardize his efforts to attain a new upbringing. Only by assuming an 'Ersatz' identity to preserve his anonymity, could he forge his character in a way that genuinely

[134]WA IV, 8, 115. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 6 Januar 1787
[135]For a detailed account of Goethe's incognito travel see Roberto Zapperi.*Römische Spüren: Goethe und sein Italien*. (München: Beck, 2007) and Gretchen L. Hachmeister, *Italy in the German literary imagination: Goethe's "Italian journey" and its reception by Eichendorff, Platen und Heine*. (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002) 30-31.
[136]HA XI, 311. Italienische Reise, Messina, 13 Mai 1787

transcended social forces. Indeed, he insisted that the periodic assumption of an incognito identity proved an invaluable exercise in reconnecting with one's true nature:

> Gelegentlich einmal äussere Vorzüge ins Verborgene zu stellen, um den eignen innern menschlichen Gehalt desto reiner wirken zu lassen...Der menschliche Gehalt wird also vorausgesetzt; vom Inkognito kann nur derjenige eigentlich profitieren dessen persönliche Eigenschaften seine soziale Rolle transzendieren.[137]

If Goethe harbored grievances that the essence of his nature had become overshadowed by a public image that was more a facade than a veritable manifestation of his person, incognito travel allowed him to divest social influences that had illegitimately taken over his personality. Once shorn of the trappings of his social identity, he could endow a more genuine form to the substance of his character.

During the sedentary leg of his voyage, where he settled for several months in Rome, Goethe continued to make various provisions to safeguard his independence from society, prudently keeping prejudicial social forces at bay to dedicate himself exclusively to the arts. Upon his arrival in the capital, he noted, "Kaum war ich in Rom angekommen als ich erkannt wurde doch führ ich mein Incognito durch, sehe nur die Sache und lehne alle andern Verhältnisse ab." Despite residing in a city where there was no want of available, social connections for someone of his reputation, Goethe sought to ward off society's encroachments, scrupulously evading the milieu of the native gentry and governing elites.[138] He went so far as to eschew invitations of local notables who sought to make his acquaintance: "Kardinal Buoncompagni verlangte, mich zu sehen, ich aber hielt fest in meinem wohlbekannten Einsiedelei."[139] Keeping a low profile to avoid the public eye, he remained on guard to avoid relapse into social relations

[137]HA IX, 410. Aus meinem Leben Dichtung und Wahrheit Zweiter Teil Zehntes Buch
[138]Roberto Zapperi, *Das Inkognito: Goethes ganz andere Existenz in Rom* (München C.H. Beck Verlag, 1999) 67.
[139]HA XI, 391. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt Bericht August

that might compromise his private to his public life. He insisted, "In dem weiten Rom lebe ich indessen sehr still und abgesondert."[140]Indeed, Goethe's pronounced aversion towards the Roman nobility was symptomatic of the critical stance he had developed towards Weimar high society: "Übrigens widersteh ich allem Andringen der sogennanten großen Welt."[141]Having long been implicated in the conventions of court society, Goethe was determined to remain aloof from high society's discriminations in Italy. He repeatedly underscored the necessity of a reclusive lifestyle that would avoid provoking renewed discord of the passions, "(ich lebe) ohne mich in das Getümmel der Welt einzulaßen."[142] Indeed, he insisted that ceasing to interact with the upper echelons served as a prophylactic against a deleterious form of sociality characterized by false pretensions. Goethe essentially likened society's influence to an illness that sapped his energy and retarded his abilities: "Ich scheue mich vor den Herren und Damen wie vor einer bösen *Krankenheit*."[143] Being in the company of elites, inevitably subjected him to the stigma of censure and the inducements of praise, preventing him from uninhibitedly concentrating on his immediate occupations. Goethe thus strove to sidestep all social forms that he considered a breeding ground for human passions, wherein pride and vanity drove him to succumb to influences at odds with his true interests. Only by escaping from human prejudice could he devote himself to activities that really mattered in Italy.[144]

Once Goethe had become imperturbable to social pressures, he was in a position to distinguish social forms appropriate to the fulfillment of his artistic desires. Serious artistic training required not only avoiding getting bogged down in superficial relations, it demanded conscientiously keeping the right company. While Goethe persisted in equating social

[140]WA IV, 8, 317. Brief an Voigt, 29. Dez 1787
[141]WA IV, 8, 311. Brief an Knebel, 21. Dez 1787
[142]WA IV, 8, 195. Brief an Jacob Fritsch, 20 Feb 1787
[143]HA XI, 384. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom 18 August 1787
[144] Hadot, 102.

acquaintanceships with a malady to be avoided at all cost, he actively sought out a milieu capable of promoting his artistic endeavors. Judging commerce with artists and art connoiseurs imperative to his own artistic development, he exclaimed, "Ich vermeide sorgfältig alle Bekanntschafft, die nur Zeit verdirbt und sehe und studire unermüdet mit Künstlern und Kennern *alles andre acht ich vom Übel*."[145] Indeed, Goethe's self-imposed incognito meant no longer mingling with polite society, freeing him up to associate exclusively with artists: "Mein decidirtes Incognito spart mir viel Zeit, ich gehe absolut zu niemanden ausser zu Künstlern."[146] Thus recanting his former pretensions to win favor from high society, Goethe repeatedly underscored the appropriateness of living in Rome amongst artists: "...mein Leben mit den Künstlern ist einzig diesem Ort angemessen. Das andre Leben ist schaal wie überall und schaaler wo möglich..."[147] Goethe saw artistic exchange as the only form of social intercourse conducive to his attempt to remake himself a native of Italy. But notwithstanding his abandonment of high society, Goethe was no loner in Italy. He related the mixed feelings he entertained in being torn from his self-willed isolation: "Schon in Rom hatte man meinem eigensinnigen Einsiedlersinne, mehr als mir lieb war, eine gesellige Seite abgewonnen."[148] Goethe's retreat from society thus effecitvely bore the character of a withdrawal into an Epicurean garden. Joining the ranks of an artist colony, he cultivated relationships that would allow him to flourish under carefully husbanded circumstances.[149] Rome's artist colony became a sanctuary of sorts in which he was at liberty to invest in developing his skills as he deemed necessary. He retrospectively remarked of his artistic apprenticeship in Italy, "Ich lebte 10 Monate lang zu Rom ein zweytes academisches

[145]WA IV, 8, 65. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 24 Nov 1786
[146]WA IV, 8, 76. Brief an Herders, 2. Dez 1786
[147]WA IV, 8, 134. Brief an Herder, 13 Jan 1787
[148]HA XI, 185. Italienische Reise, Neapel 1 März 1787
[149]Robert Pogue Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago UP 2008) 112.

Freyheitsleben."[150]Epicurean withdrawal from society was thus crucial to Goethe's liberation from the pernicious influences of social convention that had long frustrated the possibility of his unimpeded artistic development.[151]

If Goethe's journey was tantamount to an Epicurean retirement from society, it also exhibited features reminiscent of the Epicurean emphasis on obtaining pleasure in the present. For the Epicureans, the purpose of life consisted in pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain, whereby happiness depended in large part on achieving a state free of distress and anxiety.[152] Goethe's observations of Italy's classical remains, disclosing important strategies designed to promote a cheerful allegiance to life in the present, brought into relief the significance of structuring everyday existence around the procurement of pleasure and the avoidance of pain.

One particularly influential experience that shaped Goethe's perspective on the ancient will to happiness, involved a visit to the ancient Roman city of Pompeii. Having been buried under volcanic ash for more than a millenium, by Goethe's time, Pompeii had undergone partial excavation, its art and architecture becoming accessible to the public, affording a unique archaelogical encounter with antiquity. Upon setting foot in the ancient city, Goethe was taken aback by the modesty of its buildings, that lacking the colossal majesty of the Roman structures he was accustomed to, struck him as inordinately narrow and cramped. He remarked concerning their unassuming scale and proportions: "Pompeji setzt jedermann wegen seiner Enge und Kleinheit in Verwunderung..."[153] But despite his initial alienation by structures more medieval than classical in appearance, Goethe set about exploring the city, only to be pleasantly surprised

[150]Kanzler von Müller: Unterhaltungen mit Goethe, ed. Ernst Grumach, (Weimar: H. Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1956) 13. Brief an Kanzler Müller 30 Mai 1814
[151]Nussbaum, 32.
[152]Timothy O'Keefe, *Epicureanism* (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2010)117.
[153]HA XI, 197. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 11 März, 1787

by the inner decor of its constructions: "Die Häuser sind klein und eng, aber alle inwendig aufs zierlichste gemalt."[154] Distinctive of Pompeii's architectural patrimony were its ubiquitous wall paintings that not only adorned its public buildings but decked even the most unassuming of domestic residences. In fact, Pompeii's architecture could only be properly understood in virtue of its remarkable wall paintings. Goethe described one such example in the temple of Isis, that moved him to reflect upon the character of the locals:

> Diese Zimmer, Gänge und Galerien aber aufs *heiterste* gemalt, die Wandflächen einförmig, in der Mitte ein ausführliches Gemälde, jetzt meist ausgebrochen, an Kanten und Enden leichte und geschmackvolle Arabesken, aus welchen sich auch wohl niedliche Kinder- und Nymphengestalten entwickeln, wenn an einer andern Stelle aus mächtigen Blumengewinden wilde und zahme Tiere hervordringen. Und so deutet der jetzige ganz wüste Zustand einer erst durch Stein- und Aschenregen bedeckten, dann aber durch die Aufgrabenden geplünderten Stadt *auf eine Kunst- und Bilderlust eines ganzen Volkes, von der jetzo der eifrigste Liebhaber weder Begriff, noch Gefühl, noch Bedürfnis hat.*[155]

Insisting that even the most ardent admirer of the arts of his day had no notion of what was implied in the Romans' omnipresent desire for images, Goethe astutely discerned human needs underpinning the sophisticated visual backdrops of their domestic life. He suggested that modern man, having demoted images to mere ornamentation fulfilling exclusively decorative purposes, was unable to grasp the ancient, existential need to surround oneself with elaborate images. Indeed, far from merely putting art on display, Roman mural paintings were intended to engage inhabitants in specific ways, serving both apotropaic (protective) and cathartic (concerned with healing and well being) purposes.[156] Maurice Owen underscores the fundamental difference separating ancient from modern uses of pictorial imagery, pointing to the Roman's “sophisticated depictions of a world in which gods are revered and worshiped, family

[154]HA XI, 203. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 13 März 1787
[155]HA XI, 197. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 11 März, 1787
[156]Maurice Owen. "The False-Door: dissolution and becoming in Roman wall painting" Creaden Solent Electronic Archive Feb 2010, Online Internet Available: http://creadm.solent.ac.uk/custom/rwpainting/cover/contentspage.html

ancestors are commemorated, filial piety and affection is freely given and received, tragedy is confronted, moral fortitude is praised and profound love and passion is openly and sensitively articulated."[157] Characterizing Pompeiians as possessed of an exceptional 'Bilderlust,' Goethe recognized that their wall paintings, far from merely embellishing their surroundings, served important existential functions.

In his interpretation of Roman mural paintings, Goethe discerned something akin to an Epicurean principle of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. To this end, he made an essential distinction between their richly ornamented frames and their central images. Indeed, he initially had difficulty reconciling the stucco ornament and flamboyant arabesques that typically characterized the frames of mural paintings with the norms of classical, aesthetics. He thus attributed a specific function to them, claiming that they served to direct the viewer's attention to the mural's primary image to bring the whole into harmonious perspective. The intricate interlacing of nymphs and exotic flora and fauna delighted the viewer, preparing him for the central image. The cheerful frames were meant as pleasing objects, whereby their ubiquity in Pompeiian buildings seemed to reflect more generally on a culture steeped in an aesthetic will to delight in life. The neoclassical artist William Tischbein, who accompanied Goethe to Pompeii, thus praised Pompeiian art as exhibiting an aesthetics celebrating 'a merry life.'[158] In contrast with their delightful mural frames, Goethe claimed that the self-contained imagery of their central paintings served an entirely different function. In his observations of one Pompeiian fresco, Goethe pointed to the depiction of three women, serene and sovereign over their passions, ostensibly serving as an allegory for the unperturbed equanimity of the Epicurean gods.

[157]Owen
[158]Thorsten Fitzon, "A tamed 'desire for images': Goethe's Repeated Approaches to Pompeii" in *Pompeii in the Public Imagination from its Rediscovery to Today* Ed. Hales, Shelly and Paul, Johanna (Oxford: Oxford UP 2011) 21.

> so ruhig und leidenlos wie die epikurischen Götter, deren Nachbild und Gleichniβ sie zu seyn scheinen. Eben diese himmlische Ruhe, dieses Verharren in sich selbst, nicht etwas auf Leidenschaft und Sehnsucht hindeutend, geht auch durch alle übrigen Bilder durch und gibt uns die Anschauung einer andern Welt.[159]

Indeed, Epicureans set great store by the happiness attainable from banishing fears, whether of the gods or presentiments of death, that enabled one to embrace fate with the absence of trepidation in perfect tranquility.[160] Goethe claimed that motifs designed to dispel anxieties and apprehensions with respect to life's hardships permeated Pompeiian mural paintings, suggesting a culture that valued the attempt to meet life's vicissitudes with undisturbed confidence. Depicting figures who revealed no trace of submission to unsettling affects, the images commended the merit of dignified perseverence in the face of pain and suffering. Pompeiian wall paintings thus effectively exhibited an Epicurean dialectic of seeking pleasure and shunning or subduing pain: the frames evoked a cheerful gaeity serving to elicit pleasure, while the central paintings were intended to illustrate the virtues of composure and self-mastery in the face of life's trials.

Goethe discovered that ancient, Pompeiian artifacts similarly articulated a specific, cultural need among the populous for visual artistry. The dominant impression conveyed by the art objects housed in Pompeiian residences was one of buoyant joyfulness, that while evoking the user's pleasure, might equally have served to ward off adversity, furnish solace or offer its observer encouragement. Indeed, despite initially attributing elaborately decorated household objects the function of animating and expanding the senses to compensate for the cramped premises typical of modestly sized Roman houses, Goethe ultimately concluded that their

[159]Ernst Grumach, *Goethe und die Antike Eine Sammlung* vol.1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1949) 813. Copien pompejanischer und herculanischer Gemälde von Ternite (1827)
[160]Glenn Lesses, "Happiness, Completeness, and Indifference to Death in Epicurean Ethical Theory," *Apeiron* 35 (2002) 60.

primary purpose could only have been one of delighting their users:

> Man sieht zum Beispiel einen herrlich geformten Eimer, oben mit dem zierlichsten Rand...Die Lampen sind nach Anzahl ihrer Dochte mit Masken und Rankenwerk verziert, so dass jede Flamme ein wirkliches Kunstgebilde erleuchtet. Hohe, schlanke, eherne Gestelle sind bestimmt, die Lampen zu tragen, aufzuhängende Lampen hingegen mit allerlei geistreich gedachten Figuren behängt, welche die Absicht, *zu gefallen und zu ergötzen*, sobald sie schaukeln und baumeln, sogar übertreffen.[161]

Pompeiian artifacts thus bore testament to a culture in which everyday objects were not merely functional instruments, but a medium of aesthetic engagement that could induce feelings of primordial bliss, bucolic harmony or Elysian tranquility within the confines of ordinary, domestic existence. In fact, Goethe quickly discovered that such an archaic ethos of beautifying one's immediate surroundings to afford an almost naive pleasure in the quotidian, was well alive among the indigenous population of his day:

> Näher an der Stadt fielen mir die kleinen Häuser wieder auf, die als vollkommene Nachbildungen der pompejanischen dastehen. Wir erbaten uns die Erlaubnis, in eins hinein zu treten, und fanden es sehr reinlich eingerichtet. Nett geflochtene Rohrstühle, eine Kommode ganz vergoldet, mit bunten Blumen staffiert und lackiert, so dass *nach so vielen Jahrhunderten, nach unzähligen Veränderungen diese Gegend ihren Bewohnern ähnliche Lebensart und Sitte, Neigungen und Liebhabereien einflößt.*[162]

Notwithstanding the lapse of centuries, the Pompeiians continued to adorn their households, elaborately ornamenting ordinary household objects to enhance daily life in the present.

In the wake of his travels in Italy, Goethe increasingly recognized that whether it be a question of maintaining self-possession in the face of adversity or rejoicing in the ordinary, art served the important everyday function of mediating the passions. In Rome, he accordingly procured a giant bust of the renowned Juno Ludovisi, explaining that it served not only to transport him to ancient times, but fulfilled vital therapeutic purposes:

[161]HAXI, 21.1 Italienische Reise, Neapel, 18 März 1787
[162]HA XI, 198. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 11 März 1787

> Umgeben von antiken Statuen...man wird...auf den Menschen in seinem reinsten Zustande zurückgeführt, wodurch denn der Beschauer selbst lebendig und rein menschlich wird. Wenn man des Morgens die Augen aufschlägt, fühlt man sich von dem Vortrefflichsten gerührt; alles unser Denken und Sinnen ist von solchen Gestalten begleitet, und es wird dadurch unmöglich, in Barbarei zurückzufallen.[163]

For Goethe, ancient art animated the spirit and put one in touch with one's humanity, preventing one from degenerating into barbaric tastes that agitated the soul and forced one to succumb to intemperate emotions. Classical art and artifacts had the power to elicit states of mind that palliated the soul, rendering soothing joy and placid serenity. Insofar as Goethe valued such psychological effects, upon his return to Weimar, he refurbished his own living quarters with an array of choice, antique objects, the daily observation and use of which served to regulate his affects and contribute to his daily sense of well-being.

Beyond prioritizing the seeking of pleasure and the avoidance of pain through commerce with objects, a further aspect of an Epicurean conception of happiness marked Goethe's way of living in Italy. For the Epicurean, happiness importantly involved revising conventionally held beliefs that prevented one from appreciating life's true character. One such example lay in the idea that happiness was attainable through satisfaction derived from the posession of wealth, fame or status.[164] But in actual fact, such things more often than none proved unchoiceworthy, in part because they implied enduring considerable hardship and pain in the attempt to procure and maintain them.[165] What is more, they could never be fully satiated as there was virtually no limit to their satisfaction. They knew no natural measure.[166] In contradistinction, true happiness, could be obtained from eliminating or paring down such desires, while learning to appreciate essential pleasures including nourishment and warmth, secure in the knowledge that they could be duly

[163]HA XI, 544. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt Bericht April 1788
[164]Lawrence & Charlotte Becker, *Encyclopedia of Ethics* (New York: Routledge 2001) 700.
[165]Phillip Mitsis, *Epicurus' ethical theory: the pleasures of invulnerability* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988) 67.
[166]Andrew Mitchell, "Friendship Amongst the Self-Sufficent: Epicurus" *Essays in Philosophy*, 2.2 (2001) : 4.

gratified and remained within one's continual reach.[167]Once reconciled to the happiness derivable from life's ever-renewable fundamentals, the prospect of failing to obtain or suffering the loss of inessential goods like riches and prestige ceased to be meaningful. Epicureans thus embraced the curative value of dispensing with orthodox conceptions of happiness and coming to appreciate how little was actually required to be contented with life.

In the course of his travels through southern Italy, Goethe repeatedly encountered evidence of an Epicurean ethos of affirming day-to-day life through the satisfaction of routine, readily available pleasures. Through observing various forms of life that delighted in basic pleasures, Goethe came to abandon the vain and empty desires that had long plagued him in Weimar. On route to Italy, in Regensburg, he had a foretaste of a mentality that cherished prosaic pleasures, where upon attending a Jesuit theater production that seemed to anticipate the Italian penchant for the dramatic arts, he concluded of the joyful countenance he witnessed: "Hier ist nicht Klugheit, wie man sie sich in Abstracto denkt, es ist e*ine Freude an der Sache dabei, ein Mit-und Selbstgenuss, wie er aus dem Gebrauche des Lebens entspringt*."[168]Observations of the Jesuits led Goethe to realize that contentment with life depended in large measure on the ability to cultivate pleasure within the confines of the everyday. Indeed, the further he penetrated southwards, the more he discerned the salutary effects of a way of life focused on basic needs that promoted the simple joy of existing. Arriving in Naples after an exacting stint of artistic training in Rome, Goethe remarked: "Wenn man in Rom gern studieren mag, so will man hier nur leben; man vergisst sich und die Welt, und für mich ist es eine wunderliche Empfindung, *nur mit genießenden Menschen umzugehen*."[169]If the ambience of Naples did wonders to take his

[167]O'Keefe, 125.
[168]HA XI, 10. Italienische Reise, Regensburg, 3 Sept 1786
[169]HA XI, 208. Italienische Reise, Caserta, 16 März 1787

mind off personal trials and preoccupations, interacting with Neapolitans who knew how to take pleasure in mundane existence proved doubly therapeutic, apprising Goethe that a positive attitude went a long way towards keeping one emotionally upbeat about life. Indeed, beyond their sanguine natures, the modern, Neapolitan boasted a host of quintessentially ancient features. Goethe pointed to "Menschen von *glücklichem Naturell*," the dominant attributes of which included, "...*Augenblickliche Befriedigung, mäßiger Genuss, vorübergehender Leiden, heiteres Dulden*!"[170]Effectively exhibiting the entire gambit of virtues that practitioners of an ancient therapeutics took pains to acquire, the Neapolitan incarnated an example to be emulated.

Goethe was not oblivious to the fact that conditions in the south were particularly conducive to the cultivation of ancient, spiritual values promoting a happy disposition. Indeed, he observed that while work and pleasure were mutually exclusive for the northerner, for the southerner, there was no conflict of interest between them. Evincing the capacity to be industrious without permitting work to become burdensome, life was animated rather than enslaved by one's labor. Undoubtedly, the south's auspicious climatic conditions facilitated the enjoyment of work, whereby inhabitants had the advantage of living each day as it came. Goethe maintained, "Jedermann *lebt in den Tag hinein*, weil ein Tag dem andern gleicht und man sich auf keine Zeit des Mangels, keinen Winter vorzubereiten hat."[171]Italy's mild climate meant that the southerner benefited from mother nature's year-round provision of life's essentials, enabling him to immerse himself in the present without troubling about the future. But despite ascertaining ideal conditions conducive to focusing on the present, Goethe was persuaded that the insouciant demeanor of the Neapolitans had much to recommend it. Refusing to embrace the prevailing opinion that the Mediterranean climate was responsible for breeding a lazy populace,

[170]HA XI, 198. Italienische Reise Naples, 12 März 1787
[171]WA IV, 8, 207. Brief an Friderich Constantin von Stein 10 März 1787

Goethe went so far as to hold up the infamous Lazzaroni, a poor peoples domiciled in Naples, typically censured as degenerate, idle loafers (Müssigganger), as a form of existence animating "life's daily festival of joy."[172]For Goethe, the Lazzaroni were characterized by a remarkable industry and knew how to make work the very felicity of their existence. Equipped with the propensity to constantly occupy themselves, while ready to assume any kind of work no matter how distasteful for reasonable remuneration, Goethe applauded their remarkably positive work ethic. He noted, "Man würde alsdann im ganzen vielleicht bemerken, daß der sogenannte Lazarone nicht um ein Haar untätiger ist als alle übrigen Klassen, zugleich aber auch wahrnehmen, *daß alle in ihrer Art nicht arbeiten, um bloß zu leben,* sondern *um zu genießen, und daß sie sogar bei der Arbeit des Lebens froh werden wollen*."[173]Through his impartial observations of a highly stigmatized culture's way of life, Goethe drew valuable lessons that bore affinities with the precepts comprising an ancient art of living. He came to recognize that daily existence could be felicitous regardless of one's station in life, while discovering that the ability to delight in one's labor, refusing to let it dictate life, proved indispensable to securing happiness from one day to another.

The therapeutic wisdom Goethe acquired in Italy not only depended on reconceptualizing the aim of work, refusing to permit it to overshadow life's immediacy, it involved a reorientation towards the fulfillment of basic needs as the fulcrum of an Epicurean joy of living. If freedom from material worry helped to keep one's sights on the concerns of the present, the Mediterranean mentality also relied on a spiritual form of industry that derived satisfaction from a modest livelihood. Goethe maintained, "Ich finde in diesem Volk die lebhafteste und

[172]Melissa Calaresu, "From the Street to Stereotype: Urban Space, Travel and Picturesque in late Eighteenth-Century Naples" *Italian Studies* 62:2 (autumn 2007): 199.
[173]HA XI, 337. Italienische Reise, 28 Mai 1787 "ich möchte fast das Paradoxon aufstellen, daß zu Neapel verhältnismäßig vielleicht noch die meiste Industrie in der ganz niedern Klasse zu finden sei...Ein armer, uns elend scheinender Mensch könne in den dortigen Gegenden die nötigsten und nächsten Bedürfnisse nicht allein befriedigen, sondern die Welt aufs schönste genießen"

geistreichste Industrie, *nicht um reich zu werden*, sondern *um sorgenfrei zu leben*."[174] Rather than harbor ambitions of profit, much less the amassing of a fortune, the Neapolitan's assiduity had prescribed limits, primarily aimed at satisfying basic, immediate needs. Through repeat exposure to such a humbling mentality, Goethe came to realize that a work ethic premised on deferred gratification aimed at future prosperity led one to forfeit contentment with the immediate fruits of the present. Moreover, he increasingly recognized that learning to temper one's needs and abandon artificial desires enhanced satisfaction with everyday existence. Reflecting on the example of the ancient school of Cynicism, the teachings of which turned on renouncing worldly attachments to subsist on life's bare essentials, Goethe perceived the remedial benefits of habituation to frugality in which the fundamentals sufficed to afford infinite contentment. He observed that the simpler and less complicated his needs, the freer and less anxious his life. Goethe thus sought to limit his desires to those which were natural and necessary, where his daily existence came to consist almost exclusively in "ein klein Stüpgen, wo er in Schlaffen und ungehindert in arbeiten könnte, und ein ganz einfaches Essen."[175] He later claimed that the experience of such a rudimentary form of existence had constituted a form of happiness previously unknown to him. Goethe thus came to recognize the inestimable value of purging himself of unnecessary desires so as to derive satisfaction under even the most modest of circumstances.

Goethe further saw the cheerful disposition that prevailed in the south owed to prevailing values regarding the role of material wealth, suggesting that affluence was ultimately incompatible with a happy existence. He explained how the Neapolitan school of painters were spokesmen for this normative perspective:

[174]HA XI, 199. Italienische Reise, Naples, 12. März, 1787
[175]Christian Beutler, J.H.W. Tischbein-Goethe in der Campagna (Stuttgart: Reclam1962) 265. Tischbein, Brief an Lavater, 9 Dez 1786

> Den zweiten Fastensonntag benutzten wir, von Kirche zu Kirche zu wandern. Wie in Rom alles höchst ernsthaft ist, so treibt sich hier alles lustig und wohlgemut. Auch die neapolitanische Malerschule begreift man nur zu Neapel. Hier sieht man mit Verwunderung die ganze Vorderseite einer Kirche von unten bis oben gemalt, über der Türe Christus, der die Käufer und Verkäufer zum Tempel hinaustreibt, welche zu beiden Seiten, munter und zierlich erschreckt, die Treppen herunterpurzeln. Innerhalb einer andern Kirche ist der Raum über dem Eingang reichhaltig mit einem Freskogemälde geziert, die Vertreibung Heliodors vorstellend.[176]

Despite donning frescos portraying the sinfulness of trade and usury, the ambience of Naples churches was surprisingly merry and cheerful; for in their transmission of Christian moral themes, they revealed themselves to be remarkably pagan in spirit. On the one hand, they evinced a Greco-Roman attitude of disdain for the accumulation of wealth as a license for vice, while on the other, they refrained from sanctimonious gestures attempting to connect a troubled conscience with the coveting of riches, electing instead to depict the human propensity towards avarice in the most light-hearted manner.

Thus surrounded from all quarters by forces inoculating him from the influences of orthodox conceptions of happiness, Goethe's shift from prizing literary acclaim and court distinction to a return to what fundamentally mattered in life, also grew out of his determination to fulfill his basic, artistic desires. Here, the fundamental Epicurean distinction between pleasure as the satisfaction of and pain as the frustration of desire, conditioned his relation to the arts.[177]During his first decade in Weimar, Goethe frequently invoked the therapeutic effects he derived from fulfilling his existential need to draw: "...mir ist's, als wenn das Zeichnen mir ein Saugläppchen wäre, dem Kind in Mund gegeben, daβ es schweige und in eingebildeter Nahrung ruhe..."[178]Drawing had afforded a certain consolation for his strenuous, political duties, delivering him from the brunt of ministerial life and furnishing a modicum of solace.

[176]HA XI, 189-190. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 5. März 1787
[177]Julia Annas, "Epicurus on Pleasure and Happiness" *Philosophical Topics* 15 (1987): 9
[178]WA IV, 3, 175. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 15 bis 16 September 1777

Notwithstanding, as a purely subsidiary activity serving to counterbalance the drudgery of his primary occupations, Goethe was prevented from satiating his artistic desires. But if his passion for the arts in Weimar had remained compensatory, at best, providing temporary relief from the strain of taxing professional duties, in Rome, its function altered dramatically. Through consecrating himself to a full-fledged apprenticeship in the arts, Goethe converted an elementary need that had hitherto been an escape, into a routine practice issuing in daily sated pleasure. Once he was able to practice art for art's sake, what had long proven a mere anodyne to his toils became a genuine source of pleasure.

In order to fully rectify the compensatory function of art, Goethe sought to acquire a capacity to uninhibitedly take pleasure in artistic training. At the outset of his apprenticeship, the need to appropriate the technical know-how of drawing and painting proved so daunting, that despite having secured the conditions needed to satisfy his desires, Goethe was far from enjoying a state of artistic bliss: "Es bleibt wohl dabei...daß ich ein Mensch bin, der von der Mühe lebt. Diese Tage her habe ich wieder mehr gearbeitet als genossen."[179]With time, he realized that learning to draw and paint was just as much a matter of enjoying the incremental fulfillment of desire, as a question of discipline and self-application. Moreover, awakened to what he took to be the essentially culturally conditioned nature of pleasure, he saw the need to dispense with his habitual German tendency to be industrious at the expense of enjoying his daily occupations. Taking a short respite from his training in Rome to imbibe a Neapolitan ethos of pleasure, he thus maintained, "Triebe mich nicht die deutsche Sinnesart und das Verlangen, *mehr zu lernen und zu tun als zu genießen*, so sollte ich in dieser Schule des leichten und lustigen Lebens noch

[179]HA XI, 395. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 17 Sept 1787

einige Zeit verweilen und mehr zu profitieren suchen."[180]That Goethe should speak of a school of joyful living attests to his recognition that learning to properly cultivate the pleasures was the key to securing happiness. Whilst ultimately incapable of repressing his indefatigable diligence to entertain a Neapolitan nonchalance, he recognized the benefits of uninhibitedly taking pleasure in one's activities, gradually succeeding in making his daily, artistic practice a source of immediate pleasure: "Ich habe in der Welt nichts zu suchen als das Gefundne, nur daß ichs *genießen lerne*, das ist alles *warum ich mich hier noch mehr hämmern und bearbeiten laße*."[181]Goethe thus came to realize that the capacity to surrender to the joys of learning was an indispensable component of engaging in artistic practice for its own sake.

The satisfaction Goethe derived from his artistic schooling in Italy was also a function of coming to conceive happiness in terms of self-flourishing. Much in the Epicurean vein of regarding happiness in eudaimonistic terms as the fulfillment of one's distinctive nature, the more Goethe cultivated his personal, artistic endowments, the more he derived pleasure. "Ich bin hier sehr *glücklich*, es wird den ganzen Tag bis in die Nacht gezeichnet, gemalt, getuscht, geklebt, Handwerk und Kunst recht ex professo getrieben."[182] In the endeavor to realize his ownmost artistic potentialities, Goethe abandoned all pretensions of knowledge about art production, seeking instruction whenever possible and immersing himself in the fundamentals: "Ich gehe wenn es Nacht wird, vier Tage in der Woche in eine Perspektivstunde, es ist mir eine rechte *Lust*, wieder den Schüler zu machen..."[183] If Goethe derived pleasure from revisiting the basics in the capacity of a beginner, he was afforded infinite satisfaction in the knowledge that he was laying a more solid foundation: "Gestern abend, als ich zu Bette ging, fühlt' ich recht das

[180]WA XI, 215. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 22 März 1787
[181]WA IV, 8, 115. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, Rom, 6 Januar 1787
[182]HA XI, 398. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Frascati, 28 Sept 1787
[183]WA IV, 8, 309. Brief an Friederich von Stein, 18 Dez 1787

Vergnügen hier zu sein. Es war mir, als wenn mich auf einen recht breiten sichern Grund niederlegt."[184] The more he achieved technical competence, the more he came to relish the very process of his artistic development. He unequivocally maintained: "Ich sprech nicht aus wie *glücklich* ich bin, daß ich da zu sehen anfange, wo ich Zeitlebens nur getappt habe."[185] Goethe's happiness was thus intimately bound up with his own self-flourishing in Italy, whereby the progressive enhancement of his distinct nature became a vital source of his well-being.

While transforming his clamorous desires to engage in the arts into a capacity to derive pleasure from labors that enlarged his own nature, Goethe's ability to secure happiness in the present also rested on obtaining skills that would ensure the renewability of his pleasure in future. Much in the vein of Epicureanism's commitment to cultivating pleasures that could endure for a lifetime, Goethe's artistic ambitions were focused on the development of long-term, sustainable pleasure.[186] Persuaded that the capacity to take pleasure lastingly was the key to preserving his mental health, he remarked, "Mit jedem Tage scheint die Gesundheit Leibes und der Seele zu wachsen und ich habe bald nichts als die *Dauer* meines Zustandes zu wünschen."[187]Emancipating himself from the weight of neglected artistic passions, Goethe thus sought to remove anxieties about the transience of his newly acquired, artistic capacities. All too aware that his apprenticeship in the arts was merely a trial period invariably destined to come to an end, he recognized the need to cultivate enduring skills that would allow him to induce pleasure at will in the future. Indeed, if the ancients had deemed it imperative to cultivate an ability to make the fundamental pleasures of life continually renewable, Goethe too was persuaded that only the capacity to replenish pleasureful moments no matter what the

[184]HA XI, 415. Zweite römischer Aufenthalt, Castel Gandolfo, 8 Okt 1787
[185]WA IV, 8, 322. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, Rom, 19 Jan 1788
[186] Becker, 700.
[187]WA IV, 8, 236. Brief an Keyser, 14 Juli 1787

circumstances, could contribute to his abiding happiness. Such a conception proved remarkably close to the Epicurean idea that one ought to live in such a way as to secure the greatest amount of happiness possible during one's lifetime.[188] Goethe articulated precisely this belief, claiming: "Auch habe ich dieses Jahr unter fremden Menschen Acht gegeben und gefunden,...daß der Moment alles ist und dass nur der Vorzug eines vernunftigen Menschen darin bestehe, *sich so zu betragen, dass sein Leben...die möglichste Masse von vernüftigen, glücklichen Momenten enthalte*."[189]Amassing the greatest quantity of happy moments was not, for Goethe, a matter of enjoying inconstant gratification as often as possible in the foreseeable future, but a question of acquiring permanent habits of eliciting pleasure that could be reliably summoned at will, time and again, in perpetuity. Recognizing that pleasure had to be evaluated from the viewpoint of life's entirety, Goethe endeavored to equip himself with permanent skills that could secure happiness from occupation with the arts over the whole of his existence. Notwithstanding such aspirations, achieving a lasting command over the arts was no simple undertaking. Goethe recognized the magnitude of the task, conceding that the aspired after results would be a long time in coming. He wrote to Herder, "Ich habe mich in eine zu große Schule begeben, als daß ich geschwind wieder aus der Lehre gehen dürfte."[190] At the same time, Goethe made breakthroughs that conferred him permanent knowledge and the promise of lasting expertise: "Und so kommt tagtäglich etwas Neues zum Vorschein was, zu dem Alten und Bleibenden gesellt...mit der Zeit könnte ich Kenner werden."[191] Eventually, he reconceived the figurative arts in terms of a lifetime occupation destined never to achieve full resolution: "etwas recht zu tun,

[188]Holowchak, 95
[189]HA XI, 418. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 27 Okt 1787
[190]HA XI, 353. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom 30 Ende Juni
[191]HAXI, 368. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 16. Juli 1787

dazu gehört die Übung des ganzen Lebens."[192]But if the length of tenure required to master the arts was long and immeasurable, once one secured the requisite expertise, the horizons of one's world proved limitless: "O wie weit und lang ist die Kunst und wie unendlich wird die Welt..."[193]Indeed, the long-term investment required to achieve self-sufficiency in the arts ultimately paid off dividends because once properly equipped, one could employ oneself indefinately. By the end of his apprenticeship, Goethe managed to secure a reserve of artistic skills exploitable for years to come: "(ich) habe Vorrat auf Jahre lang auszubilden und zu komplettieren." Elsewhere he remarked on the enduring consequences of his engagement with the arts in Italy: "Ich freue mich der gesegneten Folgen auf mein ganzes Leben."[194] Goethe thus saw the task of achieving expertise in the arts necessary to an optimization of pleasure-seeking over the whole of life that could contribute to his persisting happiness.

If Goethe came to prioritize long-term sustainable pleasure in Italy, he also recognized that his artistic abilities could only be realized in association with others. A therapeutic apprenticeship in the arts thus importantly depended upon the cultivation of friendship. If the ancients considered friendship an indispensable element in the pursuit of self-flourishing, it played no small part in Goethe's striving towards self-betterment in Italy. Like the Epicureans, Goethe knew the inestimable value of dwelling in a circle of like-minded friends. Eager to take advantage of the pedagogical resources at his disposal, he lost no time cultivating friendships with artists. He thus took to systematically visiting monuments and ruins with Wilhelm Tischbein, viewing renown works housed in Romam palazzi with the painter, Angelika Kaufmann, engaging in discussion about human proportion with the sculptor, Alexandre

[192]HA XI, 172. Italienische Reise, 17 Feb 1787
[193]HAXI, 398. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 22 Sept 1787
[194]HA XI, 125. Italienische Reise, 1 Nov 1786

Trippel,[195]and obtaining drawing lessons from the landscape painter, Philipp Hackert.[196] He maintained of the benefit of having adepts of the arts in close proximity, whereby certain artistic principles could only be grasped through expert instruction:

> Denn gewisse Dinge sind es die man von andern lernen und annehmen muß. Dieses macht den Aufenthalt in Rom so angenehm, weil so viele Menschen sich hier aufhalten, die sich mit Dencken über Kunst, mit Ausübung derselben Zeitlebens beschäftigen und wohl kein Punckt seyn kann, über den man nicht von einem oder dem andern Belehrung erwarten könnte.[197]

But beyond the benefits of tuition, the friendships Goethe forged with artists in Italy served a therapeutic function of confirming his own artistic identity. While Tischbein, Kaufmann and Trippel conferred Goethe guidance in the visual arts, each in turn payed tribute to his achievements as a poet. Executing artworks representing him, they reinforced his consciousness of being an artist in his own right. Goethe noted of the iconic painting Tischbein produced of him: "Tischbein mahlt mich jetzo. Ich laße ihn gehn, denn einem solchen Künstler muß man nicht einreden. Er mahlt mich Lebensgröße, in einen weisen Mantel gehüllt, in freyer Luft auf Ruinen sitzend und im Hintergrunde die Campagna di Roma."[198]Hence, like in the ancient, therapeutic schools where practitioners were bound by practical fellowship in their common pursuit of spiritual training, Goethe benefited from the cameraderie prevailing in Rome's artist colony, gaining both insight and confidence in his own artistic nature.

The friendships Goethe initiated in Italy took on various guises reflecting Goethe's newfound allegiance to ancient, classical norms governing human relations. Indeed, the classical demanded a certain symmetry of relations, in which each party strove to balance its interests. Here, the Epicureans, while deeming friendship valuable per se, nevertheless maintained that it

[195]HAXI, 390. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, August Inhaltsverzeichnis
[196]HA XI, 350./ WA I, 32, 4. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom 16. Juni 1787
[197]WA IV, 8, 240. Brief an Karl August, 11 August 1787
[198]WA IV, 8, 104. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 29 Dez 1786

essentially arose for the sake of gain. Far from censure the benefits accruing from such a relationship, they insisted that conferring a friend an advantage could be equally, if not more agreable than receiving one.[199]Friendship was thus a matter of reciprocal welfare, the caveat being that a sense of proportion be preserved, such that it not conflict with the demands of self-sufficiency. Goethe espoused such a conception of friendship predicated on mutual benefit, unequivocally maintaining: "Ich will auch keine Stunde um der Menschen willen versäumen, *die mir nichts geben können und denen ich nichts geben kann*."[200]Having been party to a host of asymmetric relations in Weimar, in which he perpetually felt indebted to his patrons and obliged to do favors to those dependent upon him, Goethe was determined to cultivate relations based solely on mutual gain in Italy.

The delicate equipoise of friendship premised on reciprocity barring dependency is perhaps best illustrated in Goethe's rapport with one of the most promising German eighteenth century painters, Wilhelm Tischbein. Having been prematurely forced to interrupt his schooling in Rome due to a want of finances, Tischbein was able to procure a scholarship to resume his studies in 1783, in part, thanks to Goethe's mediation with the Herzog of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg. He thus demonstrated no want of hospitality upon Goethe's arrival in Rome, sharing his living quarters, acquainting him with the city's artistic treasures and introducing him to his entourage of artist friends to induct him into the capital's vibrant art scene. Acknowledging the auspicious conditions under which he commenced his apprenticeship, Goethe wrote: "Das stärckste was mich in Italien hält ist Tischbein...Ich werde nie...so viel in so kurzer Zeit lernen können, als jetzt in Gesellschaft dieses ausgebildeten, erfahrenen, feinen, richtigen, mir mit Leib und Seele

[199]John M. Rist, "Epicurus on Friendship" *Classical Philology* 75.2 (April 1980):124.
[200]WA IV, 8, 311. Brief an Knebel, 21 Dez 1787

anhängenden Mannes."[201] Elsewhere he similarly insisted, "Tischbeins Gesellschaft ist mir von unendlichem Nutzen..."[202] Goethe profited from Tischbein's scrutiny of his artistic abilities and credited him with helping to identify his strengths and limitations: "Tischbein bringt mich im Zeichnen seit fast zwey Tagen fast jede Stunde weiter, denn er sieht wo ich bin und was mir abgeht."[203] Moreover, Goethe saw in Tischbein a model worthy of emulation, his work embodying a point of orientation that would keep him from straying from the path of classical aesthetics; his turn from the Roccoco to the Neoclassical, was living proof of the artistic renewability of classical influences. Having reappropriated the classical with no paucity of imagination, Tischbein's work thus provided Goethe with a model of exemplary artistry: "Tischbein kann ich nicht genug loben, wie original er sich aus sich selbst heraus gebildet hat."[204]

But if Tischbein furnished the mentorship of a seasoned painter whose signature works felicitously rejuvenated classical tenets, Goethe's own poetic powers were no less vital to the friendship. Even before their acquaintance, Tischbein had been an enthusiastic reader of Goethe's works, completing a painting based on Götz von Berlichingen as early 1782. During Goethe's Roman sojourn, he took a noteworthy interest in his versification of Iphigenie, impressing Goethe with his powers of interpretation: "Ich las Tischbeinen meine Iphigenie vor die nun bald fertig ist. Die sonderbare, originale Art wie dieser das Stück ansah und mich über den Zustand in welchem ich es geschrieben aufklärte, erschröckte mich. Es sind keine Worte wie fein und tief er den Menschen unter dieser Helden Maske empfunden."[205] Goethe's work undoubtedly galvanized Tischbein to offer his own interpretation of the drama, whereby he completed the

[201]SW 23, 187. Brief an den Weimarer Freundeskreis, 25 Januar 1787
[202]GB 2, 49. Brief an C von Stein, Rom, 7-10 Feb 1787
[203]GB 2, 49. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, Rom, 7-10 Feb 1787
[204]WA IV, 8, 108. Brief an Herder, 29 Dez 1786
[205]WA IV, 8, 93. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 14 Decembre 1786

painting entitled *Oreste und Iphigenie* in 1788, one year after Goethe's departure from Italy. Moreover, in his endeavor to realize artistic projects informed by the ancient dictum 'ut pictura poesis,' Tischbein envisaged collaboration with Goethe, seeking to persuade the poet to author pieces for a cycle of idylls. Goethe's friendship with Tischbein thus in many ways coincided with the Epicurean vision of friendship as a relation founded on give and take, in which pleasure was largely derived from benefitting the other without forfeiting one's autonomy.

But reciprocal benefit alone was insufficient to maintain a Goethean conception of friendship that increasingly acquired classical bearings. After undertaking a trip to Naples together, Goethe's relation to Tischbein cooled off percipitately. While Goethe seems to have been alienated by the painter's indiscretion in his bid to secure a position as Naples' Director of the Academy of Fine Arts and his ungrateful attitude towards his patron Ernst II, the Duke of Sachsen-Gotha-Altenberg,[206] he also discovered personality traits at odds with his own classical values. Citing his lack of will to finish a commendable painting depicting Helen and Paris, Goethe complained of Tischbein's indolence and unreliability: "Tischbein ist...ein wunderliches Thier eine Art Hasenfuß, ist faul, unzuverlässig."[207] Manifesting tendencies that patently contradicted the classical ethos of dutiful diligence and unwavering productive activity required to valorize the present, Goethe insisted that Tischbein lacked discipline, "...Er ist unternehmend, hat aber weder Kraft noch Fleiß zum Ausführen."[208] Indeed, the characterization is a telling one when brought into contrast with Goethe's praise of his colleague, Philipp Hackert, whose defining feature appeared be one of deriving pleasure precisely from his unceasing industry: "Es ist ein sehr bestimmter, kluger Mann, der bei unausgesetztem Fleiß das Leben zu genießen

[206]Sigrid Damm, *Goethes Freunde in Gotha und Weimar* (Berlin: Insel Verlag 2014) 123.
[207]GB 2, 111. Brief an Herder, 2. März 1789
[208]GB 2, 112. Brief an Herder, 2. März 1789

versteht."[209] Censuring Tischbein's laid back work ethic, Goethe further discerned a certain caprice and inconstancy of temperament lurking under the mantel of his talent. Taken aback by his proneness to the arbitrary and manifest inability to keep his passions in check, he wrote to Herder, complaining: "Ein Nachklang von Gemüth schwankt noch in seiner Seele. Es ist Schade um ihn."[210] Having learned the virtue of sublimating his passions to internalize the norms of moderation and self-discipline, Goethe came to expect the ideals of harmony and restraint to govern an artist's temperament as well as informing his aesthetics. Tischbein's ostensible indifference towards the ethical dimension of aesthetic life contradicted the classical spirit, whereby Goethe insisted that those who enjoyed the privilege of pursuing the fine arts cultivate it as a comprehensive way of life, incorporating the imperative of spiritual self-fashioning into its very practice.

> Ja, ich muß sagen, ich bin dieses Jahr *moralisch sehr verwöhnt* worden. Nun hat sich wieder ein enger Kreis um mich gezogen, die alle gut sind, alle auf dem rechten Wege, und das ist nur das Kennzeichen, daß sie es bei mir aushalten können, mich mögen, Freude in meiner Gegenwart finden, je mehr sie *denkend und handelnd auf dem rechten Wege sind*. Denn *ich bin unbarmherzig, unduldsam gegen alle, die auf ihrem Wege schlendern oder irren*.[211]

If spiritual improvement went hand in hand with artistic self-development, Tischbein's glib attitude proved disenchanting. Goethe went so far as to judge the painter incapable of ever entertaining the tranquility and satisfaction characteristic of the classical, artistic spirit: "...doch fürchte ich, er wird nie in einen solchen Zustand kommen, in welchem er mit Freude und Freiheit arbeiten kann."[212] Indeed, owing to spiritual incompatibilities, the two artists would ultimately part ways in Italy, whereby Tischbein's divergence from classical ideals cast a different complexion on the initial appeal Goethe had felt to follow in his painter friend's footsteps.

[209]HA XI, 185. Neapel, 28. Februar 1787
[210]WA IV, 9, 92. Goethe an Herder in Italien, Weimar 2. März 1789
[211]HA XI, 446. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 25 Dez 1787
[212]HA XI, 352. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 27 Juni 1787

Reasserting his independence, he categorically maintained: "Mit dem Künstler nur muss man sich nicht vergleichen, sondern nach seiner eigenen Art verfahren; denn die Natur hat für ihre Kinder gesorgt..."[213]Goethe's friendship with Tischbein thus served to bring to the fore the values he deemed inviolable to a therapeutic form of artistic practice embracing the ethical imperative of spiritual, self-improvement.

The therapeutic benefits afforded by friendship came to greatest fruition in Goethe's relations with the young, German writer, Karl Philipp Moritz. Indeed, if the Epicureans held friendship in the highest esteem, importantly conceiving it in therapeutic terms, they ultimately maintained that "a life without friends was a life diseased, pained and in need of succor."[214]This wisdom rang especially true for Moritz, who, making Goethe's acquaintance in Italy, only to subsequently be taken under his umbrage after a serious accident, underwent spiritual as well as physical rehabilitation thanks to his solicitous attentions. In the course of ministering to the injured writer, Goethe ascertained their striking similarity of history and endowment, christening Moritz his younger brother and reflecting upon the contingency of his own Bildung's trajectory. Whereas auspicious circumstances had served to nurture his development, enhancing his abilities and reinforcing his self-assurance, the desolate conditions Moritz had endured worked to impede his personal growth and undermine his morale.[215]If hazard had brought these two men of remarkably similar orientation into intimate proximity, they lost no time forging an intense, artistic and spiritual exchange. For his part, Goethe served largely as a spiritual mentor, offering Moritz guidance, reinforcing his aesthetic committment and shoring up his confidence, until he was convinced that he had made a lasting influence: "Moritz schleicht wieder herum, *dem* bin

[213]HA XI, 172. Italienische Reise, 17 Feb 1786
[214]Andrew Mitchell, "Friendship Amongst the Self-Sufficent: Epicurus" *Essays in Philosophy*, 2.2 (2001): 1.
[215]WA IV, 8, 93. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 14 Dez 1786

ich nun wieder nützlich und mein Umgang wird wichtigen Einfluß auf sein künftig Leben haben."[216] Moritz, in turn, became a springboard for Goethe's nascent, natural scientific and aesthetic ideas, helping him to articulate and sharpen their contours:

> Mit Moritz hab' ich recht gute Stunden, und habe angefangen, ihm mein Pflanzensystem zu erklären, und jedesmal in seiner Gegenwart aufzuschreiben, wie weit wir gekommen sind. Auf diese Art konnt' ich allein etwas von meinen Gedanken zu Papier bringen. Wie faßlich aber das Abstrakteste von dieser Vorstellungsart wird, wenn es mit der rechten Methode vorgetragen wird und eine vorbereitete Seele findet, seh' ich an meinem neuen Schüler. Er hat eine große Freude daran und ruckt immer selbst mit Schlüssen vor wärts.[217]

But if Goethe profitted from the inexhaustible receptivity of his new disciple, Moritz was, by no means a mere subordinate. Offering Goethe a great deal more than a gifted interlocutor, Mortiz's ambitions to author a mythology provided a cultural reference for Goethe's antiquarian interests and his linguistic competencies had considerable resonance for his classical poetics: "»Iphigenia« in Jamben zu übersetzen, hätte ich nie gewagt, wäre mir in Moritzens »Prosodie« nicht ein Leitstern erschienen. Der Umgang mit dem Verfasser, besonders während seines Krankenlagers, hat mich noch mehr darüber aufgeklärt, und ich ersuche die Freunde, darüber mit Wohlwollen nachzudenken."[218] While Moritz's influence played no small part in the versification of *Iphigenie*, the play's evolution was a product of Goethe's will to continuously subject his intuitions to scrutiny in ongoing dialogue with intimates. Conversely, theoretical exchanges with Goethe were a source of edification for Moritz, such that the doctrines elaborated in his aesthetic treatise, *Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönen*, ostensibly grew out of discussion with Goethe and are partially imputed to his ideas. Indeed, if dialogue had been an indispensable component of the spiritual practice of the ancients, both Goethe and Moritz credited their artistic

[216]WA IV, 8, 181. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, Rom, 7-10 Feb 1787
[217]HA XI, 399. Italienische Reise, Frascati 28 Sept 1787
[218]HA XI, 476. Zweite römischer Aufenthalt, 10.Jan 1787

progress to its influence. Indeed, the constitutive role dialogue could play in spiritual development is perhaps most tellingly evinced in Moritz's admission that the habit of exchanging thoughts with Goethe had become so ingrained in him, that it continued to persist long after the poet's departure from Italy: "Gestern morgen machte ich einen feierlichen Spaziergang in die Villa Borghese, wo ich lange mit Ihnen gesprochen habe; weil diejenigen von Ihren Gedanken, welche in mir feststehen, den meinigen immer zu gehörigen Zeit antworten."[219]Much in line with the ancients, meaningful conversation was an invaluable means through which Goethe and his intimates fashioned themselves in Italy.

Goethe's changing conception of human relations in Italy also evinced parallels with the Epicurean idea that personal happiness was not necessarily compatible with pursuing societal welfare. If the Epicureans had deemed it necessary to sever happiness from its traditional affiliation with engaged citizenship in the Polis, Goethe too began to reconsider the relationship between individual happiness and the collective good, disengaging himself from public-spirited, civic activity in Italy. While undeniably having derived satisfaction from his dedication to the welfare of the Weimar Duchy, he also lamented the loss of his humanity through relationships exhausted in answering the petitions of others: "Ich kann dir nicht sagen was ich schon die kurze Zeit an Menschlichkeit gewonnen habe. Wie ich aber auch fühle was wir in den kleinen Souverainen Staaten für elende einsame Menschen seyn müssen weil man, und besonders in meiner Lage, fast mit niemand reden darf, der nicht was wollte und mögte."[220]Once he managed to extricate himself from instrumental relations, Goethe realized that he was incapable of functioning as a productive member of a social whole, without initially satisfying his particular

[219]Otto Harnack, *Zur Dachgeschichte der italienischen Reise Goethes Briefwechsel mit Freuden und Kunstgenossen in Italien* (Nikosia: Verone 2017) 27. Moritz an Goethe Rom, 7 Juni 1788
[220]WA III, 1, 229-230. Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise 1786

ends:

> Meine Lage wird die glücklichste seyn, sobald ich *an mich allein denke*, wenn ich das, was ich solange für meine Pflicht gehalten, aus meinem Gemüthe verbanne und mich recht überzeuge: das der Mensch das Gute, das ihm weiderfährt, wie einen glücklichen Raub dahinnehmen und sich weder um Rechts noch Lincks, *vielweniger um das Glück und Unglück eine Ganzen bekümmern soll*.[221]

Determined to take possession of his own happiness in Italy, Goethe temporarily deferred his sense of social obligation, refusing to subordinate his aims to the collective interests of the whole of society. He accordingly assumed personal responsibility for his own happiness, grasping opportunities for self-cultivation afforded by his surroundings without any consideration of their broader, social implications.

By stepping back from civil society to avoid social entanglements, Goethe was able to reflect upon the character that intersubjective relations ought to assume in society at large. Cohabitating almost exclusively with practitioners of art, from whom there was little risk of being solicited for favors, communal life in Italy gave Goethe the opportunity to observe social dynamics from a new perspective. He thereby came to evaluate human relations in terms of their specific implications for self-development:

> Auch im allgemeinen mit mehreren Menschen zu leben, geht mir ganz gut. Ich sehe eines jeden Gemütsart und Handelsweise. Der eine spielt sein Spiel, der andre nicht, dieser wird vorwärts kommen, jener schwerlich. Einer sammelt, einer zerstreut. Einem genügt alles, dem andern nichts. Der hat Talent und übt's nicht, jener hat keins und ist fleißig etc. etc. Das alles sehe ich und mich mitten drin; es vergnügt mich und gibt mir, da ich keinen Teil an den Menschen, nichts an ihnen zu verantworten habe...[222]

No longer hindered by a sense of responsibility for others, Goethe began to cultivate new forms of conduct amenable to mutual association with others. Indeed, while the goal of cultivating

[221]WA IV, 8, 147. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 25-27 Jan 1787
[222]HA XI, 411. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Frascati 2. Okt, 1787

self-reliance had apprised him of his abilities, the need to get along with strangers increasingly acquainted him with his own nature. He explained, "Die Individualität eines Menschen ist ein wunderlich Ding, die meine hab' ich jetzt recht kennen lernen, da ich einerseits dieses Jahr bloß von mir selbst abgehangen habe, und von der andern Seite mit völlig fremden Menschen umzugehen hatte."[223]Living amongst unfamiliar faces in an artist colony devoid of the conventions of court society, Goethe was forced to improvise appropriate modes of behavior. Indeed, he insisted that living as a guest among individuals essentially unknown to him had been a true test of his character. He explained to his friends inWeimar: "Ihr glaubt nicht, wie nützlich, aber auch wie schwer es mir war, dieses ganze Jahr absolut unter fremden Menschen zu leben."[224] Goethe subsequently recounted his attempt to master intersubjective relations through exercising a form of moderation that afforded him latitude for accommodation to others:

> Hier ist es, wo durch ein wechselseitiges Dulden und Tragen, Teilnehmen und Entbehren ein gewisses Mittelgefühl von Resignation entsteht, dass Schmerz und Freude, Verdruss und Behagen sich in herkömmlicher Gewohnheit wechselseitig vernichten. Es erzeugt sich gleichsam eine Mittelzahl, die den Charakter der einzelnen Ergebnisse durchaus aufhebt, so daß man zuletzt im Streben nach Bequemlichkeit weder dem Schmerz noch der Freude sich mit freier Seele hingeben kann.[225]

Describing a social dynamic of mutual self-restraint in which one was compelled for the sake of propriety to alternate between sufferance and forebearance, participation and withdrawal to establish a median state of resignation that habitually defeated emotional excesses, Goethe strove to prevent himself from unreflectively acceding to pain and pleasure. By systematically regulating his responses to exercise measure, he inoculated himself against impulsive behavior liable to lead to annoyances in his dealings with others. Moreover, systematic exercises of

[223]HA XI, 418. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rome, 27 Okt 1787
[224]HA XI, 410. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Frascati, 2 Okt 1787
[225]HA XI, 429. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Okt

moderation aided Goethe in transcending the self-sacrificing resignations that had gained the upper hand during his Weimar years. Once he learned to embrace a form of resignation premised on balancing his needs to achieve harmonious interaction with others, he was able to subdue the passions in ways that mitigated extremes without stifling his natural desires.

In exploring the give and take of social relations in Italy, Goethe became increasingly persuaded that happiness had to be achieved both as a personal end, underived from dedication to the common good, as an expression of one's true, underlying nature. This conviction is paradigmatically evinced in his account of Phillip Neri during his Italian journey. Finding himself in Naples on the Saint's feast day, Goethe recounted the history of an individual who had, from his youth, made consecration to others, devoid of excess or deficiency, a genuine source of his happiness. He characterized Neri as one who "ergibt sich...ganze den Übungen der Frömmigkeit," whereby "die fromme tagtägliche, ja familiäre-praktische Behandlungen ...(waren)...aufs Leben gerichtet, und das Leben sich ohne Heiterkeit nicht denken lässt."[226] Neri's exemplarity lay in his practice of exercises in piety within the confines of the everyday, wherein he cheerfully met with life's challenges without recourse to self-deprivation. Despite earning widespread renown for his charitable works, they were neither the expression of abstemious denial of life's every pleasure, nor a painful show of self sacrifice in devotion to his fellow man. Immune to worldly vanity and faithful to his self-cultivated spirituality, Neri simply expressed his habitual generosity in commerce with others. He thereby struck the perfect balance between the cultivation of sacred passions and dedication to the social whole, aiming to defeat spiritual complacency and live in agreement with his nature, rather than accomplish feats of benevolence. Goethe concluded that even the clerical life began with the individual's pursuit

[226]HA XI, 462. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Philipp Neri, der humoristische Heilige

of a joyful way of life, unconstrained by social obligations, in harmony with one's nature. Persuaded that happiness could not come at the cost of sacrificing one's own welfare, years after his voyage, he explained in a conversation with his friend Eckermann: "jeder müsse bei sich selber anfangen und zunächst sein eigenes Glück machen, woraus denn zuletzt das Glück des Ganzen unfehlbar entstehen wird."[227]Goethe thus saw the fulfillment of a duty to the self integral to the realization of civic duties, whereby the pursuit of personal happiness and not the practice of altruisim born of self-denying renunciations, ultimately contributed to the greater good of society.

The practical expression of Goethe's need to forgo obligations to society prejudicial to his nature, occured through his gradual renunciation of his political obligations while in Italy. Towards the end of his journey, he thus supported the Duke of Weimar's intentions to promote one of his colleagues, attempting to cede his former, administrative duties in the process. He insisted, "Vielmehr wünschte ich: Sie *entbänden mich*, mit einem freundlichen Worte, meiner bisherigen Inkumbenz,...Machten alsdann Schmidten entweder gradezu zum Presidenten, oder gäben ihm die Direcktion, wie ich sie in Würcklichkeit (nicht nach dem Rescripte) gehabt habe..."[228] Proferring what amounted to his resignation, Goethe's experiences in Italy led him to realize that fulfilling political responsibilities fundamentally at odds with his intrinsic abilities was no longer tenable. He lost no time persuading the Duke that his talents would be better served elsewhere:

> ja ich werde Ihnen mehr werden als ich oft bisher war, wenn Sie mich nur das thun lassen was niemand als ich thun kann und das übrige andern auftragen. Schon sehe ich, was mir die Reise genützt, wie sie mich aufgeklärt und *meine Existenz erheitert hat*...geben Sie mich Sich

[227]J. P. Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann 1960) 533. 20 Okt 1830
[228]WA IV, 8, 223. Brief an Carl August, Neapel 27.-29. May 1787

selbst wieder, daß ich ein neues Leben und ein neues Leben mit Ihnen anfange![229]

Goethe's desire to abandon his former obligations and begin life anew reveal his attainment of the healthy optimism required to renounce, once and for all, responsibilities that had contradicted his intrinsic nature. Determined to channel his skills in socially beneficial ways that agreed with his abilities, he would relinquish virtually all of his previous administrative duties upon his return to Germany. Thus embracing a duty to act in ways that expressed his own excellence, he subsequently took to superintending cultural institutions, revitalizing the German art scene through organizing art exhibitions, overseeing professorial nominations to the University of Jena, and participating in various building projects, most notably, the reconstruction of the Weimar palace. Goethe's experiences in Italy ultimately led him to reconfigure his social commitments in ways that were in keeping with natural talents, permitting him to fulfill his obligations with genuine pleasure.

Once he had succeeded in appeasing his unrelenting passions to satisfy his personal aspirations, Goethe achieved a state resembling Epicurean pleasure as the absence of disturbances of the soul. Indeed, he had initially begun his therapeutic training by announcing a need to intensively engage with the arts in order to achieve a permanent sense of calm and contentment: "Ich bin im Land der Künste; lasst uns das Fach durcharbeiten, damit wir für unser übriges Leben *Ruh' und Freude* haben..."[230] Much in the Epicurean spirit, he recognized that the pleasure constitutive of genuine happiness was not simply a matter of quenching momentary thirst, but of working through his desires, so as to no longer be thirsty: "*Mein Durst ist gestillt*, auf dem rechten Weg bin ich der Betrachtung und des Studiums, *mein Genuss ist friedlich und*

[229]WA IV, 8, 223. Brief an Carl August, Neapel, 27.-29. May 1787
[230]HA XI, 368. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 20. Juli 1787

genugsam."[231]At the end of his nearly two year tenure in Italy, he maintained, "Mein dringendsten Bedürfnis...wird befriedigt sein." Thus having liberated himself from the tyranny of a pressing desire to achieve self-sufficiency in the arts, Goethe not only subdued the agitations of his soul, he became impervious to subsequent regret and pining. Indeed, he insisted that his newfound tranquility was no temporary gratification: "Nun bin ich hier und *ruhig* und wie es scheint *auf mein ganzes Leben beruhigt*."[232] Secure in the knowledge that he had transformed insistent desires into concrete aptitudes that would contribute to his life-long happiness, Goethe had achieved Epicurean peace of mind.

Goethe's Italian journey thus exhibited certain, fundamental teachings reminiscent of Epicureanism. Much in the vein of its exhortation to withdraw from society and repudiate orthodox, social norms of happiness, Goethe radically retreated from conventional society and its obligations, prioritizing his private needs of self-flourishing. He retrospectively reflected, "Ganz abgeschnitten von aller Welt, hab' ich eine zeitlang allein gestanden."[233] At one remove from society, Goethe learned to reconceptualize the notion of work, tempering his industry so as to be able to delight in his artistic laborings, while developing artistic expertise that promised to afford long-term sustainable pleasure. He explained to his Weimar friends: "Freut euch mit mir, daß ich *glücklich* bin, ja, ich kann wohl sagen, ich war es nie in dem Maße: *mit der größten Ruhe und Reinheit eine eingeborne Leidenschaft befriedigen zu können und von einem anhaltenden Vergnügen einen dauernden Nutzen sich versprechen zu dürfen*, ist wohl nichts Geringes."[234] The endeavor to permanently better himself, was in turn met by way of pursuing meaningful friendships, wherein he took pleasure in the giving and receiving of guidance to contribute in like

[231]HA XI, 516. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 6. Feb 1788
[232]HA XI, 125. Italienische Reise, 1. Nov 1786
[233]HA XI, 446. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom 25 Dez 1787
[234]HA XI, 395 Zweite römischer Aufenthalt, 6 Sept 1787

measure to his own progress and that of others. Finally, Goethe came to recognize that a good deal of unhappiness arose from the possession of erroneous beliefs. Pleasures he had long considered worthy of pursuit revealed themselves groundless, necessitating concessions and sacrifices that more often than none, diminished pleasure and caused pain. Reassessing the sources that led to genuine contentment with life, he eschewed the pleasures of vanity and prestige, realizing that true happiness lay in freedom from disquietude arising from the passions. Goethe learned to derive contentment in cultivating simple pleasures afforded by the everyday, whereby he concluded his journey completely at one with himself, ultimately attaining serenity of the soul and genuine happiness: "In Rom hab' ich mich selbst zuerst gefunden, *ich bin zuerst übereinstimmend mit mir selbst glücklich* und vernünftig geworden..."[235] Later claiming to have never again recovered the contentment that indelibly marked the formative period of his therapeutic-aesthetic journey, Goethe's experiences in Italy redefined for him forever after the true nature of happiness.

Conclusion

By the end of his therapeutic efforts in Italy, Goethe succeeded in curing himself of a malaise of the soul to realize a spiritual rebirth. He conveyed the marked improvement won from a process of self-healing, in which a new vitality replaced his emotional turmoil and physical stagnation: "Sehr wunderbar drängt sich in dieses Jahr so viel zusammen. *Heilsam und gesegnet*, daß auf eine lange Stockung wieder eine Lebensregung sich rührt. Ich finde mich viel, viel anders und besser."[236] Elsewhere he similarly confirmed: "Ich fühle mir einen leichtern Sinn und bin fast ein andrer Mensch als vorm Jahr."[237] Rebirth was, above all else, a restorative

[235]HA XI, 529. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 14 März 1788
[236]WA I, 30, 302. Paralipomena zur Italienischen Reise
[237]HA XI, 382. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom 11 Aug 1787

process tantamount to taking an elixir that reanimated the soul and made one feel young again. Indeed, Goethe likened it to shedding dead skin and casting off a lifeless rind to liberate his humanity: "Täglich werf ich eine neue Schaale ab und hoffe als ein Mensch wiederzukehren."[238]Once he had slewn off the trappings of a spent identity, he experienced changes known to him only in his youth. Reverting first to a state of childhood,"Mir ists wie einem Kinde, das erst wieder leben lernen muβ"[239], he subsequently claimed to experience a process of 'wiederholte Pubertät'. Elsewhere, he thematized the flowering of a second youth: "Das Leben hier ist eine zweyte Jugend..."[240] With the wrinkles effaced from his brow and the blood coarsing anew through his veins, Goethe enjoyed a veritable recommencement of life.[241]

Indeed, if he had likened Rome and its architectural wealth to a phoenix rising forth from its own ashes, Goethe's own rebirth gestured at a spiritual renewal from out of the vestiges of Italy's classical patrimony. Like his predecessor, J.J. Winkelmann, for whom the discovery of classical culture offered a touchstone for physical and mental well-being, Italy's ancient patrimony held the key to Goethe's recovery. Ensconced in an environment that emanated a spirit of robust solidity, cheerful gaiety and placid serenity, Goethe deemed Winkelmann's assessment of the salutary influence of 'die Gegenwart des klassischen Bodens' all too germane to his own experiences. Quoting his predecessor, he maintained: "Ich bin gesund und gesunder als (ich) in Deutschland gewesen bin, frei und vergnügt, und ich kann sagen, ich habe in Italien allerest angefangen zu leben. *Gesagte passt recht auf meine Art, den Sachen hier nachzugehen...*"[242] Goethe left no doubt as to his recovery at the close of his travels: "ich bin von einer ungeheueren Leidenschaft und Krankheit geheilt, wieder zum Lebensgenuss, zum Genuss der Geschichte, der

[238]GB 2, 40. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 6 Jan 1787
[239]WA III, 1,179. Tagebuch der Italienische Reise, 11 Sept 1786
[240]WA IV, 8, 154. Brief an Herder, 25-27 Jan 1787
[241]WA IV, 9, 2. Brief an Jacobi, Juli 21, 1788
[242]WA IV, 8, 119. Brief an Weimar Freundeskreis, 6 Jan 1787

Dichtkunst, der Altertümer genesen..."[243] By consummating a rebirth, he succeeded in reawakening his susceptibility to the spectrum of pleasures that defined his true, artistic nature.

The restoration of Goethe's health was largely a product of overcoming the two anathemas of self-defeating resignation and disarrayed passions that defined his Weimar years. The burden of political duties that had increasingly offered little prospect for self-flourishing, together with the obstacles barring his existential need to engage with the arts, had all but taken the life out of him: "Da, auf dem Punkte der Wirkung meines Wesens, fühl' ich die Gesundheit meiner Natur und ihre Ausbreitung; meine Füße werden nur krank in engen Schuhen, und ich sehe nichts, wenn man mich vor eine Mauer stellt."[244] But by departing for Italy to undertake an apprenticeship in the arts, Goethe put an end to self-defeating resignation and reigned in his unruly passions. On the one hand, he came to embrace an affirmative form of Entsagung that involved both renunciatory (Verzicht) and restorative (Wiederherstellung) components. In relinquishing a political way of life at loggerheads with his identity, he simultaneously took steps to fulfill his artistic nature and recover his calling as a poet. Goethe's conception of 'Entsagung' thus implied a laboriously attained capacity constitutively linked to self-realization (Erfüllung), rather than a passive capitulation to circumstances perceived beyond control. [245] At the same time, he strove to reign in turbulent passions to achieve mastery over them. The decision to pursue a serious apprenticeship in the arts was the first step in this process, importantly serving to appease unrequited desires and rectify the dissonance between 'Sehnsucht' and 'Tun' that had long proven problematic. Moreover, through cultivating a therapeutic form of artistic practice in which affects were vigilantly monitored and excesses were moderated, Goethe succeeded not

[243]WA IV, 8, 118. Brief an Weimar Freundeskreis, 6 Jan 1787
[244]HA XI, 446. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom 25 Dez 1787
[245]William Meads, *Goethe's Concept of "Entsagung"* Pacific Coast Philology 8 (Apr 1973):36.

only in mending passions that had gone awry, but in achieving a capacity to permanently restrain them. Finally, Goethe's therapeutic-artistic schooling led him to reevaluate his own artistic abilities, allowing him to gain real insight on their scope and nature. He ultimately concluded, "Ich darf wohl sagen: ich habe mich in dieser anderthalbjährigen Einsamkeit selbst wiedergefunden; aber als was?--Als Künstler!"[246]Only through having trained to become a painter, was Goethe able to rehabilitate his sense of selfhood as an artist, ultimately coming to grasp his true calling as a poet.

But Goethe's spiritual convalescence was not simply a function of escaping political duties to allow for the artistic exercise of his agency; it crucially involved assimilating the normative influence of Italy's ancient patrimony to acquire new habits of behavior that fundamentally altered his outlook on life. Equipping himself with a set of self-corrective measures reflecting the ancient belief that a change in perspective on reality could deliver one from forces antithetical to one's nature, Goethe strove to realize a form of happiness that lay within the daily run of experience. To this end, Roman funereal monuments awakened him to the necessity of embracing each irretrievable moment of existence to make it self-sustaining. Roman temples, amphitheatres and acqueducts in perfect harmony with natural purposes instructed him on the wisdom of bringing his conduct and his artistry into agreement with nature's ways. Finally, ancient mural paintings taught Goethe that art could transcend mere decorative purposes, playing a vital role in eliciting pleasure and combatting pain to provide a therapeutic means of persevering through life's vicissitudes. Thus inspired by Italy's robust Greco-Roman heritage, Goethe fundamentally reshaped his selfhood through the cultivation of quintessentially ancient therapeutic doctrines including self-sufficiency and detachment from social conventions, as well

[246]WA IV, 8, 356. Brief an Carl August, 17 März 1788

as the exercise of measure and proportion in everything from work to friendship. He maintained of the change that transpired from reforming his everyday mode of existing: "Ob ich gleich noch immer derselbe bin, so mein' ich bis aufs innerste Knochenmark verändert zu sein."[247]Classical ground thus exerted normative influence on Goethe's way of living in Italy such that in putting his constancy to the test to obtain a sense of what lay within reasonable limits of his will, while developing the aptitudes necessary to secure the happiness afforded by the moment, Goethe returned to Weimar, born and bred a new man: "Ich bin wirklich *umgeboren* und erneuert und ausgefüllt."[248] Later invoking the dictum, 'Auch ich in Arkadien,' he concluded that he too had secured the unattainable under the influence of the classical: health, serenity and happiness.

The fulcrum of Goethe's rebirth lay in the practice of narrowing the focus of attention to the present in awareness of its inestimable value. Indeed, the ancient habit of prioritizing the living present was the red thread that ran through his journey. By taking a sabbatical from his political career to revive his artistic sensibilities, Goethe refused to be forever harassed by his desires and to postpone his happiness indefinately. Once he succeeded in concentrating his efforts on the arts, he realized that every instant was ripe with promise, such that he need only cast off the regrets of yesterday and abolish all fear of tomorrow to sieze what lay within reach. He thus maintained forever after: "Nichts ist höher zu schätzen als der Werth des Tages."[249] Adopting something resembling a Stoic duty to discipline the passions and temper excesses, he cultivated self-reliance and appropriated sound skills in the arts that bore no trace of dilletantism. Through forbearance and a disciplined work ethic, he made artistic practice satisfying in and of itself where there was no need to compensate for a form of self-exertion yielding gratification at

[247]HA XI, 145. Italienische Reise, Rom, 2. Dez 1786
[248]HA XI, 385. Italienische Reise, Rom, 25 Aug 1787
[249]HA XIII, 461.Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre 18 Kapitel

every instant. At the same time, Goethe tasted the pleasures of seclusion from society, surrounding himself with art adepts to establish conditions in the present amenable to his artistic self-flourishing. Reforming false beliefs about happiness and discarding vain and empty desires, he learned to appreciate the momentary, renewable pleasures of everyday living in Epicurean fashion. As Pierre Hadot claimed, Goethe "was in his way of living the present moment, ... half Stoic and half Epicurean. He enjoyed the present moment like an Epicurean, and willed it intensely like a Stoic."[250] Manifesting his unqualified allegiance to the present through the practice of l'art pour l'art, Goethe came to realize that art gave nothing but the highest quality to his moments as they passed, and simply for those moment's sake.[251]

[250]Hadot, 230.
[251]Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: studies in art and poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1922) 238-239.

Chapter 3: Goethean Spiritual exercises in Natural Investigation

"Was bin ich denn gegen das All?" - *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*

Conceiving his journey to Italy as instrumental to a metamorphosis of his selfhood, Goethe conveyed his profound yearning for rebirth in explicitly botanic terms: "Möge meine Existenz sich dazu genügsam entwickeln, der Stengel mehr in die Länge rücken und die Blumen reicher und schöner hervorbrechen. Gewiß, es wäre besser, ich käme gar nicht wieder, wenn ich nicht wieder geboren zurückkommen kann."[1] The organic metaphors he employed could not have been more appropriate given the critical role that the exploration and study of nature played in the self-transformative endeavors he pursued throughout his journey. Attentive to Italy's singularly diverse and fecund natural endowment, Goethe's enlightenment on the essential nature of organic development was due in large part to the scientific discoveries he made there. Indeed, after hesitating to venture as far as Sicily, he eventually proclaimed that this fateful detour bore the key to his entire journey.[2] Undergoing a revelation on the fundamental character of organic form through the discovery of a prototypical plant in the Palermo botanical gardens, Goethe ultimately obtained confirmation of conjectures he harbored about the thoroughgoing unity of nature. The discernment of nature's all-encompassing oneness (Alleinheit) was in turn the fruit of natural investigative labors that importantly impacted his way of seeing, ultimately engendering a dramatic conversion of his perspective on nature.

This chapter systematically explores Goethe's practice of natural scientific inquiry in Italy, where the apprehension of nature's comprehensive unity served to transform his identity. I

[1]HA XI, 216. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 22. März 1787
[2]HA XI, 251. Italienische Reise, 13 April 1787

seek to demonstrate that in pursuing a specific mode of natural observation, Goethe effectively refashioned his subjectivity. Such self-formative natural investigation evinced close affinities with an ancient applied physics bearing an intimate connection between the natural inquirer's study of nature and the reconstitution of his selfhood. Through a rigorous regime of natural scientific inquiry much in the spirit of ancient spiritual exercises in the research and investigation of nature, Goethe developed new perceptual faculties, whereby his mode of natural inquiry not only resembled an ancient art of self-transformation, it proferred ethical guidance on how to best live life. The more Goethe inscribed himself in the organic world, ascertaining its laws and assimilating its dynamics, the more he discovered the prescriptive force inhering in it, such that by the conclusion of his journey he was convinced of the ancient wisdom of bringing his existence into conformity with nature's necessity. Such an ethically informed conception of natural inquiry compelled him to fundamentally reevaluate his role and place within the natural world. Like the ancients, Goethe came to insist that natural science was important only insofar as it had significant ethical implications on man's way of life: "Wie doch alles Höhere, im Wissenschaftlichen und so durchaus, alsbald ethisch wirkt uns so viel sittlichen Vortheil bringt." Whether for Goethe or for the ancients, then, physics was not a theoretical domain of study at one remove from reality, but a spiritual practice to be applied and lived out on the plane of daily life, wherein the exemplary natural investigator converted his knowledge of nature into practical principles that determined his worldview and shaped his conception of the good life.

In the discussion that follows, I elaborate the specific ways in which Goethe's method of natural inquiry in Italy exercised a fundamentally self-transformative function. I argue that in adopting a form of natural investigation in which the practitioner incorporated concrete

experiences of the natural world into his identity in order to fundamentally reconstitute his selfhood, Goethe can be seen to have essentially rehabilitated a lost, ancient art of self-shaping vis-a-vis natural inquiry. Within this context, I draw parallels with Stoic and Epicurean forms of natural inquiry to illustrate the way in which Goethe's explorations of nature in Italy constituted a spiritual process of self-fashioning. I make recourse exclusively to these two schools because of their emphasis on the practical as well as ethical dimensions of natural philosophy, in which man is an active participant rather than a mere observer of the natural order. Finally, I argue that Goethe's essentially existential conception of natural inquiry was importantly mediated by his engagement with Linnean taxonomy, on the one hand, and Spinozan philosophy, on the other. Methodological preoccupations with the classification of organic life as well as a metaphysical vision of nature's comprehensive unity importantly conditioned Goethe's vision of natural scientific practice, leading him to develop a distinct repertoire of spiritual exercises.

The self-transformative mode of natural inquiry evinced throughout Goethe's Italian journey assumed three principle forms. At the most elementary level, it fulfilled a therapeutic function, liberating the natural observer from the volatility of his passions and freeing him from everyday worries to restore him to health and wholeness.[3] Goethe repeatedly thematized such therapeutic consequences in his accounts of natural phenomena in Italy, where meticulous observations of plantlife rejuvenated his spirits and animated his cognitive powers to furnish untold joy and serenity of the soul. Ascertaining the potential for self-renewal in the exercise of a form of natural inquiry that placed significant demands on the practitioner to reform his way of being, Goethe's therapeutic approach engendered a genuine spiritual metamorphosis. At a

[3]Hadot, 88.

second, more programmatic level, Goethe pursued a self-transformative mode of natural inquiry by seeking to detach himself from subjective frames of reference to apprehend natural phenomena from a strictly physical point of view. Drawing on Pierre Hadot's claim that the Goethean equivalent of natural observation from a physiocentric perspective lay in the apprehension of nature through its two driving forces of 'polarity' and 'intensification,'[4] I illustrate the way in which Goethe set out to acquire a physical perspective on nature by observing various forms of organic life through these two intertwined forces. Observations of nature's polar tendencies enabled him to see the scope and range of its diversity, while the attempt to discern nature's heightening or ever-striving ascent helped him to acquire a sense for its creative, self-enhancing dynamic. Circumspect attunement to polarity and intensification thus aided Goethe in approximating a physical perspective on nature, shedding light on its capacity to engender new organic forms. At a third and final level, Goethe practiced a cognitively enhanced form of natural observation through developing an intuitive mode of apprehension. Here, organic life and its constituent parts were seen through the holism and synthetic unity of an overarching universal perspective. The practice of systematically observing nature from an intuition of the whole, ultimately led the natural inquirer to reconceptualize his place in the universe and bring his comportment into sync with nature's governing laws. Goethe accordingly came to embrace something akin to the 'cosmic consciousness' characterizing an ancient art of natural observation, wherein the natural inquirer acquired a sense of belonging to the universal whole and was ethically compelled to conform his behavior to the rational harmony of the universe.[5]

[4]Hadot, 244.
[5]Hadot, 208.

I. Natural Observation as Spiritual Therapy

For the ancients, natural investigation was instrumental in therapeutically releasing man from the destablizing affects and sources of anxiety afflicting everyday human existence. As one ancient philosopher maintained, "we should not think that any other end is served by knowledge of celestial phenomena...other than freedom from disturbances and firm confidence..."[6] Indeed, the rational contemplation of the earth, sea and heavens served to elevate the soul and divert one's attention from bodily ills, psychic troubles and the adversity arising from external circumstances.[7] As Edward McGushin explains, ancient practices in natural investigation functioned "as aids for the formation of the self: freeing the self from its fears or compulsions, calming the mind disturbed by pressing problems, reinforcing a will constantly bombarded by frivolous demands, distractions, temptations."[8] Here, the Stoic and Epicurean adopted modes of exploring and contemplating nature that relied on cultivating diametrically opposed mental states, the former exercising constant vigilance and self scrutiny, while the latter strove to achieve relaxation and serenity. Indeed, for the Stoic, a rational form of natural inquiry was a vehicle for reigning in unruly affects and capricious appetites. The Epicurean, by contrast, endeavored to derive pleasure and inner peace from the pure contemplation of nature's harmony. Both aimed to liberate themselves from a subjective perspective on natural events to rise to a universal vantage point enabling the recontextualization of human affairs in a larger context.

Goethe's mode of observing and exploring nature in Italy took on a markedly therapeutic character serving to extricate him from the burdens and worries of everyday existence to promote

[6]Hadot, 87.
[7]Hadot, 98.
[8]Edward McGushin, *Foucault's Askesis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Evanston: Northwestern UP 2007) 235.

the serenity of his soul.[9] Indeed, Goethe's engagement with Italy's natural environment must initially be understood in the context of his exposure, for the first time, to a Mediterranean climate, the therapeutic impact of which cannot be underestimated. Prior to his departure, he incessantly complained of a northern climate antithetical to his psychological well-being: "Das Wetter ist immer sehr betrübt und ertötet meinen Geist; wenn das Barometer tief steht und die Landschaft keine Farben hat, wie kann man leben?"[10] Underscoring the anticipated amelioration of his psychic condition through his decision to travel southwards, he retrospectively maintained: "Denn ich muβ gestehen, da meine Reise eigentlich eine Flucht war vor allen den Unbilden, die ich unter dem einundfunfzigsten Grade erlitten, daβ ich Hoffnung hatte, unter dem achtunvierzigsten ein wahres Gosen zu betreten."[11] As he marked off his descent into the lower meridional latitudes, Goethe sought deliverance from inclement weather, where overcast skies and frigid temperatures had consistently undermined his morale. Persuaded that a change of atmosphere far removed from Germany's nebulous skies was necessary to recuperate his mental agility, he sought refuge under friendlier horizons. And indeed, while northern Italy's limpid firmament did wonders to raise his spirits, the salubrious influence of the near subtropical climate of Naples and Sicily proved without parallel. Goethe lauded the auspicious weather conditions of the Neapolitan region, in which the effects of a milder climate served to revitalize his health and mental fitness: "Die Lage der Stadt, die Milde des Klimas kann nie genug gerühmt werden."[12]He never ceased to invoke the benefits accruing from his protracted exposure to felicitous weather conditions: "Ich habe doch diese ganze Zeit keine Empfindung aller der Übel gehabt die mich in Norden peinigten und lebe mit eben derselben Constitution hier wohl und

[9]Hadot, 97.
[10]WA IV, 9, 18. Brief an Herder, 4. Sept 1788
[11]HA XI, 17. Italienische Reise, Auf dem Brenner, 8. Sept 1786
[12]HA XI, 216. Italienische Reise, Neapel 22 März 1787

munter, so sehr als ich dort litt."[13] In fact, once Goethe had experienced the curative effects of a subtropical climate, he became ridden with disquietude at the prospect of returning to the Cimmerian surroundings of his Germanic homeland. No longer accustomed to the oppressive dreariness of somber skies, he insisted: "ich (habe) mich selbst seit einem Jahre jenen kimmerischen Vorstellungen und Denkweisen des Nordens zu entziehen gesucht, und unter einem himmelblauen Gewölbe mich freier umzuschauen und zu atmen gewöhnt..."[14]Goethe suggested that Germany's climate obscured men's faculties of apprehension breeding a constrained, narrow minded outlook. By the end of his journey, as his departure drew closer, he gave vent to lingering apprehensions: "Gewiß fühl ich mich hier schon ganz anders, nur fürchte ich das nördliche Klima wird mir vor wie nach allen *Lebensgenuß* rauben."[15] But Italy's felicitous ambient conditions not only relieved Goethe of a pervasive sense of enervation and melancholy that had prevented him from entertaining the joys of living, it put him in a heightened state of mental acuity with important repercussions for his ability to apprehend his new natural surroundings.

Above and beyond its propitious impact on his psychic health, Italy's climate afforded Goethe certain ideal conditions for the observation and study of nature. With a luminous atmosphere that brought the perceptual world into relief to render its forms infinitely more transparent, Goethe enjoyed a noteworthy enhancement of his discriminatory powers. Upon completing one of his many exploratory promenades in Rome, he accordingly exclaimed: "Gestern fuhr ich vor Sonnenaufgang nach Acqua acetosa; es ist wirklich zum Närrischwerden, wenn *man die Klarheit, die Mannigfaltigkeit, duftige Durchsichtigkeit* und himmlische Färbung

[13]WA IV, 8, 322. Brief an Charlotte von Stein 19 Jan 1788
[14]HA XI, 429. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Okt 1787
[15]WA IV, 8, 216. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 25 Mai 1787

der Landschaft, besonders der Fernen ansieht."[16]Furnished with abundant ambient light, Goethe's natural surroundings struck him with incomparable precision and sharpness. The change was so pronounced that he began to direct his attention to the contrasting aspects of an object elicited depending on the time of day one observed it, wherein significant qualitative differences arose at sunrise, midday and twilight. Goethe went so far as to maintain that in marked contrast with his southern neighbours, the northerner was barely cognizant of the disparity between day and night: "was Tag sei, wissen wir Cimmerier kaum. Im ewigem Nebel und Trübe ist es uns einerlei, ob es Tag order Nacht ist;..." On arriving in Venice to encounter a city surrounded entirely by a lagoon reflecting atmospheric light accentuating the sun's brightness, Goethe perceived definite contours and radiant colours, the likes of which he had never previously experienced: "Der Sonnenschein hob die Lokalfarben blendend hervor, und die Schattenseiten waren so licht, dass sie verhältnismäßig wieder zu Lichtern hätten dienen können."[17] The dramatic effects of such lighting conditions led him to reflect on the nature of human vision: "Es ist offenbar, dass sich das Auge nach den Gegenständen bildet, die es von Jugend auf erblickt, und so muss der venezianische Maler alles klarer und heiterer sehn als andere Menschen."[18] Goethe was persuaded that the southerner, exposed from birth to the brilliance of the sun's rays was able to see the world in greater detail, attuning him to the manifold aspects of its forms. The northerner by contrast, habituated to the gloom of perpetually overcast skies that progressively served to obscure his vision, was condemned to indistinct perception yielding amorphous forms. Even the perception of color was intimately related to the apprehension of light, wherein the intense color schemes of the Venetian school of painters served to corroborate Goethe's belief that the eye's

[16]HA XI, 383. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 18 August 1787
[17]HA XI, 85. Italienische Reise, 8. Oktober 1786
[18]HA XI, 86. Italienische Reise, Venedig, 8 Okt 1786

chromatic discernment was an environmentally conditioned aptitude. If there was no mistaking the correlation between light source and the ability to perceive a vivid contrast of tones and hues, Goethe increasingly came to believe that superior vision was the product habitual exposure to conditions of plentiful light permitting the observer to access the world in all of its clarity of form and chromatic distinctness.

A further advantage of a Mediterranean climate stemmed from the therapeutic effects issuing from the natural investigator's ability to observe the unimpeded growth of developing organisms under natural conditions. Pointing to the felicitous developmental trajectories of Italy's diverse vegetation, Goethe invoked the benefits of inspecting the prodigious plant growth native to the south. Auspicious climatic conditions not only promoted vegetal development that could be readily observed, the flourishing appearance of plants literally rubbed off on the observer. Indeed, despite reaching Naples as late as mid February, Goethe was pleasantly surprised to discover vegetation still bearing fruit: "Noch hängt die Mehrzahl der Orangen an den Bäumen, die Saat steht grün, durchaus Weizen; Oliven auf den Äckern, das Städtchen im Grund. Ein Palmbaum zeichnet sich aus und ward begrüßt."[19] Italy's temperate climate meant that plants could be observed in their native environments no matter what the time of year: "So spät die Jahrszeit ist, so *freut mich* doch mein bißchen Botanick erst recht, in diesen Landen, *wo eine frohre weniger unterbrochene Vegetation zu Hause ist*."[20]Witnessing plants that thrived without disruptions prematurely curtailing their development, Goethe took advantage of conditions permitting observations of plant growth untouched by excessive human intervention: "Es hängen viele Hunderte der schönsten Früchte an so einem Baum, der nicht wie bei uns beschnitten und

[19]HA XI, 180. Italienische Reise, 23 Februar 1787
[20]WA IV, 8, 57. Brief an Carl Ludwig von Knebel 17 Nov 1786

in einen Kübel gepflanzt ist, sondern *in der Erde frei und froh*, in einer Reihe mit seinen Brüdern steht."[21] Undomesticated plants struck Goethe as exhibiting a healthier, happier disposition, whereby the further he ventured southwards, the more he became apprised of vegetation that abounded in the wild, devoid of artificial constraints. He exclaimed in Palermo of a striking absence of mediation: "Die vielen Pflanzen, die ich sonst nur in Kübeln und Töpfen, ja die grösste Zeit des Jahres nur hinter Glasfenstern zu sehen gewohnt war, *stehen hier froh und frisch unter freiem Himmel.*. "[22]Not requiring transplantation to protect them from inclement weather, plants in Italy were left to their own devices, growing without interruption to happily consummate their native potential. Flourishing in a climate that allowed them to reach maximal states, they revealed a remarkable distinctness of form: "*...indem sie ihre Bestimmung vollkommen erfüllen, werden sie uns deutlicher*. "[23] Goethe thus concluded that nature's laws perfectly coincided with a plant's intrinsic determination in Italy, whereby observing such thriving plantlife proved a source of distinct pleasure: "Wer wäre nicht geneigt gewesen, an diesem Ort zu studieren, zur schönen Zeit der blühenden hohen Schule?"[24]The robust growth of indigenous plants, unimpeded in the realization of their natural potential, conveyed a vitality and vigor that exposed the investigator to an exceptional distinctness and transparency of organic form.

An environment replete with burgeoning vegetal forms manifesting spontaneous growth trajectories in turn furnished Goethe with new impetus for his speculations on plant growth. Stimulated by a wealth of foreign flora thriving under markedly different climatic conditions, he

[21]HA XI, 148. Italienische Reise, Rom, 13. Dez 1786
[22]HA XI, 373. Italienische Reise, Palermo 17. April 1787
[23]HA XI, 373. Italienische Reise, Palermo 17. April 1787
[24]HA XI, 218. Italienische Reise, Neapel 23. März 1787

delighted in the constant discovery of new plant varieties: "Nun kommen mir Blumen aus der Erde, die ich noch nicht kenne, und neue Blüthen von den Bäumen;..."[25] Elsewhere, he reiterated his appreciation of Italy's organic diversity: "...ließ uns die andere Seite des Stadtberges ein Schauspiel neuer Vegetation sehen...Am Wege sahen wir neue, noch nie gesehene Blumen und Sträuche."[26]Having moved amongst all too familiar, commonplace plant species in Weimar, Goethe had experienced a waning of his discriminatory powers such that exposure to unknown plant varieties in Italy reinvigorated his mind. In beholding the infinite heterogeneity of Mediterranean plant species, he was provoked to combine and extrapolate, making unexpected connections that furnished insight on their classification. Moreover, the ability to observe newfound plant species with the naked eye facilitated Goethe's conjectures on vegetal growth patterns, furnishing patent evidence for his latent hypotheses on plant development. He explained: "Wie ich es oft voraussagte habe ich es gefunden, daß hier alles aufgeschloßner und entwickelter ist. Manches was ich bey uns nur vermuthete und mit dem Mikroscop suchte, seh ich hier mit bloßen Augen als eine zweifellose Gewißheit."[27]The heterogeneity of plant forms and their greater visibility to the human observer, served to corroborate intuitions that had hitherto lacked empirical confirmation. Indeed, Goethe insisted that nature seemed to disclose rather than conceal her ways in Italy: "Dieses Land ist schon recht zu einem solchen Studio gemacht. Was ich im Norden nur vermuthete finde ich hier offenbar."[28]Moreover, it was precisely the abundance and diversity of plantlife, instantiated in greater and lesser degrees of perfection, that afforded an overview of the similarity and difference needed to grasp the underlying kinships of the plant kingdom's diverse members. The more Goethe was able to

[25]HA XI, 173. Italienische Reise, Rom 19.2.1787
[26]HAXI, 179. Italienische Reise, 23. Feb1787
[27]WA IV, 8, 250. Brief an Knebel, 18. Aug 1787
[28]WA IV, 8, 267. Brief an Knebel, 3. Okt 1787

discern and synthesize such interrelations, the greater satisfaction he derived from discovering new plant varieties.

By adopting an essentially therapeutic posture towards natural investigation in Italy, Goethe ultimately came to distinguish between a healthy, classical and debased, romantic mode of observing nature. He accordingly invoked Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Botanic Letters* during his sojourn in Naples, noting that when faced with a diversity of plantlife, Rousseau suffered a disarray of the mind, owing to his largely sentimental interest in nature. Thus rejecting a form of observation subsisting on mere sympathy, Goethe maintained:

> Manchmal gedenke ich Rousseaus und seines hypochondrischen Jammers, und doch wird mir begreiflich, wie eine so schöne Organisation verschoben werden konnte. Fühlt' ich nicht solchen Anteil an den natürlichen Dingen und säh' ich nicht, daß in der scheinbaren Verwirrung hundert Beobachtungen sich vergleichen und ordnen lassen, wie der Feldmesser mit einer durchgezogenen Linie viele einzelne Messungen probiert, ich hielte mich oft selbst für toll."[29]

By Goethe's lights, the pathos of the sickly romantic who sought refuge from societal ills in nature reduced natural investigation to a mere comfort and distraction that did little to promote the observer's powers of discrimination. In contrast with such a pathological practice of botany, Goethe approached nature with nothing but healthy enthusiasm and unbounded curiousity conducive to uninhibited participation in natural phenomena that ultimately permitted him to impose order on its bewildering diversity. Writing home to his trusted servant, Philip Seidel, who had likewise commenced the study of botany, he remarked of the joy he derived from speculating on categorial distinctions: "Ich...freue mich deiner Beobachtungen der Natur. Fahre so fort, es ist *die reellste Freude unter den speculativen."*[30] Hence, while natural investigation in Italy served to therapeutically assuage Goethe's passions by releasing him from dreary surroundings,

[29]HA XI, 210. Italienische Reise, Naples 17 März 1787
[30]WA IV, 8, 307. Brief an Seidel, 8 Dez 1787

furnishing ideal conditions for observation and exposing him to a spectrum of plant varieties teeming with vitality, his inquisitive attitude and constructive approach proved crucial to discerning the unity underlying its breathtaking array of specimens.

II. Natural Investigation as a Self-transformative Exercise

The Ancients' attitude toward nature

Beyond the advantages accruing from an environment characterized by ideal growth and viewing conditions, the natural inquirer's assumption of a specific attitude towards nature contributed in no small measure to its disclosure. Indeed, the ancients were practitioners of a wide range of spiritual exercises designed to promote a new perspective on the relationship between man and nature. One important preoccupation lay in rectifying a perceived degradation of natural observation. Acutely conscious of man's propensity to take for granted everyday perception, the Roman Epicurean, Lucretius, pleaded for the restoration of unadulterated forms of apprehending natural phenomena. He suggested that humans perceived their environments mechanically and unconsciously, undermining their ability to genuinely see things. All too accustomed to their surroundings, they erroneously assumed that a casual glimpse sufficed to take in nature's scope and particulars. Lucretius alerted his readers to the virtues of discovering nature anew by attempting to see it 'as if' for the first time:[31]"First of all, contemplate the clear, pure color of the sky and all it contains within it:...the sun and its light with its incomparable brilliance: *[as] if all these objects appeared to mortals today for the first time*, if they appeared before the eyes suddenly and unexpectedly."[32] The adoption of such an attitude served to combat the carelessness infecting everyday observation. Similarly discerning the qualitative

[31]Hadot, 257.
[32]Pierre Hadot, *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) 212-213.

deterioration of natural observation, the Roman Stoic, Seneca likewise decried the pervasive human proclivity to remain heedless of its natural environs. He too maintained that the antidote to a decline in the ability to attentively apprehend the natural world lay in the attempt to see things in nature 'as if' for the first time. Only by accentuating consciousness to take in one's surroundings with greater sensitivity and alertness could one perceive the natural world with new eyes. Hence, for the ancients, the key to rediscovering nature lay in the attempt to qualitatively alter one's way of looking, casting a penetrating look at things to see them anew from a fresh perspective.

Goethe's observational stance towards nature

Goethe's attitude and comportment with respect to natural inquiry in Italy, the heedful reverence for nature that characterized his observations, strongly coincided with the ancients' vision of resuscitating mindful modes of inspecting natural phenomena. Here, engagement with nature in a new and foreign environment was particularly conducive to entertaining familiar facets of nature 'as if' for the first time. Goethe thus maintained that travel was the ideal venue for observing the world in a new and receptive fashion: "Das ist das Angenehme auf Reisen, daß auch das Gewöhnliche durch Neuheit und Überraschung das Ansehen eines Abenteuers gewinnt."[33] Goethe heeded the most proximate and seemingly mundane natural phenomena with an almost naive wonder and appreciation during the course of his travels. Proferring minute descriptions of Italy's atmospheric conditions, whether sunrises, sunsets or the spectacle of a full moon, he conveyed the impression of taking in celestial phenomena for the first time. Such attentive viewing was further directed to commonplace natural organisms, whereby upon

[33]HA XI, 196. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 9. März 1787

observing moving crabs and limpets over the breakwaters on the Lido in Venice, he marvelled at their ingenuity, praising their appropriateness to existence:[34]"Was ist doch ein Lebendiges für ein köstliches, herrliches Ding! Wie abgemessen zu seinem Zustande, wie wahr, wie seiend!"[35]In inspecting familiar entities 'as if' for the first time, Goethe increasingly realized that Italy's organic forms, far from fixed and static, were animate and continuously changing, adapting to their environments in versatile ways.

But while Goethe circumspectly observed organic life with which he was well acquainted, Italy also furnished him the opportunity to behold previously unknown natural phenomena for the first time. One such example was the sea. Captivated by this novelty, he layed eyes on it with such intensity, that he claimed that, while there were those for whom seeing the sea daily was a necessity, it sufficed to see it but once for him to indelibly imprint its image upon his soul.[36]Indeed, in witnessing the sea for the first time, Goethe effectively saw it 'as if' for the last time, gazing at it with profound intensity and committing its every detail to memory. Moreover, the sight of the sea immediately altered his perception of the world and his place within it: "Hat man sich nicht ringsum vom Meer umgeben gesehen, so hat man keinen Begriff von Welt und von seinem Verhältnis zur Welt."[37]Surrounded by the sea's immensity, human life assumed another dimension, whereby in strolling along the Neapolitan seashore, Goethe noted the humbling effect of its expansiveness: "Es übernimmt einen wirklich das Gefühl von Unendlichkeit des Raums."[38]Indeed, the sea never ceased to provide Goethe with an inexhaustible source of contemplation, drawing his attention to its variegated forms at diverse

[34]Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age: Volume I: The Poetry of Desire (1749-1790)* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991) 426.
[35]WA III, 1, 287. Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, Venedig, 9. Okt 1786
[36]HA XI, 203. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 13. März 1787
[37]HA XI, 230. Italienische Reise, Palermo, 3. April 1787
[38]HAXI, 190. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 5. März 1787

points in his journey: "Die Stürme dieser Tage haben uns ein herrliches Meer gezeigt, da ließen sich die Wellen in ihrer würdigen Art und Gestalt studieren; die Natur ist doch das einzige Buch, das auf allen Blättern großen Gehalt biete."[39] In the wake of his travels in Sicily in which the coast was never far from reach, he noted: "Ich bin neugierig wie mir seyn wird wenn ich kein Meer künftig sehe, das ich nun drey Monate anhaltend und aus so vielen Gesichtspunckten im Auge gehabt habe."[40] Goethe's practice of observing and re-observing natural phenomena was thus not confined to taking them in through new perspectives, it importantly involved attending to their fundamental forms, whereby examining the sea's waves was particularly revelatory of nature's formative process in that it shed light on a generative method of form creation and dissolution which was the guiding theme of his natural investigations throughout his Italian journey.

Ancient Spiritual techniques in Observation

The ancients envisaged transforming their reception of the natural world prinicipally by means of askesis or intense laboring on the self intended to inculcate new ways of seeing. Making recourse to an ensemble of heterogeneous techniques including forms of attention, definition, meditation and dialogue, they sought to internalize correct habits of observation amenable to apprehending nature's true character. On the one hand, a self-applied regime of exercises, co-constitutive of mind and body, was indispensable to combatting heedless ways of looking and purging the distorting influences of affects and emotions. On the other, spiritual exercises aimed to effectuate a complete reversal in the way the observer perceived the natural world were premised on replacing an anthropocentric viewpoint that saw the world through the

[39]HA XI, 195. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 9. März.1787
[40]WA IV, 8, 223. Brief an Carl August, Neapel 27.-29. May 1787

lens of human values and interests with an objective perspective embedding events within the natural order of things.

Among one of the most foundational spiritual exercises intended to reorient observational capacities, was a Stoic technique known as prosoché or self-attention. Through this exercise, the practitioner made himself attentive to his every thought and sensation in the very course of experiencing them.[41] Not to be conflated with modern notions of increased attention span or combatting attention deficit, prosoché involved a sustained state of mindfulness, an abiding attentiveness to one's doings that was never suspended and knew no respite. Pierre Hadot characterizes its basic spiritual attitude as "a continuous vigilance and presence of mind, self-consciousness which never sleeps, a constant tension of the spirit."[42]The Stoic practiced such permanent watchfulness over his observations both within the confines of daily life and in the context of specific activities including natural inquiry.[43]

The habitual self-attention constitutive of prosoché was further applied to an important Stoic exercise known as the discipline of judgment. The purpose of this exercise was to systematically interrogate representations as they appeared, only giving assent to 'objective' representations or those that corresponded with reality.[44] The practitioner subjected his representations to intense scrutiny and surveillance, taking care to avoid adding anything subjective to that which, within the representation, was adequate to reality.[45] For instance, a given representation might have consequences on one's desires, which, though themselves representations, have no basis in the world and exceed the adequate representation of reality by

[41]Buzaré, Elen. *Stoic Spiritual Exercises* (www.lulu.com, 2011) 27.
[42]Hadot, 84.
[43]Hadot, 44.
[44]Pierre Hadot, *The Inner Citadel The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001)104.
[45]Buzaré, 30.

adding a value-judgment.[46]Accordingly, in order to grasp the object as found in nature, the observer had to censor representations containing elements of subjectivity including passions, desires, and judgments. The separation of objective from subjective representations in turn rested on the application of the traditional Stoic distinction between what did and did not depend on the human will. Whereas value-judgments, inclinations to act, desires, and aversions were subjective and depended on the will, the general course of nature was objective and stood outside of its purview.[47] By disciplining judgment through application of the precept that subjective things could be regulated, while objective things lay beyond one's control, the observer withheld assent from false representations, preventing the illegitimate interference of subjectivity in order to apprehend objects in their naked reality.[48]

A final exercise that aimed to get at the objective content of representations involved the Stoic exercise of physical definition. Here, the practitioner attempted to dissolve the object of his observation into its constituent parts, analyzing its basic components in order to get to the bottom of it.[49]Espousing such exercises in decomposition, Marcus Aurelius counseled: "Always define or describe whatever presents itself to your mind, so as to see what sort of thing it is when stripped to its essence, as a whole and in its separate parts; and tell yourself its proper name, and the names of the elements from which it was compounded and into which it will finally be resolved."[50]By disassembling a natural object part by part, the practitioner sought to divest it of concealing elements, unveiling it from every side to lay it bare, free of illusions. In apprehending how the object's separate parts were related to it as a whole, the inquirer gained a conception of

[46]Buzaré, 86.
[47]Hadot, 192-193.
[48]Ciarán McMahon, "Prehistory of the concept of attention," diss., University College Dublin 2007, 41.
[49]Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject Lectures at the College de France, 1981-82* (New York: Picador. 2001) 295.
[50]Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus,* trans. Francis Hutcheson and James Moor (Indianapolis: The Liberty Fund, Inc. 2008) 44.

its true nature. Moreover, a meticulous delineation of the object's parts aided him in recognizing that it was not inviolable.[51] The exercise of resolving an object into its constituent parts had both a disarming effect and permitted the disclosure of its fundamental essence.[52]

Goethean spiritual techniques in natural observation

Goethe's endeavor to comprehend reality objectively incorporated the ancient spiritual exercises of self-attention, the discipline of judgment and physical description. Faced with a host of unknown natural objects, he was particularly receptive to the smallest details of their character. At the same time, he was watchful over his own powers of perception, probing their nature and limits to systematically distinguish what belonged to his senses and what belonged to the deliverances of the natural world. Once he determined the true scope of his perceptual faculties, Goethe labored to overcome their defects and shortcomings. He was particularly intent on eliminating two tendencies antithetical to apprehending objects in their own right; the unwarranted influence of subjectivism and excessive conceptual mediation. Seeking to restrict subjectivism and curb discursive tendencies, he conscientiously subjected his representations to scrutiny, exercising vigilance and withholding his assent to false representations to bring his faculties of observation in alignment with nature's objectivity.

If the ancients deemed the self-discipline required to assent exclusively to objective representations the result of absolving a regimen of exercises habituating one to a new way of seeing, Goethe's guiding premise during his Italian journey was that the perceptual world compelled human subjects to test and exercise their sensorial capacities: "die gegenständliche

[51]Foucault, 297.
[52]Foucault, 296

Welt ist für uns darum da, um *unsere Fähigkeiten daran zu üben*."[53] Laboring on himself through techniques designed to acclimate his vision to a range of unfamiliar, natural objects, Goethe practiced two principle visual exercises in Italy: one setting out to eliminate false tendencies, the other premised on facilitating an objective apprehension of nature. In order to overcome the disorientation that beset him upon setting foot in new surroundings, he strove to eradicate inappropriate visual habits and acquaint himself with Italy's unfamiliar objects: "Unerachtet der Verwirrung, in der ich mich befinde, fühle ich doch schon, daβ *Übung*, Bekanntschaft und Neigung mir schon in diesen Irrgärten zu Hülfe kommen."[54]Persuaded that perceptual skills were not unvarying, but fundamentally adaptable to the environment, Goethe subjected his visual capacities to due and detailed scrutiny, probing the way in which they had been formed through by habit and upbringing. Realizing that it was necessary to replace visual conventions that belonged to his native manner of seeing with those adapted to his new environment, he embarked on a process of corrective reeducation, abandoning accustomed ways of looking and undoing inappropriate habits of vision, neither of which came easily: "...dass ich aber so weit in die Schule zurückgehen, dass ich so viel *verlernen*, ja durchaus *umlernen* musste, dachte ich nicht."[55]Goethe thus pursued an exacting repertoire of perceptual exercises designed to overturn chronic, conventional ways of seeing. By eliminating incompatible background presuppositions and breaking down ingrained visual cues comprising his default frame of visual reference, he sought to fundamentally transform his visual apprehension of the world.

Goethe's endeavor to alter his perceptual capacities rested on replacing subjective ways of

[53]J. W. Goethe, *Schriften zur Morphologie II Morphologische Hefte 1817-1824* Zweite Abteilung 19 Band (J.G. Cottasche Buchhandlung Stuttgart: 1827-30) 624.
[54]HA XI, 106. Italienische Reise, 19. Okt 1786
[55]HA XI 149. Italienische Reise, 20 Dez 1786

seeing with a 'gegenständlich' or objectual form of observation. Indeed, Stuart Atkins insists that the central leitmotif of Goethe's Italian journey was none other than "Gegenständlichkeit or the almost painfully obsessive concern with disinterested observation."[56]Goethe was intent upon exercising subjective austerity, adopting a pronounced, object centered mode of perception: "Ich...hatte die Maxime ergriffen, *mich soviel als möglich zu verleugnen und das Objekt rein, als nur zu tun wäre, in mich aufzunehmen*."[57]Seeking to grasp the object in its purity, he aimed to achieve something in the way of the detached gaze of the ancient observer of nature, who refrained from assenting to all but genuinely objective representations. The gradual acquisition of 'gegenständliches Sehen' thus occurred by way of visual exercises designed to pare down subjective elements in seeing in an effort to valorize the object of observation. In order to forestall the tendency to apprehend the content of perception subjectively, Goethe set out to systematically discriminate what belonged to his perceptual apparatus and what belonged to the object. Much in the vein of Stoic exercises in disciplining judgment, he unceasingly interrogated his representations, ascertaining their origins and withholding assent whenever subjective: "Bei Betrachtung der Natur, im Grossen wie im Kleinen, hab ich unausgesetzt die Frage gestellt: *Ist es der Gegenstand oder bist du es, der sich hier ausspricht?*"[58]Drawing on long-standing habits of self-abnegation designed to combat perceptual judgment clouded by subjectivism, he exclaimed: "Meine *Übung*, alle Dinge, wie sie sind, zu sehen und abzulesen,... meine völlige *Entäusserung* von aller Prätention kommen mir einmal wieder recht zustatten."[59]While not unaccustomed to reigning in his subjectivity when inspecting objects, in Italy, Goethe exercised concerted efforts

[56]Stuart Atkins, "Italienische Reise and Goethean Classicism," in *Aspekte der Goethezeit*, ed Stanley A. Corngold (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977) 86.
[57]BA 16, 12 / MA 14, 15. Tag-und Jahres-Hefte 1789
[58]BA 18, 568. Maximen und Reflexionen
[59]HA XI, 134. Italienische Reise, Rom, 10 Nov 1786

to monitor his vision, limiting subjective influences that over-determined his representations.

The systematic scrutiny of subjective elements conditioning his vision led Goethe to discern a preponderance of cognitive capacities at play in his visual apprehension of objects. Attempting to eliminate the deleterious effects of excessively discursive modes of seeing, he maintained that the observer had to take in the object prior to assessing it, preventing the faculty of judgment from prematurely interfering with his observations. Unmediated responsiveness to the naked reality of things demanded forgoing judgment's conceptual grasp, allowing the object to impress itself upon one's perceptual apparatus. Goethe maintained, "*I halte die Augen nur immer offen und drücke mir die Gegenstände recht ein. Urteilen möchte ich gar nicht*, wenn es nur möglich wäre."[60] Indeed, there were innumerable sources of subjective error liable to interfere in the apprehension of experience:

> Man kann sich daher nicht genug in acht nehmen, aus Versuchen nicht zu geschwind zu folgern: denn beim Übergang von der Erfahrung zum Urteil, von der Erkenntnis zur Anwendung ist es, wo dem Menschen gleichsam wie an einem Passe alle seine inneren Feindeauflauern,Einbildungskraft,Ungeduld,Vorschnelligkeit,Selbstzufriedenheit, Steifheit, Gedankenform,vorgefaßteMeinung,Bequemlichkeit,Leichtsinn,Veränderlichkeit und wie die ganze Schar mit ihrem Gefolge heißen mag, alle liegen hier im Hinterhalte und überwältigen unversehens sowohl den handelnden Weltmann als auch den stillen, vor allen Leidenschaften gesichert scheinenden Beobachter.[61]

Goethe thereby shifted the focus of Stoic spiritual exercises from the imperative of avoiding assent to false representations to the cultivation of pure sensing minimizing mediation by the faculty of judgment. He was persuaded that grasping objective content was just as much a question of unconceptualized perceptual uptake as a matter of correct judgment. For like the Stoics, Goethe was acutely aware that judgment, involving a process of inference and conclusion, frequently drew on premises not given in an object's bare presentation. By implicitly

[60]HA XI, 122. Italienische Reise, Terni, 27 Okt 1786
[61]FA I, 25, 30. Der Versuch als Vermittler zwischen Objekt und Subjekt

attributing features to the object or bringing it into any number of possible relations, judgment misrepresented and detracted from its identity as given. Goethe thus labored to avoid its conceptual determination, announcing, "ich sehe neuerdings nur die Sachen und nicht wie sonst *bei* und *mit* den Sachen, *was nicht da ist*."[62]Taking pains to avoid inadvertently attributing nonexistent properties to the object, he conscientiously restricted the role of judgment.

The need to inspect objects free of the discursive encroachments of subjectivity took on particular urgency for Goethe in the context of his observations of nature. Writing Philipp Seidel from Italy to warn him of the dangers of excessive judgment in the observation of plantlife, he insisted, "Du bist auch auf einem guten Wege zu beobachten. Nur mußt du dich in acht nehmen, daß *du deinen Folgerungen nicht zuviel Werth gebest*. Ich will nicht sagen, daß du keine Folgerungen machen müßtest, denn das ist die Natur der Seele. Nur mußt du immer deine *Meynung geringer halten als dein Auge*."[63] While Goethe realized that it was virtually impossible to apprehend objects without making implicit inferences, he was particularly wary of observational forms that made illegitimate deductions in the context of organic phenomena. He accordingly anounced, "Deine fortgesetzten Beobachtungen sind recht brav, nur glaube ich noch immer, du folgerst zu geschwind und zu schneidend *für eine so zarte Sache*."[64]Recognizing the tendency on the part of observers to see objects in terms of their implicit assumptions and to draw hasty conclusions that failed to do them justice, Goethe encouraged the cultivation of object rather than mind-led forms of observing nature, wherein cognitive austerity constrained judgment-centered ways of seeing; a mode of proceeding that would later become the lynchpin of his agenda of promoting the practice of a 'tender empiricism' in the study of nature.

[62]HA XI, 353. Italienische Reise, Rom, 30 Juni 1787
[63]WA IV, 8, 312. Brief an Seidel, 21 Dez 1787
[64]WA IV, 8, 321. Brief an Seidel, Rom 5 Jan 1788

The endeavor to cultivate a mode of observation free of subjectivism and over-conceptualization was part and parcel of Goethe's methodological preoccupation with the character of natural classification. Prior to his departure for Italy, he had engaged in intense study of the taxonomic system set forth in Carl Linneas' *Systema Naturae*, which initially served as the foundation for his exercises in observing nature. But despite expending formidable efforts to internalize its principles, from the very outset, Goethe deemed the work unsuitable for normal reading purposes: "Ich lese im Linné fort. Dieses ist aber vorzüglich nicht zum lesen sondern zum recapituliren gemacht..." [65]Recognizing that he would have to work through Linnean principles in the course of actual observations, he concluded that natural classification was not a matter of contemplating a rational scheme in abstraction, but of hands-on engagement through the exercise of comparing and contrasting real specimens. Notwithstanding such a practical agenda, upon setting foot in a Mediterranean environment that abounded with exotic plant life, Goethe was literally overwhelmed by its unprecedented breadth of diverse species, insisting, time and again, that he was mired in a labyrinth of inscrutable forms. Having conscientiously committed to memory Linnean nomenclature that delineated plant forms according to class, genera and species, he assumed that he need only apply its criteria to the specimens encountered in empirical reality: "Die Pflanzen betreffend, fühl' ich noch sehr meine Schülerschaft. Nun habe ich zwar meinen Linné bei mir und seine Terminologie wohl eingeprägt..."[66]But the more Goethe immersed himself in Italy's enormous variety of vegetation, the more he met with evidence of the Linnean method's shortcomings. Premised on subsuming organic life under fixed categories according to the presence or absence of distinguishing features, its binary logic risked severing

[65]WA IV, 7, 117. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 9 Nov 1785
[66]HA XI, 18. Italienische Reise, 8 Sept 1786

individuals that belonged together. In order to classify plants for instance, Linneas delineated between species almost exclusively on the basis of the number and arrangement of their reproductive organs, the consequence of which was to create seemingly artificial groupings. Moreover, Goethe complained of the difficulty of drawing categorical distinctions based on pre-specified criteria given the malleable, ever-changing growth patterns of Mediterranean plant life that meant that no feature was immutably set in stone:

> so fand ich doch bei der versuchten genauen Anwendung die Hauptschwierigkeit in der Versatilität der Organe. Wenn ich an demselben Pflanzenstengel erst rundliche, dann eingekerbte, zuletzt beinahe gefiederte Blätter entdeckte, die sich alsdann wieder zusammenzogen, vereinfachten, zu Schüppchen wurden und zuletzt gar verschwanden, da verlor ich den Mut irgendwo einen Pfahl einzuschlagen, oder wohl gar eine Grenzlinie zu ziehen.[67]

Identifying a rigid, over-exclusionary mode of classification that failed to do justice to the versatility and ever-fluctuating nature of organic life, Goethe concluded of Linneas' method: "mußt' ich nach und nach empfinden, daß mich auf dem bezeichneten eingeschlagenen Wege manches, wo nicht irremachte, doch zurückhielt."[68] The Linnean system's imprecision in discriminating between related species led him to question the legitimacy of categorial demarcations based on seemingly arbitrary distinctions in external attributes reflecting an organism's abiding constancy and unable to account for change.

Once he concluded that Linnean taxonomy insufficiently approximated the divisions immanent to nature, Goethe set out to develop a more synthetic mode of apprehending natural organisms. Rather than isolate features of individual entities to separate them as Linneas had stipulated, he began to conceive classification in terms of identifying a fundamental unity that lay behind the differences displayed on the surface of things. Favoring a method of ascertaining

[67]HA XIII, 160. Der Verfasser teilt die Geschichte seiner botanischen Studien mit
[68]HA XIII, 159. Der Verfasser teilt die Geschichte seiner botanischen Studien mit

the 'oneness' encompassing nature's manifold particularity, he maintained: "Das, was er (Linné) mit Gewalt auseinanderzuhalten suchte, mußte, nach dem innersten Bedürfnis meines Wesens, zur Vereinigung anstreben."[69] Goethe was convinced that difference could only be distinguished from out of nature's all-embracing generality: "Daher schärf' ich mein Auge aufs Allgemeine..."[70]The key to accurately classifying natural organisms was to discern the relations uniting them, wherein singularities would become manifest against the backdrop of shared commonalities.

In order to access nature's underlying unity, Goethe ultimately made recourse to something akin to the Stoic exercise of physical description, developing his own classificatory know-how based on parsing a living thing's parts in order to grasp its forms and functions. Notwithstanding, he importantly departed from the Stoic conception by insisting that the identification of a natural entity's constituent parts implied grasping them as a function of how they hang together as a whole. Convinced that a living thing had to be seen as coordinated and distinct from the mere sum of its parts, he deemed the act of resolving it into its basic components fraught with the risk of reductionism. In order to avoid emasculating an organic entity, Goethe was mindful of the coordinating and subordinating relations of the elements constituting it as an integrated whole. Moreover, the aim of meticulously describing an organism part by part, was not to dismember it into discrete structural units to dispel illusions about its identity, but to grasp its structural connections to permit comparison with other similar entities. Such comparison in turn depended on avoiding erroneously bringing into connection the furthest with the nearest so as to elicit relations of resemblance and affiliation inhering within nature's

[69]GW 19, 26. Zur Morphologie, Geschichte meines botanischen Studiums
[70]HA XI, 18. Italienische Reise, Auf dem Brenner, 8. September 1786

continuities. Goethe thus analyzed an organism's basic elements only insofar as it promoted comparison with related others, permitting the ascertainment of similarities of form across different individuals. By proceeding in this fashion, he overcame the arbitrariness appertaining to Linnean classification, progressively coming to discern what he took to be the red thread running through nature's apparent heterogeneity.

Just as the ancients practiced important self-transformative exercises in the context of the research and investigation of nature, Goethe pursued his natural scientific inquiries in Italy through engaging in a host of exercises aimed at cultivating new ways of apprehending natural organisms. On the one hand, he strove to renounce subjective, cognitive modes of observation, while on the other, he was determined to achieve a genuinely objective form of observation by physically describing entities with a view to their status as organic wholes embedded in nature's greater totality; goals that in turn depended upon achieving a physiocentric mode of perceiving things.

III. Seeing Nature from a physical point of view: Polarity & Intensification

One of the central premises of ancient spiritual exercises in natural investigation lay in the practitioner's attempt to effect a transition away from human ways of perceiving reality to a natural perspective on things.[71] Through meticulously describing and relocating objects and events within the universe, the natural investigator defeated the habitual tendency to see things anthropomorphically, apprehending reality from a physical point of view.[72]Such a physical perspective in turn facilitated the apprehension of nature as a comprehensive whole.

Goethe too advocated the adoption of a physiocentric perspective in commerce with the

[71]Hadot, 83.
[72]Hadot, 197.

natural world. Insisting that he wished to dispense with the 'yardstick of a human standpoint' to acquire a universal frame of reference, he endeavored to approximate a physical point of view on things by apprehending them through the laws of nature. Such laws corresponded to the universal principles of polarity and intensification he deemed immanent to nature and responsible for its diverse and perpetually changing character. He thus perpetually emphasized the priority he placed on "die Anschauung der zwei groβen Triebräder aller Natur: der Begriff von Polarität und von Steigerung."[73] Here, polarity was a foundational principle, whereby Goethe envisaged pairs of interdependent forces, the one unable to function without the other. Such an opposing and yet reciprocative dynamic could be provoked through a change in external conditions: "Man gedenke der leichten Erregbarkeit aller Wesen, wie der mindeste Wechsel einer Bedingung, jeder Hauch gleich in den Körpern Polarität manifestiert, die eigentlich in ihnen allen schlummert."[74] Indeed, mutually dependent, contrary forces exercised an essentially creative role through their propensity to unite and reunite, where the conjoining of opposites engendered new products.[75] The second essential principle Goethe deemed operative in nature, intensification, was commensurate to a natural entity's internal drive towards complexity. Intensification involved the organism's traversal of a series of ascending stages to undergo ever complex transformations. Hence, on the one hand, an organism's form and function was influenced by its assimilation of polarities, adapting to contrary external forces like air, water, heat and cold. [76]At the same time, it could break free of set principles within certain limits to impose its own creative will, striving to overcome obstacles, change its environment or forgo certain functions for others.[77]Moreover,

[73]HA XIII, 47. Erläuterung zu dem aphoristischen Aufsatz "Die Natur"
[74]HA XII, 369. / BA 18, 657. Über Natur und Naturwissenschaften
[75]Astrida Tantillo, *The will to create: Goethe's Philosophy of Nature* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press 2002) 47.
[76]Tantillo, 98
[77]Tantillo, 109.

while a mere intermingling of opposites had a neutralizing effect, when what was divided was first intensified and then reunited, the fusion of opposites yielded a higher product.[78] Nature therefore proved at its most creative in the interplay of polarity and intensification, because an intensified thing was much more apt to produce novel forms than one which was a mere union of polarities.[79]Through the process of intensification homogeneity was effectively overcome to yield "ein Neues, ein Höheres, ein Unerwartetes."[80]

Goethe endeavored to observe organic life from the point of view of nature, through systematically apprehending natural variation as a function of polar environmental factors interacting with an organism's innate, self-enhancing dynamic.[81] Indeed, the more he observed organic life in Italy, the more he was persuaded of the existence of oppositional tensions between a variety of external limitations and the creative, developmental force immanent to nature. As one commentator notes, Goethe saw nature as "an interrelated whole evolving through mutually constitutive principles of polarization and intensification, whereby organic growth was seen through a productive dynamic between an upward striving, living organism and the alternately constraining and enabling environmental forces which act upon it."[82]Through the practice of observing organic growth through the combination of environmental constraints and internal forces, Goethe explored nature's creative patterns to discern its immanent divisions, in turn aiding him to approximate a physical point of view.[83]

For Goethe, grasping nature from a genuinely physical perspective ultimately implied

[78]Bishop, 56.
[79]Tantillo, 115.
[80]HA XIII, 159 Der Verfasser teilt die Geschichte seiner botanischen Studien mit
[81]Hadot, 244.
[82]Bernhard Kuhn, *Autobiography and Natural Science in the Age of Romanticism: Rousseau, Goethe, Thoreau* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009)78.

rejecting the premise that the natural inquirer was a priori capable of obtaining knowledge of nature's diverse constraining and promoting influences to instantaneously take in their character. The disclosure of a foreign environment was not a function of merely exploring its diversity of terrain, where nature readily availed its productive powers to the passing observer. On the contrary, as a non-native, unversed in the local climactic and topographic conditions, Goethe believed that the natural inquirer faced an essentially opaque and impervious world, perceptual access to which demanded considerable adaptive efforts. In order to penetrate his alien surroundings, he deployed a host of techniques to bring his perceptual faculties into alignment with them.

Exercises in Observing Nature through topographic polarities

Goethe's practice of attempting to access natural phenomena began by way of a systematic exploration of Italy's remarkably heterogeneous landscapes, where he set out to probe the developmental impact of topographical oppositions that influenced the variability of organic forms and functions. Indeed, Italy's dramatic contrast of mountainous inland and coastal peripheral regions revealed a host of natural polarities including altitude and depth, humidity and aridity that made for substantive variations in plant growth. Goethe noted of the pronounced disparities impacting the climate:

> Auch ist Italien eins von denen Ländern wo Grund und Boden bey allem was geschieht immer mit zur Sprache kommt. *Höhe und Tiefe*, *Feuchtigkeit und Trockne* sind bey Begebenheiten viel bedeutender und die entscheidenden Abwechslungen der Lage und der Witterung haben auf Cultur des Bodens...mehr Einfluss als in nördlichen und breiter ausgedehntern Gegenden."[84]

A country concentrated on a relatively limited surface area, Italy's topographical extremes accentuated developmental contrarieties, whereby Goethe initially probed features characteristic

[84]WA IV, 10, 327. Brief an Johann Heinrich Meyer, 16. Nov. 1795

of mountainous regions. He insisted, "Ich mache die Reise durch's Land, um zu sehen, *wie es auf den Bergen aussieht*..."[85]Its northern border penetrated by the Alps, with the Appenine range forming its backbone, Italy's terrain alternated between steep peeks and deep valleys, producing a marked divergence between high and low altitudes in temperature, humidity and soil composition that elicited variation across plant species. Indeed, if topographical heterogeneity awakened the natural investigator to the breadth of determinants sustaining organic life and its versatile, ever-shifting boundaries, Goethe initially ascertained considerable differences in the external form of plants as a function of altitude:

> Was mich noch aufmerksamer machte, war der Einfluss, den die Gebirgshöhe auf die Pflanzen zu haben schien. Nicht nur neue Pflanzen fand ich da, sondern Wachstum der alten verändert; wenn in der tiefern Gegend Zweige und Stengel stärker und mastiger waren, die Augen näher aneinander standen und die Blätter breit waren, so wurden höher ins Gebirg hinauf Zweige und Stengel zarter, die Augen rückten auseinander, so dass von Knoten zu Knoten ein grösserer Zwischenraum stattfand und die Blätter sich lanzenförmiger bildeten.[86]

A difference in altitude had noteworthy developmental implications on plant life, affecting the structure of its branches, stalks and leaves, such that one and the same species could have a range of potential developmental trajectories depending on its topographic circumstances. Goethe was awakened to a plant's adaptive versatility, equipping it to accommodate to the most drastic of conditions, be it through developing resistances to cold or heat, weathering drought or excess moisture and subsisting on a paucity of nutrients. But Italy not only brought to bear the developmental divergences owing to the polarities informing the lay of its land, there was no overlooking the impact of surrounding bodies of water.

A peninsula encircled by the sea with a chain of islands at its southern tip, Italy was largely a coastal country. Goethe thus immediately set out to explore its seashores, directing

[85]WA IV, 8, 210. Brief an Friedrich von Stein, 17 April 1787
[86]HA XI, 18-19. Italienische Reise, 8. September 1786

attention to the capacity of native vegetation to adapt to them. Upon arriving in Venice, he noticed that coastal plant life united features reflecting the influence of both land and water: like aquatic plants, they teemed with juices and like mountain shrubbery they bore tough, tenacious foliage:

> Am Meere habe ich auch verschiedene Pflanzen gefunden, deren ähnlicher Charakter mir ihre Eigenschaften näher kennen liess; sie sind alle zugleich mastig und streng, saftig und zäh, und es ist offenbar, dass das alte Salz des Sandbodens, mehr aber die salzige Luft ihnen diese Eigenschaften gibt...sie strotzen von Säften wie Wasserpflanzen, sie sind fest und zäh wie Bergpflanzen;[87]

Goethe concluded that the resemblances across coastal plant varieties were a function of acclimation to the ground composition's high saline concentration. Meanwhile, further inland on the marshland areas of the Venetian Laguna, he identified variation resulting from adaptations to the sea's perpetual agitation of ebb and flood: "Der sumpfige Teil ist mit Wasserpflanzen bewachsen und muß sich auch dadurch nach und nach erheben, obgleich Ebbe und Flut beständig daran rupfen und wühlen und der Vegetation keine Ruhe lassen."[88]But the impact of the sea's incessant rise and fall was not restricted to plantlife. Goethe observed that Crustacean life was significantly effected by Venice's land subsidence, forcing it to accommodate to the exigencies of high and low tide. Such constraints brought into relief the malleable nature of organic life and its capacity to adapt to widely varying environmental conditions. Enthused by the versatility of Italy's wealth of organic life, Goethe exclaimed, "Was ist doch ein Lebendiges für ein köstliches, herrliches Ding! Wie abgemessen zu seinem Zustande, wie wahr, wie seiend!"[89]The systematic probing of nature's polarities thus awakened him to organic life's innate ability to adapt to extremely heterogeneous natural circumstances.

[87]HA XI, 89. Italienische Reise, 8. Okt 1786
[88]HA XI, 90. Italienische Reise, 9.Okt 1786
[89]HA XI, 246. Italienische Reise, Venedig, 9. Okt 1786

But while Goethe recognized that natural organisms were conditioned by external factors that modified their structure to produce variation, he was also attentive to their inner law of development that resisted change to preserve their essential forms. The productive exchange between internal and external forces was particularly striking in the Mediterranean regions due to extremely variable geographic features. Goethe explained:

> Hier kommen die Verschiedenheiten des Bodens in Betracht; reichlich genährt durch Feuchte der Täler, verkümmert durch Trockne der Höhen, geschützt vor Frost und Hitze in jedem Maße, oder beiden unausweichbar bloßgestellt, kann das Geschlecht sich zur Art, die Art zur Varietät, und diese wieder durch andere Bedingungen ins Unendliche sich verändern; und gleichwohl hält sich die Pflanze abgeschlossen in ihrem Reiche, wenn sie sich auch nachbarlich an das harte Gestein, an das beweglichere Leben hüben und drüben anlehnt. Die allerentferntesten jedoch haben eine ausgesprochene *Verwandtschaft*, sie lassen sich ohne Zwang untereinander vergleichen.[90]

Mediterranean conditions were conducive to virtually unlimited possibilities for organic differentiation, with plants producing endless varieties and sub-varieties owing to the multitude of environmental forces impacting their development. Nonetheless, the modification of organic form occurred within certain prescribed limits, whereby an entity's lawful determination was preserved because the boundaries of the plant kingdom were by no means porous.

Through attunement to the way in which the universal principles of polarity and heightening informed plant development, Goethe began to move beyond the demarcations characterizing Linnean classification. Rather than attempt to establish clear-cut boundaries between organisms on the basis of pre-established criteria, he explained the variation informing a given species in terms of its adaptive capacities. Nature's power to accommodate to diverse localities and environmental pressures yielded intricate criss-crossing affinities and family resemblances that accounted for the similarity and difference characterizing individuals within a

[90]HA XIII, 162. Der Verfasser teilt die Geschichte seiner botanischen Studium mit

given species. Indeed, Italy's highly diversified geographical terrain brought to visibility an organic capacity for form modification that played down nature's lawful determination:

> Das Wechselhafte der Pflanzengestalten, dem ich längst auf seinem eigentümlichen Gange gefolgt, erweckte nun bei mir immer mehr die Vorstellung: die uns umgebenden Pflanzenformen seien nicht ursprünglich determiniert und festgestellt, ihnen sei viel mehr, bei einer eigensinnigen, generischen und spezifischen Hartnäckigkeit, eine glückliche Mobilität und Biegsamkeit verliehen, um in so viele Bedingungen, die über dem Erdkreis auf sie einwirken, sich zu fügen und darnach bilden und umbilden zu können.[91]

Italy's environment thus accentuated the dialectic between the external constraints and inner determination conditioning organisms, whereby Goethe came to see them as part of a web of interrelated forms and overlapping kinships, cutting across members under the same kingdom.

Exercises in observing nature through the Polarity of Generation and Destruction

Another way in which the ancient natural inquirer sought to achieve a physical perspective on nature was to grasp it in the etymological sense of 'physis' as the movement of growth and birth by which living things manifest themselves.[92]Several ancient exercises involved attending to nature's prodigious capacity for self-generation as well as its ubiquitous tendency towards decay and destruction. Through witnessing nature give birth before his very eyes, the natural investigator was led to meditate on the miracle of life's coming into being. Meanwhile, inspecting nature's diverse capacities for procreation shed light on its self-proliferating impulse.[93] The correlate to exercises in observing life's coming into being involved attending to the natural phenomena of death and decay. Here, the natural observer reflected upon the fact that an organism's dissolution was always already underway, wherein it progressively approached the demise assigned to it by time. Ultimately inscribing death within a chain of causality immanent to nature, he came to accept that each event, including death, transpired as a result of the natural

[91]HA XIII, 162. Der Verfasser teilt die Geschichte seiner botanischen Studien mit
[92]Hadot, 260.
[93]Hadot, 260.

necessity that inextricably bound all living things on earth.[94]Indeed, in witnessing the inevitablity of death as well as its manifold manifestations, the natural inquirer was led to acknowledge life's impermanence and fragility, embracing death as part of the natural course of things.[95]By thus internalizing nature's cycle of birth and death as a lived, existential experience, he obtained a sense of his own finitude and greater unity with the natural world.[96]

Like the ancients, Goethe's mode of natural inquiry in Italy was mindful of nature's procreative and degenerative forces. Italy was marked by vivid expressions of flourishing and decay that pointed to the polarity of nature's generation and destruction. Goethe initially witnessed the magnitude of Italy's remarkable vegetative fecundity through first-hand evidence of its capacity for self-propagation. In Naples he thus noted, "Besonders kann man sich keinen Begriff von der Fruchtbarkeit des innern Landes machen wenn man es nicht gesehn hat."[97] Astounded by the rapid proliferation of Mediterranean vegetation, he remarked:

> Zwischen Neapel und Capua ist gleichfalls eine Fruchtbarkeit die alle unsre Begriffe übersteigt. Man glaubt nur die wiederhohlten Erndten Eines Bodens, wenn man sieht, wie schnell sich hier die Pflanze entwickelt. Im vorigen Jahr haben sie auf demselben Acker dreymal Türckisch Korn zur Reife gebracht.[98]

If the Neapolitan region's fertile yields proved remarkable, Goethe was no less impressed by Sicilian landscapes replete with bountiful vegetation. Setting out to probe the conditions that made such prodigious growth possible, he maintained, "Sehr vieles musste zusammenkommen, um Sizilien zu einem der fruchtbarsten Länder der Welt zu machen."[99] Indeed, Sicilian plant life was literally in perpetual fluctuation, conveying the impression that it could not afford to forgo

[94]Hadot, 197.
[95]Buzaré, 18.
[96]Hadot, 253.
[97]WA IV, 8, 212. Brief an Seidel, 15. Mai 1787
[98]WA IV, 8, 247-48. Brief an Johanne Bohl, 18 Aug 1787
[99]HA XI, 283. Italienische Reise, 28 April 1787

its procreative impetus. Goethe thus recounted his astonishment, when, upon having left dormant seeds in his dry quarters, they began to germinate entirely on their own. Such remarkable exhibitions of self-propagation drove home the restless, dynamic character of Mediterranean vegetation.

In addition to coming to appreciate the generative capacities of organic life in the southern latitudes, Goethe benefitted from its exhibition of a marked fertility and faster seasonal growth rates, permitting observations of a plant's entire developmental cycle under natural conditions. In particular, accelerated growth made it possible to observe successive stages of plant growth. Goethe thus began cultivating plants in Italy in order to bring into view the course of plant maturation that had remained indiscernable to the naked eye in Germany. He explained the utility of comparing the developmental trajectories of individual specimens: "einige Dattelpflanzen, die ich aus Kernen gezogen hatte; wie ich denn überhaupt die Entwickelung derselben an mehreren Exemplaren beobachtete."[100] Conversely, the absence of specific transitional stages in a given plant species helped him to gain new insight on the veritable function of different parts. Goethe remarked, "Es ist gar interessant, zu bemerken, wie eine lebhaft fortgesetzte und durch starke Kälte nicht unterbrochene Vegetation wirkt, hier gibt's keine Knospen, und man lernt erst begreifen, was eine Knospe sei."[101] By dint of growth uninterrupted by the cold, certain Mediterranean plants possessed embryonic foliage that immediately burgeoned into a shoot, making the phenomenon of dormant buds the exception rather than the rule. In colder climates, buds were often situated in a series of gradations of bud scales that unfolded into leaf-like structures serving to protect the plant's more delicate parts

[100]HA XIII, 165. Der Verfasser teilt die Geschichte seiner Studium mit
[101]HA XI, 145. Italienische Reise Rom, den 2. Dezember 1786

during unfavorable periods.[102]The lack of such bud scales among Mediterranean plant varieties suggested that such a protective function was an adaptation that proved superfluous under semi-tropical conditions. In this way, both the visibility of certain transitional phases of plant growth as well as their patent absence served to enlighten Goethe on a plant species' adaptive capacities.

The generative conditions of Italy's Mediterranean climate further meant that Goethe became increasingly conversant with the diverse capacities of plantlife for reproduction and renewal. Once again, the startling pace of growth exhibited by Mediterranean vegetation brought to visibility a plant's transitional forms. Goethe accordingly noted of a pinecone's propagation by seed, "sie huben sich wie in einem Ei eingeschlossen empor, warfen aber diese Haube bald ab und zeigten in einem Kranze von grünen Nadeln schon die Anfänge ihrer künftigen Bestimmung."[103]But if rapid seed germination allowed one to observe a conifer's emerging embryonic shoots and cotyledons, propagation by bud revealed the fertility of the Mediterranean latitudes even more dramatically:

> Galt das Bisherige der Fortpflanzung durch Samen, so ward ich auf die Fortpflanzung durch Augen nicht weniger aufmerksam gemacht, und zwar durch Rat Reiffenstein, der aufallen Spaziergängen, hier und dort einen Zweig abreissend, bis zur Pedanterie behauptete, in die Erde gesteckt, müsse jeder sogleich fortwachsen. Zum entscheidenden Beweis zeigte er dergleichen Stecklinge gar wohl angeschlagen in seinem Garten.[104]

Elsewhere, Goethe reflected on an orange tree's impressive self-generating powers: "Orangenäste, worauf der Reisende sitzt, klingt etwas wunderbar, wird aber ganz natürlich, wenn man weiß, dass der Orangenbaum, seiner Natur überlassen, sich bald über der Wurzel in Zweige trennt, die mit der Zeit zu entschiedenen Ästen werde."[105]By invoking the idea that, left to its own devices, the roots of an orange plant branched out to form limbs, Goethe underscored the

[102]Dirk R. Walters and David J. Keil, *Vascular plant taxonomy*. (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co. 1996) 598.
[103]HA XIII, 165. Der Verfasser teilt die Geschichte seiner Studium mit
[104]HA XI, 376. Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt, Störende Naturbetrachtungen 17. Mai 1787
[105]HA XI, 297. Italienische Reise, Taormina, 8 Mai 1787

enhanced growth capacities of Mediterranean plant life.

If Italy's natural environment made diverse patterns of generative plant growth plainly visible, its volcanic formations furnished equally patent evidence of nature's deadly, destructive powers. Upon his arrival in Naples, Goethe was greeted by a fuming Mount Vesuvius, an active volcano prone to frequent eruptions that daily created new volcanic hills and lava formations. He immediately set out to explore it, climbing it three times in successsion to observe, up close, the nature of volcanic activity. His first ascent gave him a taste of its destructive potency when a blinding emission of smoke and lava fragments made him temporarily lose sight of his guides. But perhaps his most lasting impression of volcanic prowess was obtained when passing through Naples to return to Rome, where he witnessed a full scale eruption of Vesuvius. Goethe realized that while nature promoted prodigious growth, it could just as easily obliterate life in a single, violent stroke. Sicily alone possessed a train of cities engulfed in volcanic ash, with Mount Aetna's destructive telluric powers leaving behind impressive monuments of wreckage. The city of Catana still bore noticeable signs of devastation over a century after the volcano's eruption: "Wir fuhren die Straßen hinaufwärts, wo die Lava, welche 1669 einen großen Teil dieser Stadt zerstörte, noch bis auf unsere Tage sichtbar blieb."[106]In Messina too, Goethe met with remnants of buildings turned to ash dust as a result of intense atmospheric heat: "Und so gelangten wir nach Messina...den fürchterlichsten Begriff einer zerstörten Stadt; denn wir ritten eine Viertelstunde lang an Trümmern nach Trümmern vorbei, ehe wir zur Herberge kamen, die, in diesem ganzen Revier allein wieder aufgebaut, aus den Fenstern des obern Stocks nur eine zackige Ruinenwüste übersehen ließ."[107]Volcanic ruins, conveying a petrification of life, were a

[106]HA XI, 292. Italienische Reise, Catania, 4 Mai 1787
[107]HA XI, 300. Italienische Reise, Messina 10 Mai 1787

telling reminder of nature's inherently destructive capacities.

The polarity between nature's generative and destructive forces was particularly striking in volcanic regions that oscillated between barren wastelands of desolate terrain and arable lands rampant with teeming vegetation. Such terrestrial contrasts pointed to southern Italy's dramatic interplay between dissolution and decay on the one hand and thriving and regeneration on the other. Volcanic activity left behind craters with soil deposits rich in nutrients that became the site of luxuriant vegetative growth attesting to nature's eternal cycle of generation and destruction:

> dem Pflanzenleben widerstrebende Schlackenberge, kahle, widerliche Räume und dann doch zuletzt eine immer üppige Vegetation, eingreifend, wo sie nur irgend vermag, sich überalles Ertötete erhebend, um Landseen und Bäche umher, ja, den herrlichsten Eichwald an den Wänden eines alten Kraters behauptend.[108]

In stark contrast with his early romantic vision of nature's destructive powers famously described by Werther as a monstrous spectacle, in the wake of his natural observations in Italy, Goethe came to see nature as a higher, unifiying force embracing generation and destruction. If the Goethe of *Werther* had categorically exclaimed:

> Nicht die große, seltne Not der Welt, diese Fluten, die eure Dörfer wegspülen, diese Erdbeben, die eure Städte verschlingen, rühren mich; mir untergräbt das Herz die verzehrende Kraft, die in dem All der Natur verborgen liegt; die nichts gebildet hat, das nicht seinen Nachbar, nicht sich selbst zerstörte. Und so taumle ich beängstigt. Himmel und Erde und ihre webenden Kräfte um mich her: ich sehe nichts als ein ewig verschlingendes, ewig wiederkäuendes Ungeheuer.[109]

the Goethe of the Italian journey, having been exposed to nature's unceasing flux of generation and destruction, marveled at the polarities inhering in it. Progressively attuned to the natural pulse of growth and decay, he realized that life and death were inextricably linked, wherein nature generously offered up its prodigal bounty with one hand, mercilessly decimating it with the other.

[108]HA XI, 186. Italienische Reise, 1. März 1787
[109]HA VI, 53. Die Leiden des jungen Werther

Exercises in observing nature from the perspective of normality and abnormality

Instantiations of the normal and abnormal represented a further polarity of extremes that frequently met the eye in Italy. Indeed, Goethe came to define normal organic growth by observing mutant plant specimens whose trajectories diverged from the regular course of development. Here, a phenomenon known as a composite carnation common to the Mediterranean region immediately captured his attention: "Hier ist es bey der Nelckenflor etwas gewöhnliches, daß aus einer gewißen Sorte gefüllter Nelcken eine andre gefüllte, völlige Blume herauswächst..."[110]Characterized by a tendency to multiply its flowers and develop extra petals in place of its sex organs, the composite carnation produced multiple flower heads only to eschew its natural fertility. This aberrancy provided Goethe with food for thought for his emerging hypotheses concerning plant development. The appearance of floral organs in a site normally occupied by sex organs led him to conclude that the latter were capable of transforming into petals. He noted, "Ich habe diesen Sommer eine Nelcke gefunden aus welcher 4 andre, vollkommne Nelcken herausgewachsen waren, und aus diesen wieder andre gewachsen wären, hätte die Vegetation Trieb genug gehabt. Es ist ein höchst merckwürdiges Phänomen und meine Hypothese wird dadurch zur Gewißheit."[111]While nature ordinarily arrested growth to facilitate propagation through the formation of fruit and seed, in the case of the composite carnation, repeat flowering occurred at the expense of the formation of fertile, sexual organs. Indeed, the displacement of normal reproductive organs through flowering that issued in further flowering led Goethe to posit that the plant's different parts were inter-convertible and essentially

[110]WA IV, 8, 250. Brief an Knebel, 18 Aug 1787
[111]WA IV, 8, 267. Brief an Knebel, 3 Okt 1787

equivalent.[112]Thus conceiving the carnation in terms of modifications of a single basic organ, Goethe speculated that all plant development could be grasped in terms of a generic organ differentiating into diverse structures in alternating phases of expansion and contraction. A plant's stem thus expanded into a leaf, contracted into a calyx, expanded once more to form the corolla, contracted into the reproductive organs and finally expanded into fruit, whereby certain factors could cause the organs to deviate from the common pattern or model of construction.[113] Goethe suggested that the carnation's ceaselessly upward striving dynamic, typically contained by the environment's contractive and expansive tendencies, was on occasion, liable to stray from its normal course of development:

> Am auffallendsten war mir jedoch ein strauchartig in die Höhe gewachsener Nelkenstock. Man kennt die gewaltige Lebens- und Vermehrungskraft dieser Pflanze; Auge ist über Auge an ihren Zweigen gedrängt, Knoten in Knoten hineingetrichtert; dieses wird nun hier durch Dauer gesteigert und die Augen aus unerforschlicher Enge zur höchstmöglichen Entwickelung getrieben, so daß selbst die vollendete Blume wieder vier vollendete Blumen aus ihrem Busen hervorbrachte. Zur Aufbewahrung dieser Wundergestalt kein Mittel vor mir sehend, unternahm ich es, sie genau zu zeichnen, wobei ich immer zu mehrerer Einsicht in den Grundbegriff der Metamorphose gelangte.[114]

The composite carnation not only furnished a striking example of a meshing of polarity and intensification, it demonstrated how abnormal specimens could serve to display a plant's latent formative capacities. Through meticulous examination of abnormal growth patterns, Goethe drew inferences about the normal process of plant formation, concluding that individuals that appeared to breach natural limits, ultimately served to define normalcy.

If exceptions disclosed the rule governing normal development, Goethe embraced the idea of nature as a higher unity that encompassed the polarities of normal and abnormal. From a

[112]Enrico Coen, "Goethe and the ABC model of flower development," Comptes *Rendus de l Académie des Sciences - Series III - Sciences de la Vie* 324. 6 (2001):526.
[113]David R. Smyth, "Morphogenesis of Flowers—Our Evolving View," *The Plant Cell* 17.2 (Feb 2005): 334.
[114]HA XI, 376. Italienische Reise, Störende Naturbetrachtungen

physical point of view, a flower organ growing in an unusual place, a leaf occurring in the place of a sepal or a petal displacing a stamen, far from freaks of nature, constituted an essential part of the whole of nature. Georg Simmel thus attributed a conception of organic growth to Goethe in which normal and abnormal were simply two sides of the same medallion: "Es gibt for Goethe ein höchstes Normales, das Normales und Abnormes einschliesst."[115]Indeed, the acquisition of a physiocentric perspective on nature depended on appreciating the inextricable unity of contrary organic forms. Goethe insisted that such a vision constituted the foundation for the natural observer's acquisition of a wholistic intuition of natural things: "Man kann keineswegs zu vollständiger Anschauung gelangen, wenn man nicht Normales und Abnormes immer zugleich gegen einander schwankend und wirkend betrachtet." Goethe eventually enunciated his vision of nature as a totality embracing the normal and abnormal as complementary, mutually reinforcing forces: "Im organischen Leben wird selbst das Unnütze, ja das Schädliche selbst in den notwendigen Kreis des Daseins aufgenommen, ins *Ganze* zu wirken und als wesentliches Bindemittel disparater Einzelheiten."[116] Observations of Italy's deviant organic forms thus increasingly led him to see how apparent inconsistencies in development could be used to see nature from a physical point of view as a greater, all-embracing totality.

Temporal Exercises in Seeing

A further ancient spiritual exercise intended to aid the natural investigator in attaining a physical perspective on nature involved probing organic processes of development in terms of their temporality. One such exercise required the observer to describe nature's flux of representations by taking hold of them as they occurred, allowing them to unfold

[115]Georg Simmel, *Über Goethe* (Leipzig: Klinckhardt & Biermann 1918) 264.
[116]Simmel, 192.

spontaneously.[117]Such uninhibited uptake could be distinguished from a discursive mode of apprehending organic change. One that operated by imposing a systematic law of succession in order to establish a necessary link between representations to deliberately constrain the mind's apprehension of them. Rather than screen nature's flux of representations to bind them with a logical law, the practitioner of temporal viewing succumbed to nature's lead, giving himself over to the free unfolding of representations.[118]The correlate to this exercise, more proximately linked to natural inquiry, involved the observer's interrogation of changing organic processes through the practice of observations of 'universal metamorphosis.' Such exercises aimed to habituate the observer to see natural phenomena in a state of constant change. Marcus Aurelius thus exhorted: "Acquire a method to examine systematically how all things are transformed from one to another and direct your attention constantly to this area of study, and exercise yourself in it..."[119]By attending to the transitions characterizing organic processes, the observer acquired a dynamic perspective on living things, coming to see nature as a universal force in constant change. Indeed, if all things in the phenomenal world were in interminable flux, a fluid rather than static form of viewing was needed to discern nature's form differentiations as an ongoing process of becoming,[120]whereby the transition from an inert to a dynamic mode of perception required practice. The ancient conception of metamorphic viewing thus implied repetition and accomodation, enjoining the observer to adaptively transform himself to grasp nature's dynamic trajectory of change.

Determined to acquire a physical perspective on natural phenomena in Italy, Goethe

[117]Foucault, 292.
[118]Foucault, 293.
[119]Buzaré, 18.
[120]Hadot, Inner Citadel, 172.

likewise cultivated a form of natural observation receptive to the dynamic developmental paths of natural organisms. Indeed, his primary assumption regarding nature was that it possessed a perpetually changing character, incessantly forming and reforming itself, such that grasping its essence required adopting a malleable mode of viewing. Goethe noted: "Das Gebildete wird sogleich wieder umgebildet, und wir haben uns, wenn wir einigermaβen zum lebendigen Anschaun der Natur gelangen wollen, selbst so beweglich und bildsam zu erhalten, nach dem Beispiele mit dem sie uns vorgeht."[121]Later referring to the mode of visual apprehension appropriate to developing natural entities as 'bewegliche Anschauung,' Goethe claimed that only a metamorphic mode of observation was able to do justice to the unceasing change characteristic of Italy's wealth of plantlife. If nature was in a permanent process of becoming, its never fully finished products could not be seen as fixed and unalterable or anchored in constant relationships. Rather one had to attend to its continuous process of organic fluctuation through a mobile mode of viewing receptive to its inherently mutable character, the mastery of which aided in the approximation of a genuinely physical perspective.

If Goethe's metamorphic mode of viewing nature was responsive to nature's malleable character, it was predicated on a specific method, the initial point of departure of which consisted in establishing a synoptic overview ('Überblick') over a given organic phenomenon. Goethe first recognized the utility of such a configuration after stumbling upon a fan palm in the Padua botanic gardens. Struck by the palm leaf's exhibition of a clear continuum of form changes manifesting the successive separation of its leaf parts, he discerned the transition from early, simple spear-shaped leaves that, with maturity, progressively separated into a more complicated,

[121]MA 12, 13. Schriften zur Morphologie

fan-like form: "Eine Fächerpalme zog meine ganze Aufmerksamkeit auf sich; glücklicherweise standen die einfachen, lanzenförmigen ersten Blätter noch am Boden, die sukzessive Trennung derselben nahm zu, bis endlich das Fächerartige in vollkommener Ausbildung zu sehen war."[122]The fanned leaf, divided into multiple segments, provided an overview of the incremental changes comprising the plant's developmental trajectory. In probing its architecture, Goethe was led to see an analogy between different individual organs of one and the same plant. The palm's graded structure served to reinforce his suspicion that a plant's separate parts, whether stem, calyx, petals, stamen or pistil were simply variations on a single organ, or what he generically referred to as a primal leaf. Later in Segesta, the formation of a developing fenel furnished further evidence for this hypothesis: "An frischem Fenchel bemerkte ich den Unterschied der unteren und oberen Blätter, und es ist doch nur immer dasselbe Organ, das sich aus der Einfachheit zur Mannigfaltigkeit entwickelt."[123] Indeed, even the seemingly aberrant Cactus opuntia, though lacking true leaves and developing into an enlarged, formless stem, began its germinating phase, like all other plants, with a seed disclosing embryonic leaves known as cotyledon. Goethe explained, "So wendete ich meine Aufmerksamkeit auf das Keimen des während seines Wachstums unförmlichen Cactus opuntia und sah mit Vergnügen, dass er ganz unschuldig dikotyledonisch sich in zwei zarten Blättchen enthüllte, sodann aber bei fernerem Wuchse sich die künftige Unform entwickelte."[124]Although the cactus' cotyledons were ephemeral, immediately evolving into spines, their presence at germination corroborated the fact that its formation ultimately occurred through the differentiation of a primal leaf, of which all its organs were simply variations. Goethe concluded: "Es war mir nämlich aufgegangen, daß in

[122]WA XIII, 162. Der Verfassser teilt die Geschichte seiner botanischen Studien mit
[123]HA XI, 270. Italienische Reise, Segesta, 20 April 1787
[124]HA XI, 375. Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt, Störende Naturbetrachtungen

demjenigen Organ der Pflanze, welches wir als Blatt gewöhnlich anzusprechen pflegen, der wahre Proteus verborgen liege, der sich in allen Gestaltungen verstecken und offenbaren könne."[125]Goethe thus accorded the primal leaf a privileged position, identifying an organ in a class of its own that underlay the developmental pathway of all post germination plant parts and served as the touchstone for metamorphic observations of plant life.

If the ability to apprehend a plant as a continuous transformation depended on a comprehensive overview of plant parts, the modifications of which could be grasped as a change over time relating to the plant whole, the intermediate forms of most plants was not entirely obvious. Goethe thus set about to devise a generic method of arranging various plant leaf samples in a perspicuous series so as to facilitate an overview of their transitional stages. While he initially proceeded by arranging leaf forms in the order in which they were formed, once a provisional series was established, he began to include further members by way of intuition. He did this by alternating his gaze in opposing directions along the series until he began to see transitions that allowed him to interpolate intermediate forms, such that the movement of seeing itself came to furnish the criteria needed to incorporate further members into the series.[126]By means of including more and more transitional leaf forms in the series, developmental gaps were progressively filled in to establish a fluid continuum. Once the series was complete the observer came to apprehend the necessity inhering in it, such that any alteration in the order of its forms risked jeopardizing its overall unity. An arbitrary omission, addition or rearrangement of forms would disturb the structural necessity of the plant's temporal unfolding. Hence, in the very process of creating an uninterrupted series of leaf specimens, the observer came to experience a

[125]HA XI, 375. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 17. Mai 1787
[126]Ronald H. Brady, "Form and Cause in Goethe's Morphology" In: *Goethe and the Sciences: A Reappraisal. Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, eds. Amrine F., Zucker F.J., Wheeler H. vol 97. (Boston: Springer, Dordrecht 1987) 263.

plant's changing forms, where ascending and descending observations along the continuum revealed leaf form transformations running in both directions: "*Vorwärts und rückwärts ist die Pflanze immer nur Blatt*..."[127]Goethe thus came to see each individual plant organ as part of a successive series of transitional forms that were all simply modifications of a primal leafform.

The construction of a perspicuous series was a necessary but insufficient condition of ascertaining organic change in Goethe's conception of metamorphic spiritual exercises. Indeed, the lynchpin of the spiritual exercise lay in the observer's mentally re-enacting a plant's genesis through the imaginative faculty's productive powers (die produktive Einbildungskraft). The observer essentially directed his gaze forwards and backwards along the series, all the while marshaling his imaginative capabilities to produce forms through the overall movement of his observations. Such imaginative viewing served to specify forms by generating them, while annulling the independence of each separate form as nothing more than an arrested stage of the overall transformation. Moreover, the continuous movement of observation served to indicate what remained constant within change, disclosing an abiding law governing the totality of forms.[128]Indeed, by exercising the productive imagination to invoke past forms and project possible future forms, one could discern a law of transition comprehending the series. Only in retaining the plant's past forms from memory while anticipating those that it was likely to take as it unfolded, could the imagination creatively grasp its temporal structure, fusing actuality and possibility to animate plant parts and elicit the law governing their process of becoming. A metamorphic form of observation thus involved dynamically deploying the imaginative faculty to bring to bear an ideal law dwelling within a comprehensive series of plant forms. Such a use

[127]FA 15, 1, 402. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 17. Mai 1787
[128]Frederick Amrine, "The Metamorphosis of the Scientist," *Goethe Yearbook* 5 (1990) 190.

of the imagination was spiritual insofar as it demanded that the natural observer exercise his faculties and adapt them to nature's changing character to constitutively transform his way of seeing.

Goethe became so adept at exercising his imagination in metamorphic exercises, that he began to apply it not only to empirical plant specimens, but to non-existent ones. Such meditative exercises, occurring in the physical absence of the natural object, relied on techniques of focus and attention designed to elicit images bearing an inner truth and necessity:

> Ich hatte die Gabe, wenn ich die Augen schloβ und mit niedergesenktem Haupte mir in der Mitte des Sehorgans eine Blume dachte, so verharrte sie nicht einen Augenblick in ihrer ersten Gestalt, sondern sie legte sich auseinander und aus ihrem Innern entfalteten sich wieder neue Blumen aus farbigen, auch wohl grünen Blättern; *es waren keine natürliche Blumen sondern phantastische*, jedoch regelmäßig wie die Rosetten der Bildhauer... Hier ist die Erscheinung des Nachbildes, Gedächtnis, produktive Einblidungskraft, Begriff und Idee alles aud einmal im Spiel und manifestiert sich in der eignen Lebendigkeit des Organs mit vollkommener Freiheit ohne Vorsatz und Leitung.[129]

Having fully incorporated the welter of individual observations of real life plants, Goethe could bring forth inwardly, with closed eyes, a dynamic image of a surrogate plant absent its perceptual equivalent. He then simulated the imaginary plant's genesis by drawing on and extrapolating from the retentions of direct perceptual inspection. By generating a moving image that unfolded temporally, Goethe came to literally envision a plant's various possible developmental paths. Indeed, the constant evocation of such dynamic mental images eventually helped him to see the idea, not externally given to sense-experience, that animated a plant's formative development and could only be elicited through the imagination's intuitive exercise.

Thanks to his ongoing practice of metamorphic observations in Italy, Goethe's hypotheses regarding the nature of plant growth became increasingly determinate. The more he practiced

[129]FA 25, 825-26. Schriften zur Allgemeinen Naturlehre, Geologie und Mineralogie

metamorphic exercises, the more he discovered similarities in growth trajectories across highly diverse plant species, until he began to see evidence of a single generating pattern that comprehended their respective developmental trajectories. Goethe first articulated the guiding idea in a letter addressed to Charlotte von Stein well before his departure to Italy, where he speculated about “ein Gewahrwerden der wesentlichen Form, mit der die Natur gleichsam nur immer spielt und spielend das manigfaltige Leben hervorbringt."[130]Harboring an unshakeable belief in the thoroughgoing unity of nature, he surmised that it produced its forms through a kind of playful variation on an essential, prototypical form. As one scholar explains, "Nature for Goethe has a more-or-less single fundamental form that is expressed divergently across homologous members as if they were parts of a universal organism."[131]The presence of such a fundamental form underlying nature's all-embracing unity, was essentially commensurate to a transformational law guiding the pattern of plant growth over time through its form changes. Goethe eventually spoke of an archetype encapsulating a universal pattern of generative construction. Indeed, at the moment he crossed the Alps to enter Italy by way of the Brenner pass, he already hoped to discover an archetypal model that not only permitted the grasp of relations between different plant parts, but shed light on those across different plant species: "Zu meiner Welterschaffung habe ich manches erobert, doch nichts ganz Neues und Unerwartetes. Auch habe ich viel geträumt von dem *Modell*, wovon ich so lange rede, woran ich so gern anschaulich machen möchte, was in meinem Innern herumzieht, und was ich nicht jedem in der Natur vor Augen stellen kann."[132]But once again, the apprehension of what Goethe variously referred to as a law, archetype or model was not simply the consequence of finding and looking;

[130]WA IV, 7, 242. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 9 Juillet 1786
[131]Michail Vladilopolous, "Michail. Spinoza, Goethe and the Philosophy of Form," Masters thesis, Harvard U, 2012, 18
[132]HA XI, 17. Italienische Reise, Brenner 8 Sept 1786

it came to reveal itself only by means of constructing a perspicuous series and exercising the imaginative faculty dynamically to see a series of plant parts in movement. Goethe maintained that the very point of creating a perspicuous series of plant forms to track their transformation, lay in eliciting an archetypal law: "Hatte ich doch erst unbewußt und aus innerem Trieb auf jenes Urbildliche, Typische rastlos gedrungen, war es mir sogar geglückt, eine naturgemäße Darstellung aufzubauen..."[133] The activity of arranging a series based on imaginatively generating organic forms was crucial because the archetype was never revealed in any specific individual form, but rather became discernable exclusively in the movement along a well ordered series of a given organism's separate parts.

Throughout his journey in Italy, Goethe's exercises in natural observation were thus implicitly guided by the search for an archetypal form comprehending all possible organic forms. Confronted with Italy's manifold diversity of vegetation, his latent intuitions found deliverance: "Hier in dieser neu mir entgegentretenden Mannigfaltigkeit wird jener Gedanke immer lebendiger, dass man sich alle Pflanzengestalten vielleicht aus einer entwickeln könne."[134] Indeed, the idea of an archetypal form acquired increasing plausibility at each stage of his journey: "Ich ging allen Gestalten, wie sie mir vorkamen, *in ihren Veränderungen nach*, und so leuchtete mir am letzten Ziel meiner Reise, in Sizilien, die *ursprüngliche Identität* aller Pflanzenteile vollkommen ein, und ich suchte diese nunmehr überall zu verfolgen und wieder gewahr zu werden."[135]By the time he reached Palermo, a brief survey of its botanical gardens confirmed the presence of an archetypal model immanent to a common succession of plant forms:

[133]WA II, 11, 55. In wiefern die Idee: Schönheit sei Vollkommenheit mit Freiheit, auf organische Naturen angewendet werden könne
[134]HA XI, 60. Italienische Reise, Padua, 27 Sept 1786
[135]HA XIII, 164. Der Verfasser teilt die Geschichte seiner botanischen Studien mit

> Im Angesicht so vielerlei neuen und erneuten Gebildes fiel mir die alte Grille wieder ein: Ob ich nicht unter dieser Schar die *Urpflanze* entdecken könnte? Eine solche muss es denn doch geben! Woran würde ich sonst erkennen, dass dieses oder jenes Gebilde eine Pflanze sei, wenn sie nicht alle *nach einem Muster gebildet wären*...Ich bemühte mich zu untersuchen, worin denn die vielen abweichenden Gestaltenvoneinander unterschieden seien. Und ich fand sie immer mehr ähnlich als verschieden, und wollte ich meine botanische Terminologie anbringen, so ging das wohl, aber es fruchtete nicht, es machte mich unruhig, ohne dass es mir weiter half.[136]

All too convinced of the futility of attempting to subsume individuals that resembled one another under predetermined categories in Linnean fashion, Goethe had, from the very beginning, sought to distill the primal identity circumscribing the specific differences characterizing plant life. Returning to Rome, he was persuaded that he was on the brink of deciphering the key:

> Sage Herdern daß ich dem Geheimniß der Pflanzenzeugung und Organisation ganz nah bin und daß es das einfachste ist was nur gedacht werden kann. Unter diesem Himmel kann man die schönsten Beobachtungen machen. Sage ihm daß ich den Hauptpunckt wo der Keim stickt ganz klar und zweifellos entdeckt habe, daß ich alles übrige auch schon im Ganzen übersehe und nur noch einige Punckte bestimmter werden müssen. Die *Urpflanze* wird das wunderlichste Geschöpf von der Welt über welches mich die Natur selbst beneiden soll. Mit diesem *Modell und dem Schlüßel* dazu, kann man als dann noch Pflanzen ins unendliche erfinden, die konsequent seyn müßen, das heißt: die, wenn sie auch nicht existiren, doch existiren könnten und nicht etwa mahlerische oder dichterische Schatten und Scheine sind, sondern eine innerliche Wahrheit und Nothwendigkeit haben. Dasselbe Gesetz wird sich auf alles übrige lebendige anwenden laßen."[137]

Goethe came to the conclusion that within certain lawful limits, a single archetypal form contained the pattern from which all existing and virtual plant forms could be derived as modifications.

Goethe thus ceaselessly engaged in metamorphic exercises in natural observation, the ultimate aim of which was to arrive at an intuition of a higher kind evincing a universal archetype or law of transformation governing the change that inhered within the essential unity comprehending empirical instantiations of plant life. Here, polarities were essential in grasping the inherently changing character of natural organisms. In a note published in his 1823 work *On*

[136]HA XI, 265. Italienische Reise, Palermo, April 17, 1787
[137]WA IV, 231. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, Rom 8 Juni 1787

Morphology, Goethe insisted that natural entities oscillated between a centrifugal force prone to formlessness and loss in the infinite and a centripetal drive for specific character (der Spezifikationstrieb).[138] If natural organisms achieved new forms through a movement of such contrary tendencies, then it was incumbent on the observer to exercise a form of viewing that apprehended an organism's form as both constrained and promoted by opposing environmental forces. At the same time, inspecting the polarities of normal and abnormal was conducive to Goethe's attempt to ascertain nature's fundamental unity. Aberrancies essentially supplied test cases through which to verify the validity of Goethe's hypotheses concerning nature's primordial oneness, whereby he maintained that they revealed fundamental kinships across plant species: "...ich werde immer sichrer daß die allgemeine Formel die ich gefunden habe, auf alle Pflanzen anwendbar ist. Ich kann schon die eigensinnigsten Formen z. E. Passiflora, Arum, dadurch erklären und mit einander in Parallel setzen."[139]Observing how even natural outliers like the Passiflora were subsumed by his theory, Goethe was persuaded that a law of metamorphosis embracing normal and abnormal corroborated his holistic conception of plant growth: "Alles geschieht nach dem einfachen Gesetz der Metamorphose, welche durch ihre Wirksamkeit *sowohl das Symmetrische als das Bizarre, das Fruchtende wie das Fruchtlose, das Fassliche wie das Unbegreifliche* vor Augen bringt."[140]By the end of his Italian sojourn, Goethe announced to his friend Knebel that he had found a genuine alternative to Linnean taxonomic procedures that accounted for even seemingly deviant entities: "Ich hoffe du wirst auch dereinst an meiner Harmonia Plantarum, wodurch das Linnaische System aufs schönste erleuchtet wird, alle Streitigkeiten über die Form der Pflanzen aufgelößt, ja sogar alle Monstra erklärt werden, Freude

[138]Paul Bishop, *Analytical Psychology and German Classical Aesthetics: Goethe, Schiller, and Jung* (London: Routledge 2008-2009) 56.
[139]WA IV, 8, 267. Brief an Knebel, 3. Okt. 1787
[140]WA II, 6, 276. Schriften zur Morphologie Wirkung dieser Schrift und weitere Entfaltung der darin vorgetragenen Idee

haben."[141]Through examining polarities and natural aberrancies while relating them to a law of metamorphosis, Goethe ultimately succeeded in identifying nature's underlying unity through which to gauge the specific differences that characterized it as a living whole.

Above and beyond the strides he made in natural scientific classification, the significance of Goethe's visual exercises in natural inquiry lay in their spiritual or self-transformative character. Polar and metamorphic observations were spiritual insofar as the natural inquirer modified his essential constitution by way of probing a natural entity's change and development. Frederick Amrine thus argues that the principle outcome of a Goethean mode of natural inquiry lay in engendering a metamorphosis of the inquirer.[142] Indeed, Goethe himself maintained that self-modification was constitutive of the study of nature in that the observer both transformed and became transformed by his environs: "Was den Menschen umgibt wirkt nicht allein auf ihn, er wirkt auch wieder zurück auf selbiges, und indem er sich modifizieren lässt, modifiziert er wieder rings um sich her...Die Natur bildet den Menschen, er bildet sich um, und diese Umbildung ist doch wieder natürlich."[143] Elsewhere, he insisted that the circumspect observation of nature's productive capacities made the investigator worthy of spiritually participating in its products: "daß wir uns durch das Anschauen einer immer schaffenden Natur zur *geistigen Teilnahme* an ihren Produktionen würdig machten."[144]We have seen that the spiritual participation in the objects of the investigator's natural inquiry amounted to exercising the imaginative faculty and transforming perceptual aptitudes in ways that promoted the disclosure of their specific difference in unity.

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[141]WA IV, 8, 250. Brief an Knebel, 18 Aug 1787
[142]Frederick Amrine, "Metamorphosis of the Scientist" Goethe Yearbook 5 (1990) 187-212 rpt. in *Goethe's Way of Science: A phenomonology of Nature* eds. David Seamon and Arthur Zajonc (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998) 38.
[143]MA 1.2, 458. Von der Physiognomik Überhaupt
[144]HA XIII, 30. Anschauenede Urteilskraft

A further way in which Goethe conceived his spiritual engagement with the natural entities in Italy was in terms characteristic of ancient dialogic exercises. But whereas the philosophical schools of antiquity conceived dialogue foremost as an intellectual exercise in which one interlocutor aimed to expose contradictions in the others reasoning to make him aware of his ignorance and set him on the path to truth, Goethe practiced a non-discursive dialogic relation, purely observational in character, in which his interlocutors were none other than the objects of his own observation. [145]Incessantly practicing such a dialogic relation in Italy, he announced: "ich bin den ganzen Tag in einem Gespräche mit den Dingen."[146]Indeed, in its initial stage, the communicative exchange served as a propaedeutic, wherein the investigator sought to dispense with false beliefs and prejudices, while at the same time overcoming the limitations of his mode of observation. Once he eradicated biases, he endeavored to come to know the natural object by continuously probing and examining it, gradually assimilating its very nature. Through interiorizing the natural object's mode of being, the solicitous inquirer formed an intimate nexus with it, adapting to its particularities. Amrine elaborates such a participatory relation, wherein the investigator became receptive to the concrete claims of the natural object: "one stays with the phenomena; thinks within them; accedes with one's intentionality to their patterns, which gradually opens one's thinking to an intuition of their structure."[147]The dialogic relation's attentive participation in the object's way of being, brought it to yield insight on itself: "nicht über die Dinge zu sprechen sondern die Dinge selbst sprechen zu lassen." Goethe thus adopted an investigative posture amenable to the character and specifications of the object, prompting it to disclose its very nature. He meticulously described the fruits of such dialogic accommodation

[145]Hadot, 91.
[146]MA, 3.1, 75 Tagebuch der Italienische Reise, 1786
[147]Amrine, 37.

in the context of plant observations: "denn als die Vegetation mir Schritt für Schritt ihr Verfahren vorbildete, konnte ich nicht irren, sondern mußte, indem ich sie gewähren ließ, die Wege und Mittel anerkennen, wie sie den eingehülltesten Zustand zur Vollendung nach und nach zu befördern weiß."[148]By participating actively and mindfully, the object of observation came to exert its own influence, inviting the observer to follow its developmental trajectory. In other words, the inquirer's adaptive labors ultimately compelled it to converse with him of its own accord: "Und wie doch mir fast keine Existenz ein Rätsel ist. *Es spricht eben alles zu mir und zeigt sich mir an*."[149]Thus rejecting the assumption of a neutral, once removed posture of scrutiny in relation to living entities, a dialogic form of observation underlay Goethe's guiding conception of 'tender empiricism,' wherein the cultivation of an intimate rapport with the natural object to assimilate its essential ways served to avail the observer of its very character.[150]

While compelling him to practice an array of object-adaptive, self-transformative spiritual exercises, natural inquiry in Italy also afforded Goethe therapeutic pleasure. Indeed, the experience of pleasure was constitutive of ancient spiritual exercises, whereby the delight issuing from an Epicurean physics of revelation is but one of many emblematic examples: "the walls of the world open out, I see action going on throughout the whole void...Thereupon from all these things a sort of *divine delight* gets hold upon me and a shuddering, because nature...has been so manifestly laid open and unveiled in every part."[151] Goethe experienced similar, unalloyed joy in his practice of metamorphic seeing, whereby he revelled in unveiling the transformational dynamics of the plant kingdom: "*Genoß ich die schönsten Augenblicke meines Lebens* zu

[148]HA XIII, 27. Einwirkung der neueren Philosophie
[149]WA III, 1, 149. Tagebuch an Frau Stein 3. Sept.1786
[150]MA 17, 825. Maximen und Reflexionen
[151]Hadot, 88.

gleicher Zeit, als ich der Metamorphose der Pflanzen nachforschte, als mir die Stufenfolge derselben klar geworden,... "[152]Repeatedly underscoring the felicity derived from transforming his powers of observation to fraternize with nature, Goethe found edification and delight in his manner of observing the natural world: "Wie glücklich mich meine Art, die Welt anzusehen, macht, ist unsäglich, und was ich täglich lerne!" [153]In performing a host of exercises aimed at cultivating objectual, polar and metamorphic modes of seeing, Goethe transformed his observational capacities and in so doing took unspeakable pleasure in disclosing the developmental laws governing the objects of his inquiry. The proof of such a felicitous form of spiritual engagement lay in his eventual acquisition of a new organ of intuition permitting him to apprehend the universal archetypes that resided at the foundation of organic life. Indeed, years after his natural inquiries in Italy, Goethe remarked on his creative appropriation of Linnean method, that applied to domains he had not previously foreseen, permitted him to obtain a new organ with which to disclose nature's secrets. " Ich habe diese Tage Linnés Schriften wieder vorgenommen in denen er die Botanik begründet und sehe jetzt recht gut, daß ich sie auch nur symbolisch benutzt habe, d.h. ich habe diese Methode und Behandlungsart auf andere Gegenstände zu übertragen gesucht und mir dadurch ein Organ erworben, womit sich viel thun läßt "[154]

IV. Goethe's Scientia Intuitiva as a species of ancient cosmic consciousness

The ethical worldview of an ancient cosmic consciousness

Ancient applied physics not only involved a form of natural investigation premised on acquiring a physical viewpoint on nature, it was inseparable from the acquisition of what Pierre

[152]MA 12, 86. Glückliches Ereignis 1817
[153]WA III, 1, 149. Tagebuch der italienische Reise 3.-8. September 1786
[154]WA IV, 27, 199. Brief an Carl Friedrich Zelter, 14 Okt. 1816

Hadot calls a 'cosmic consciousness,' wherein the natural inquirer came to perceive the rational order of the cosmos and ascertain his place within it.'[155]Such consciousness of a reason endowed universal order and the endeavor to conform one's behavior to it, was partly a function of the ancients' adherence to a metaphysical conception of nature and partly owed to the practice of spiritual exercises. The former provided the natural inquirer with a rational explanation for man's place in the world, while the latter compelled him to transcend his particularity to achieve the universal perspective required to be in harmony with it.[156]Spiritual exercises thus essentially served to mediate the connection between an intelligently organized natural universe and the rational order of the soul.

Pierre Hadot describes the assumption of a cosmic consciousness as involving a passage "beyond the limits of our individuality, to recognize oneself as part of a reason-animated cosmos."[157]In order to overcome his merely particular self, the practitioner had to acquire an awareness of his inseparability from the totality of nature's existence, whereby attaining such a self-surpassing dynamic involved both acceding to the interiority of consciousness and to nature's universality of thought.[158] One way to achieve the movement towards universality involved practicing a form of natural inquiry in which one strove to be in consortium with nature. This involved the natural inquirer's attempt to achieve a higher perspective that allowed him to penetrate nature's innermost secrets by way of conforming to universal reason.[159]

For both the Stoic and the Epicurean, achieving a cosmic perspective involved the natural inquirer's ascertainment of the way in which divine reason governed natural things and organic

[155]Hadot, 242.
[156]Hadot, 242.
[157]Hadot, 86.
[158]Hadot, 82.
[159]Foucault, 276.

processes, whereby each adhered to a differing conception about how to be in harmony with it.[160]In both cases, the natural inquirer had to become aware of the way in which the reason presiding over the organization of the world was of the same kind as the human reason that enabled one to know it.[161]Within this context, the Stoic attempt to harmonize with nature implied self-exertion and spiritual tension, wherein it was necessary to discipline the passions and purge the soul of affects in order to conform one's actions and responses to the laws of a rational, well ordered universe.[162]Through probing nature to discover the inexorable laws that held sway in it, the Stoic came to recognize the false and artificial character of a human perspective shorn of imperatives compelling him to discipline his subjective responses and align them with the objective laws of the universe. Achieving a cosmic perspective attuned to nature was likewise an important facet of Epicureanism, whereby the emphasis shifted from subduing unruly passions at odds with a reason-governed cosmos to converting one's way of seeing natural events in order to dispel a fear of things liable to occur in a boundless universe. The Epicurean natural observer sought to liberate himself of disturbances of the soul linked with nature's unknown, eliminating ungrounded anxieties and a sense of vulnerability to external adversity. Only by mastering such fears could he attain inner peace, learning to find gratification in nature's provisions and cultivating a sense of piety towards all living things.[163]The achievement of a cosmic consciousness thus involved a complex relationship between the natural inquirer's knowledge of the natural world and his capacity to establish autonomy vis-a-vis his own subjective passions on the one hand and the vagaries of the natural world on the other. But whether it be the Stoic priority of disciplining affects from within or the Epicurean imperative of cultivating resistance

[160]Hadot, 189.
[161]Foucault, 281.
[162]Hadot, 195.
[163]Hadot, 87.

to the unexpected rigors of events from without, the ancient natural inquirer came to harbor an acute awareness of his finitude, acknowledging the necessity of subordinating his will to nature's universal order to embrace the whole of which he was merely a part.[164]

The ancients' conception of a cosmic consciousness underscores the way in which spiritual exercises appealed to a metaphysical conception of nature latent with moral authority. Practiced in an age in which there was no strict delineation between the domain of what is and what ought to be, where the legitimacy of importing moral principles into the sphere of nature had yet to be called in question, spiritual exercises incorporated an important ethical dimension. The ancients thus endeavored to assimilate a universal perspective in conformity with the belief that humans were called upon to participate in the intelligible order of the world.[165]As rational forms of life, they were empowered to seek the good by conforming their existence to the dictates of divine reason.[166]Indeed, Maria Antonaccio argues that any attempt to sever a cosmic perspective and certain naturalist assumptions from ancient spiritual exercises would vitiate them of their normative ideal. Drawing on what Charles Taylor described as a cosmic order of meanings that humans long explored with the aim of defining moral convictions, one that anteceded the modern tendancy to reflexively turn inwards in search of a conception of the good life relying exclusively on the powers of personal choice and action, Antonaccio claims that a cosmic consciousness guaranteed the ancients an objective source of the good. By transcending the merely individual, the spiritual practitioner could discover the best part of himself, that part shared with universal reason, daily exercising and living out the intrinsic good that held sway in

[164]Hadot, 195.
[165]Maria Antonaccio, "Contemporary Forms of Askesis and the Return of Spiritual Exercises" *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 18 (1998) 74.
[166]Antonaccio, 75.

nature's divine rationality.[167]

Goethe's Spinozan ethical worldview

Goethe not only adopted the metaphysical and ethical premises informing the ancient imperative of conforming to the ways of nature, he actively engaged in spiritual exercises fostering a worldview that approximated a cosmic consciousness. Goethe's assumption of a cosmic mode of consciousness is already born out in his early writings, perhaps most strikingly evinced in the state of mind he attributes to his protagonist, Werther. Werther exclaims:

> Wenn ich sonst vom Felsen über den Fluß bis zu jenen Hügeln das fruchtbare Tal *überschaute* und alles um mich her keimen und quellen sah; wenn ich jene Berge, vom Fuße bis auf zum Gipfel, mit hohen, dichten Bäumen bekleidet, jene Täler in ihren mannigfaltigen Krümmungen von den lieblichsten Wäldern beschattet sah, und der sanfte Fluß zwischen den lispelnden Rohren dahingleitete und die lieben Wolken abspiegelte, die der sanfte Abendwind am Himmel herüberwiegte; wenn ich dann die Vögel um mich den Wald beleben hörte, und die Millionen Mückenschwärme im letzten roten Strahle der Sonne mutig tanzten, und ihr letzter zuckender Blick den summenden Käfer aus seinem Grase befreite, und das Schwirren und Weben um mich her mich auf den Boden aufmerksam machte, und das Moos, das meinem harten Felsen seine Nahrung abzwingt, und das Geniste, das den dürren Sandhügel hinunter wächst, *mir das innere, glühende, heilige Leben der Natur eröffnete: wie faßte ich das alles in mein warmes Herz, fühlte mich in der überfließenden Fülle wie vergöttert, und die herrlichen Gestalten der unendlichen Welt bewegten sich allbelebend in meiner Seele.* Ungeheure Berge umgaben mich, Abgründe lagen vor mir, und Wetterbäche stürzten herunter, die Flüsse strömten unter mir, und Wald und Gebirg erklang; und ich sah sie wirken und schaffen ineinander in den Tiefen der Erde, alle die unergründlichen Kräfte; und nun über der Erde und unter dem Himmel wimmeln die Geschlechter der mannigfaltigen Geschöpfe...wie oft habe ich mich...*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*.

Werther exercises a view from ahigh, comprehensively surveying the ambit of nature in its infinite scope and entirety to achieve a perspicuous overview disclosing its sacred essence, whereby the ensuing sentiment is one of a profound sense of belonging to a cosmos that brings forth all that is living within it. Goethe's cultivation of such metaphysical perspective as well as

[167]Antonaccio, 76.

the ethical commitments implicit in the pursuit of an unmistakably spiritual mode of natural investigation was, in many respects, indebted to his study of Spinozan philosophy. Having engaged with Baruch Spinoza's *Ethics*, first in 1773 and again more intensively just prior to his departure for Italy, Goethe subsequently claimed that it was the work most closely converging with his own perspective on the world.[168]He noted, "Ich ergab mich dieser Lektüre und glaubte, indem ich mich selbst schaute, die Welt niemals so deutlich erblickt zu haben."[169] Making little secret of the fact that Spinozism exerted a considerable influence on his emerging conception of nature, its tenets became indelibly imprinted on his worldview.[170]Indeed, Goethe's habit of carrying a volume of the *Ethics* on his person, regularly returning to it as occasion demanded, suggests that it served as a repository for spiritual wisdom aiding him to forge a new vision of reality. He thus spoke of sustained exercises in reading and re-reading Spinoza's magisterial work: "Ich *übe* mich an Spinoza, ich lese und lese ihn wieder."[171]Goethe's approach to the *Ethics* proved less one of philosophical exegesis, intended to reconstruct theoretical arguments to grasp a systematic chain of reasoning, than a form of spiritual meditation aimed at progressively assimilating general principles that would serve to shape his perspective and guide his way of knowing. Fortified by its existential doctrines, he placed Spinoza's philosophy in the service of a spiritual practice, adopting doctrines that resonated with him and converting them into a concrete mode of apprehending reality.

Goethe's appropriation of Spinozan teachings had important consequences for his

[168]WA IV, 7, 109. Brief an Jacobi, 21 Okt 1785 "wenn die Rede wäre, ein Buch anzugeben, das unter allen, die ich kenne, am meisten seit der meinigen übereinkommt *die Ethik* des Spinoza nennen müßte."
[169]HA X, 76. Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit. Vierter Teil, Sechzehntes Buch
[170]See Goethe's comments from *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit*: "Inwiefern mir alle die Hauptpunkte jenes Verhältnisses zu Spinoza unvergeßlich geblieben sind, Indem sie eine große Wirkung auf die Folge meines Lebens ausübten, will ich so kurz und bündig als möglich eröffnen und darstellen."
[171]WA IV, 7, 6. Brief an Jacobi, 12. Jan 1785

conception of nature. Indeed, his long held pantheistic sympathies were strengthened in the knowledge of Spinoza's claim that God and nature were coextensive, wherein God was both identical with the world and immanent to it, disclosing his divine essence through his creations. Goethe maintained, "die Naturwercke sind immer wie ein erstausgesprochnes Wort Gottes."[172] Elsewhere, he insisted that only in acknowledging nature as the handmaiden of the divine, could one come to perceive its manifestations: "Wer die Natur als göttliches Organ leugnen will, der leugne nur gleich alle Offenbarung."[173] In his later essay *Bedenken und Ergebung*, Goethe unequivocally maintained the inseparable unity of God and nature: "Wir können bei Betrachtung des Weltgebäudes in seiner weitesten Ausdehnung, in seiner letzten Teilbarkeit uns der Vorstellung nicht erwehren, daß dem Ganzen eine Idee zum Grunde liege, *wornach Gott in der Natur, die Natur in Gott* von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit schaffen und wirken möge."[174]Thus espying a divine governing idea lying at the origin of the world that compelled him to probe its rational structure, Goethe eventually pointed to the mode of apprehending nature that formed the foundation of his investigative observations: "...meiner reinen, tiefen, angeborenen, geübten Anschauungsweise, die mich *Gott in der Natur, die Natur in Gott zu sehen* unverbrüchlich gelehrt hatte, so daß diese Vorstellungsart den Grund meiner ganzen Existenz machte..."[175]For Goethe, grasping divine nature was ultimately a matter of becoming versed in the art of intuition, the authority for which, lay in none other than Spinozan doctrines.

Intuitive observations of nature

Beyond adopting metaphysical committments equating the universe with divine nature,

[172]WA IV, 8, 97. Brief an die Herzogin Louise von Sachsen-Weimar Eisenach, 12. bis. 25. Dezember 1786
[173]MA 17, 864. Maximen und Reflexionen
[174]HA XIII, 31. Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften: Bedenken und Ergebung
[175]BA 16, 235. Annalen oder Tages und Jahres Hefte von 1811

Goethe's natural scientific observations in Italy were premised on attaining a Spinozan form of cognition adequate to discerning nature's deep structure. Holding the belief that God was not an extramundane, transcendent entity, but as Spinoza suggested, the creative force immanent to the world that disclosed itself in diverse natural phenomena, Goethe pursued a cognitive method that endeavored to grasp organic entities by ascending from the empirical realm of *natura naturata* to their creative source in *natura naturans*.[176] He explained in a frequently cited letter addressed to his friend, Friedrich Jacobi:

> Du erkennst die höchste Realität an, welche der Grund des ganzen Spinozismus ist, worauf alles übrige ruht woraus alles übrige fließt. Er beweist nicht das Dasein Gottes, das Dasein ist Gott...Vergib mir, daß ich so gern schweige, wenn von einem göttlichen Wesen die Rede ist, das ich nur in und aus den rebus singularibus erkenne, zu deren näheren und tieferen Betrachtung niemand mehr aufmuntern kann als Spinoza selbst, obgleich vor seinen Blick alle einzelnen Dinge zu verschwinden scheinen… hier bin ich auf und unter Bergen, suche das Göttliche in herbis et lapidibus.[177]

By Goethe's lights, Spinoza's fundamental insight did not lie in proferring proof of God's existence, but in encouraging an examination of divine existence in and through nature's finite creations. Spinoza had unequivocally maintained: "the more we understand singular things, the more we understand God."[178]Notwithstanding, while the point of departure for Goethe's natural inquiries lay in seeking manifestations of the divine in empirical particulars, he saw a tension between the necessity of proceeding from observations of the singular to the universal and the countervailing desire to move from the universal to the individual. Indeed, Goethe claimed that despite Spinoza's enjoinment of the circumspect scrutiny of singular entities, such particulars vanished upon acceding to the universal intuition that disclosed the essence of divine nature. He elaborated the dynamics of such a synoptic overview:

[176]Frederick Amrine, "Goethean Intuitions," *Goethe Yearbook* 18 (2011) 37.
[177]WA IV, 7, 61. Brief an Jacobi, 9 Juni 1785
[178]Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics* in A Spinoza reader: The Ethics and other Works, ed. and trans. E. Curley (Princeton: PUP, 1994) 257.

> Wenn du sagst, man könne an Gott nur glauben, so sage Ich Dir, ich halte viel aufs Schauen, und wenn Spinoza von scientia intuitiva (anschaulicher Wissenschaft) spricht und sagt: Hoc cognoscendi genus procedit ab adaequata idea essentiae formalis quorundam Dei attributorum ad adaequatam cognitionem essentiae rerum (diese Art des Erkennens schreitet von der angemessenen Idee des formalen Wesens einiger Attribute Gottes zur angemessenen Erkenntnis des Wesens der Dinge): so geben mir diese wenigen Worte Mut, mein ganzes Leben *der Betrachtung der Dinge zu widmen, die ich reichen* und von deren ‚essentia formali' ich mir eine adaequate Idee zu bilden hoffen kann, ohne mich im mindesten zu bekümmern, wie weit ich kommen werde und was mir zugeschnitten ist.[179]

Goethe essentially cites what Spinoza considered the highest form of cognition available to humans, a 'scientia intuitiva,' that proceeded from an adequate idea of the formal essence of God's attributes to the adequate cognition of the essence of things. But while he embraced the Spinozan premise that the observer gain an intuition of the divine in order to subsequently deduce adequate knowledge of particular entities, he simultaneously spoke of observing things within the purview of empirical reach in order to achieve an adequate idea of their formal essences. The latter implied that the process of natural inquiry began with a survey of particulars only to reason back to the divine essence from which they derived. However in a later assertion from 1807, Goethe advises the contrary and is unambiguous about the necessity of proceeding from a comprehensive organizing idea to the perception of individual things:

> Um manches Mißverständnis zu vermeiden, sollte ich freilich vor allen Dingen erklären, dass meine Art, die Gegenstände der Natur anzusehen und zu behandeln, *von dem Ganzen zu dem Einzelnen, vom Totaleindruck zur Beobachtung der Teile fortschreitet*, und dass ich mir dabei recht wohl bewusst bin, wie diese Art der Naturforschung, so gut als die entgegengesetzte, gewissen Eigenheiten, ja wohl gewissen Vorurteilen unterworfen sei.[180]

Goethe effectively aspired to achieve a Spinozan form of knowing in which a universal essence and a particular entity were grasped simultaneously rather than arrived at through a process of deduction. Persuaded of the possibility of intuitively apprehending individual things through a prior, all-encompassing universal perspective, he sought to realize the Spinozan doctrine of

[179]WA IV, 7, 213. Brief an Jacobi 5 Mai 1786
[180]FA 25, 363. Zur Morphologie. See also SW 19, 385. Brief an V. Leonhard Nov 25, 1807

seeing the particular under the aspect of eternity. This meant that in order to grasp heterogeneous natural entities rooted in a shared oneness, the natural inquirer had to move from cause to effect, proceeding from a generative origin towards its derivatives. As one scholar notes, Goethe was a proponent of "a synthetic method in which an initial, most general idea unfolds to new truths and classifications that are already contained and anticipated in the premises."[181]Hence, the crux of an intuitive mode of apprehension was to begin from the source of all forms to progressively parse a scheme of individual, interrelated forms.

In order to understand Goethe's rationale for pursuing a Spinozan mode of seeing natural particulars through a prior intuition of their universality, one need only revisit his dissatisfaction with Linnean taxonomy. Faced with the dilemma of how to cognize nature's products other than through external, surface attributes, Goethe concluded that a way of ascertaining an organism's inner nature or essence was needed. As Frederick Amrine suggests: "In Spinoza's terms, Linnaeus's method of classifying plants according to external features mistakes mere attributes for essences, and hence cannot hope to rise to an adequate understanding of the unity of the plant kingdom."[182]Recognizing that a natural entity's attributes could not be adequately comprehended as long as its essence remained unknown, Goethe searched for a way of proceeding from an organism's underlying basis to its external properties. He eventually discerned such a means thanks to an illuminating experience in the Palermo Botanic Gardens, suggesting that a plant's essential properties could, in a way, be derived from a single underlying "organ" or essence.[183]In lieu of this insight, Goethe sought to devise a synthetic method aimed at eliciting an intuition of such a plant essence.

[181]Vlasopolous, 32.
[182]Amrine, *Goethean Intuitions*, 37.
[183]Eckart Förster, "Goethe's Spinozism" in *Spinoza and German Idealism* ed. Eckart Förster, Yitzhak Y. Melamed (Cambridge: CUP 2012) 90.

The endeavor to grasp a universal plant essence within and through concrete particular plants was nevertheless marked by a central difficulty. In the case of natural kinds, essences were not simply given or known, they had to be discovered. For the human observer, such discovery was of necessity, realizeable only by way of empirical particulars. Goethe thus faced the task of retrieving the essential source of all individual organic forms supporting the comparison of their particular attributes. In order to explicate this dilemma, Eckardt Förster makes recourse to Goethe's reception of Immanuel Kant's work, arguing that once apprised of the Kantian distinction between living and nonliving things as elaborated in the *Critique of Judgment*, Goethe perceived the impasse implicit in his attempt to grasp a particular plant by intuiting it through its universal essence. Kant's discussion is couched in mereological terms, serving to elucidate the relationship between universal and particular as applied to nature. Kant maintained that a non-living entity consisted of externally combined parts that existed independently of the whole to which it belonged. In a living organism, by contrast, the parts had no independent existence apart from the whole. In fact, the parts and whole were mutually cause and effect of each other, such that the whole could not be said to exist without the parts and vice versa. Kant thus argued that knowing a natural organism required grasping it as a whole in which the parts were reciprocally the cause and effect of the whole. However, a natural whole that was prior to and made possible its own parts was never given in empirical experience. It being impossible for a finite, discursive mind to move from the whole to the parts, he insisted that humans proceeded from a natural entity's constitutive parts to successively generate it as a whole.[184]Against this backdrop, the idea of apprehending a natural organism in such a way as to grasp its universal essence and particular attributes simultaneously essentially posed the same

[184]Förster, 90.

difficulty as deriving a natural entity's parts from a prior whole.

That Goethe was not blind to the difficulties that beset the enterprise of apprehending a natural entity through its universality is evinced in his *Study on Spinoza*, written in 1784-1785, just prior to his journey to Italy. Goethe begins his discussion by defining divine nature, which he calls the Infinite, as the identity of existence and perfection. He maintains that humans, as finite entities, are unable to grasp the Infinite and can only conceive of what is finite or limits the mind. But if an infinite nature is not directly knowable, what of finite natures? Goethe insists that every living thing has its existence and measure within itself. Hence, a living thing cannot be measured by something external to it, but must furnish its own measure, the difficulty lying in the highly spiritual nature of such a measure which cannot be immediately apprehended by the senses.[185] He then explains that all living things have parts inseparable from the whole that can only be grasped in virtue of them. But neither the whole can be the measure of the parts nor the parts the measure of the whole. The implication is that grasping the Infinite inhering in finite entities is tantamount to grasping the relation of whole to part without either serving as the measure of the other. Goethe's discussion reveals that he was aware of the Kantian problem of intuiting parts from out of a prior whole. But against Kant's strictures of the anthropological limits of a finite understanding, he refused to rule out the possibility of intuiting a prior whole. In fact, following Spinoza's conception of a 'scientia intuitiva,' Goethe was persuaded of the feasibility of cognitively apprehending a whole as a whole, as opposed to seeing it only in virtue of its parts, to infer in a separate mental act that they comprised a prior whole. Despite the challenge of such a synthetic form of apprehension, Goethe maintained in his *Study* that finite

[185]BA 18, 139. Studie nach Spinoza.

beings were capable of cognizing a tremendous array of things, grasping manifold, complex relations. He claimed that some expansive natures order and arrange phenomena, engaging in connective activity until they come to apprehend nature's indivisible essences.[186] Goethe thereby points to a form of intuition based on acquiring an impression of the whole from out of the connection of things, wherein a particular entity was apprehended through a higher, presupposed unity. Spinoza's conception of intuitive cognition thus encouraged Goethe to seek the essences through which to apprehend nature's particulars.

Sharing Spinoza's cognitive optimism and led by his quest to find an alternative to a Linnean approach that merely inferred a common, essential identity from an organism's external attributes, Goethe sought to ascertain how the essences of natural kinds dwelled within the totality of their specific attributes. To this end, he commenced with the investigation of empirical particulars, believing that a comparative survey of their attributes would permit him to grasp their common essence. Förster maintains that Goethe was thereby forced to reverse Spinoza's method of deriving a thing's attributes from an essential idea, attempting instead to access its underlying essence by way of examining the totality of its attributes; the caveat being that exhaustively ascertaining the sum of an entity's attributes (like all the stages of a life cycle of an annual plant) was not commensurate to deriving these attributes from its underlying essence or inner nature (plant).[187]In lieu of this difficulty, Förster points to the possibility, one he attributes to Goethe, of discerning an underlying idea operative in a natural entity by way of establishing a comprehensive array of its parts and a careful reconstruction of the transitions

[186]BA 18, 141. Studie nach Spinoza
[187]Förster, 94.

between them as they undergo change.[188]In order to engender a visual intuition of a natural entity as a prior whole, the observer had to absolve a series of steps. First, he had to generate a complete sequence of the natural entity's parts or attributes by exploring it in its most manifold variations: "Die Vermannigfaltigung eines jeden einzelnen Versuchs ist also die eigentliche Pflicht eines Naturforschers."[189]He then proceeded to envision the entity's parts changing through time as a continuous transformation, all the while attentively examining the transitions to discern their internal dependence. This demanded a certain imaginative facility for visual extrapolation, because unlike the organism's various parts, the transitions themselves were neither sensibly given nor discursively graspable. As Förster maintains, the observer had to visualize the totality of transitions simultaneously, remaining present in all of them in order to discern the effectiveness of the idea in all the constitutive parts.[190] Goethe himself described the exercise as follows:

> Wenn ich eine entstandene Sache vor mir sehe, nach der Entstehung frage und en Gang zurückmesse, soweit ich ihn verfolgen kann, so werde ich eine Reihe Stufen gewahr, die ich zwar nicht nebeneinander sehen kann, sondern mir in der Erinnerung zu einem gewissen idealen Ganzen vergegenwärtigen muss. Erst bin ich geneigt, mir gewisse Stufen zu denken; weil aber die Natur keinen Sprung macht, bin ich zuletzt genötigt, mir die Folge einer ununterbrochenen Tätigkeit als ein Ganzes anzuschauen, indem ich das Einzelne aufhebe, ohen den Eindruck zu zerstören.[191]

Goethe thus strove to elicit the essential interconnection of an organism's attributes through intuiting its wholeness within its very particularity. By tracing the genesis of an organic entity and apprehending a series of stages in succession, he sought to present the organism's parts to himself as an ideal whole. In so doing, he effectively approximated the kind of cognition Spinoza had dubbed intuitive understanding or a non-discursive, synthetic perception of nature's

[188]Förster, 96.
[189]SW VI, 575. Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt
[190]Förster, 95.
[191]WA II, 6, 303. Vorarbeiten zu einer Physiologie der Pflanzen

wholeness commensurate to the disclosure of a thing's essence. Subsequently enumerating each step of what amounted to a spiritual exercise of intuiting particulars through a prior universal, he noted:

> Die Materie, wie du weißt, ist höchst interessant und die Bearbeitung eine solche *Übung des Geistes* die mir vielleicht auf keinem andern Wege geworden wäre. Die Phänomene zu erhaschen, sie zu Versuchen zu fixiren, die Erfahrungen zu ordnen und die Vorstellungsarten darüber kennen zu lernen, bey dem ersten so aufmercksam, bey dem zweyten so genau als möglich zu seyn, beym dritten vollständig zu werden und beym vierten vielseitig genug zu bleiben, dazu gehört *eine Durcharbeitung seines armen Ichs*, von deren Möglichkeit ich auch sonst nur keine Idee gehabt habe.[192]

In order to achieve an intuitive understanding, Goethe envisaged ascending stages of mental exertion that drew on capacities of attentiveness, comprehensiveness and self-diversification. Indeed, his approach featured several hallmarks of ancient spiritual exercises, including the need for constant repetition, mental concentration and self-discipline. Moreover, in stipulating the necessity of the investigator laboring on his own observational capacities in the course of intensively working through the observed phenomenon, he revealed the fundamentally spiritual or self-transformative character of his method.

Through absolving a series of exercises to develop powers of visualization intuiting the wholeness encompassing an organic entity's manifold parts, Goethe developed a novel approach to natural scientific investigation in Italy that made possible the apprehension of natural phenomena through their essences. Transported to a Mediterranean environment replete with unfamiliar organic entities, he sought to cultivate enhanced sensory faculties permitting him to disclose nature's fundamental unity by interrogating the diverse manifestations and ever changing character of its products. Indeed, Goethe was persuaded that the physical, embodied eye could transcend ordinary sense perception to achieve a higher kind of intuition revelatory of

[192]WA IV, 10, 218. Brief an F. H. Jacobi, 29 Dez 1794

nature's essences. In the course of working through the developmental laws of polarity, heightening and metamorphosis that permeated the living whole of nature, he cultivated a visual field of intuition that served to disclose the ordinarily imperceptible universal essences lying at the base of nature's heterogeneous forms. In the case of plantlife, such an essence took the form of an archetypal plant. Goethe retrospectively insisted, "Wie sie sich nun unter einen Begriff sammeln lassen, so wurde mir nach und nach klar und klärer, daß *die Anschauung noch auf eine höhere Weise belebt werden könnte: eine Forderung, die mir damals unter der sinnlichen Form einer übersinnlichen Urpflanze vorschwebte*."[193]Intuiting wholeness within a particular plant was thus commensurate to apprehending the sensible-supersensible idea or archetype inhering in it. Indeed, Goethe ultimately claimed to perceive the indivisible unity encompassing all organic existence in Italy: "wo ich denn, besonders in der Botanik, auf ein εν και παν gekommen bin, das mich in Erstaunen setzt;"[194]Thus attaining a perspective that enabled him to see natural particulars sub specie aerternitatis, by the end of his journey, he announced his mastery of an intuitive understanding in the Spinozan spirit: "ich wandle nun im Anschauen, in der wahren unterscheidenden Erkenntnis."[195]

Through discernment of the plant kingdom's all-encompassing unity, Goethe's intuitive mode of natural observation ultimately issued in a vision of nature tantamount to an ancient, cosmic perspective. Indeed, Georg Simmel characterized Goethe's attitude of never ceasing to have nature's greater totality in mind, thinking and acting in relation to an all-embracing universe when investigating natural phenomena, as unmistakably cosmic: "Auch wo er über die verwickeltsten und zartesten seelischen Dinge Allgemeinheiten ausspricht, sind das nicht nur

[193]HA XIII, 164. Der Verfasser teilt die Geschichte seiner botanischen Studium mit
[194]HA XI, 394. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 6 Sept 1787
[195]HA XI, 445. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom 25 Dez 1787

psychologische Generalisationen, sondern sie gehen auf das Leben überhaupt und auf die tiefe *kosmische* oder metaphysische Bedeutung, die das Seelische umfaßt..."[196]Such a cosmic conception of natural philosophy implied participating in observed organisms to achieve unity with nature rather than engaging in conceptual delineations severing one from it:

> Wie ich mich zur Philosophie verhalte, kannst du leicht auch denken. Wenn sie sich vorzüglich aufs Trennen legt, so kann ich mit ihr nicht zurechte kommen, und ich kann wohl sagen: sie hat mir mitunter geschadet, indem sie mich in meinem natürlichen Gang störte; wenn sie aber vereint oder vielmehr, wenn sie unsere ursprüngliche Empfindung, *als seien wir mit der Natur eins*, erhöht, sichert und in ein *tiefes, ruhiges Anschauen* verwandelt, in dessen immerwährender Synkrisis (Vereinigung) und Diakrisis (Trennung) wir *ein göttliches Leben fühlen*, wenn uns ein solches zu führen auch nicht erlaubt ist, dann ist sie mir willkommen...[197]

For Goethe, the self-transformative work of spiritual exercises helped to intuit the cosmic whole encompassing nature's eternal pulsations of unification and separation. Moreover, such a God's eye intuition yielded a productive insight, a revelation that impressed upon the natural inquirer his kinship with the divine:

> Alles, was wir Erfinden, Entdecken im höheren Sinne nennen, ist die bedeutende Ausübung, Bestätigung eines originalen Wahrheitsgefühles, das im stillen längst ausgebildet, unversehens, mit Blitzesschnelle zu einer fruchtbaren Erkenntnis führt. Es ist eine aus dem Innern am Äußern sich entwickelnde Offenbarung, die *den Menschen eine Gottähnlichkeit vorahnen läßt*.[198]

Intuitive apprehensions thus made possible the discovery of nature in a higher, cosmic sense revealing the true character of divine creation. Writing his Weimar correspondents from Italy, Goethe underscored his acquisition of the ability to intuit traces of the divine in nature: "In der Naturgeschichte bring' ich dir Sachen mit, die du nicht erwartest. Ich glaube dem Wie der Organisation sehr nahe zu rücken. Du sollst *diese Manifestationen* (nicht Fulgurationen) *unsres Gottes* mit Freuden beschauen..."[199]Thus understanding himself as apprehending a divine order

[196]Georg Simmel, *Goethe* (Leipzig: Klinckhardt & Biermann 1918) 264.
[197]GB 2, 423. Brief an F. H. Jacobi, 23 Nov. 1801
[198]HA VIII, 302. Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre II
[199]HA XI, 388. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 28 August 1787

of reason, Goethe's cognitive aims were inseparable from a cosmic perspective that gave access to the universal essences underpinning the organisms of the natural world. Indeed, if ephemeral, organic entities were the point of entry for such a higher perspective, Goethe echoed the Spinozan quest for the eternal, insisting that he too was concerned foremost to apprehend the enduring essences that resided beneath transitory organic forms: "Die Gestalt dieser Welt vergeht, ich moechte mich nur mit dem beschaeftigen, was bleibende Verhaeltnisse sind, und so nach der Lehre des *** meinem Geiste erst die Ewigkeit verschaffen."[200]Moreover, in absolving a repertoire of exercises aiming to transcend his particularity to participate in nature's inner workings, Goethe became increasingly aware of belonging to a reason-imbued world. The acquisition of an intuitive understanding pointed to the coincidence between nature's reason and man's own, while the unmistakable unity of Italy's unprecedented variety of organic forms was testimony to nature's intrinsic rationality: "Die Natur wirkt nach ewigen, notwendigen, dergestalt göttlichen Gesetzen, daß die Gottheit selbst daran nichts ändern könnte."[201]Indeed, even Italy's renowned artists perceived the rationality inhering in nature's handiwork, seeking to emulate its eternal laws to produce consummate artworks that were destined to last for an eternity. Goethe remarked of the Greco-Roman masterpieces he observed: "Alles Willkürliche, Eingebildete fällt zusammen...da ist die Notwendigkeit, da ist Gott."[202]Hence, whether for Spinoza or for Goethe, the cosmic order was the source of divine laws to which one aspired to bring cognition and action into conformity.

Goethe's cosmically informed practice of natural inquiry in turn importantly exhibited the therapeutic effects characteristic of ancient spiritual exercises. Time and again he declared that a

[200]HA XI, 386. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 23 August 1787
[201]FA I, 14, 731. Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit
[202]HA XI, 395. Zeiter Römischer Aufenthalt, 6.Sept 1787

practical physics of intuiting nature's divine works contributed to his well-being: "mich hat er (Gott) mit der Physik gesegnet damit es mir im Anschauen seiner Werke *wohl werde*..."[203]Indeed, if part of the premise of spiritual exercises in natural investigation lay in ridding man of the agitation wrought by the passions and thwarting anxieties owing to the unknown by aligning the soul with the rationality of the cosmic order, Goethe likewise regulated his affects and combatted unpredictable fears by cultivating an intuitive understanding that brought his soul into harmony with nature's ways.[204] Through a self-imposed regime of training that systematically bracketed out subjectivism in order to permit him to see the world objectively, he simultaneously schooled himself in containing his emotions to achieve immunity from the passions. Moreover, instilled with an objective perspective on the world, he gradually dispelled forebodings of life's unknown, embracing the necessary course of nature so as to avoid being moved by contingent, external forces. By acquiring the ability to see objects and events from a universal perspective, Goethe sought to rise above the threat of life's uncertainty and disorder.

Goethe's cosmic conception importantly coincided with a Spinozan scientia intuitiva, that embodying the culmination of human reasoning powers, gave man the clarity of vision needed to discern the intelligibility of the world and afforded him a sense of his own perfection.[205] Indeed, in his *Study on Spinoza,* Goethe claimed that some finite beings arrive at a state, lying beyond all proof and understanding, wherein the mind comes full circle to achieve a conception of the whole from out of the connection of things, issuing in genuine happiness and spiritual serenity. Freeing himself from the interminable fluctuation and perplexing disarray of nature's relations to

[203]GB 1, 508. Brief an Jacobi, 5 März 1786.
[204]Antonaccio, 76.
[205]Don Garret, "Spinoza's theory of Scientia Intuitiva," *Scientia in Early Modern Philsophy*, ed Tom Sorrell, G.A.J. Rogers, and Jill Kraye (Dordrecht: Springer 2009) 107.

achieve an intuition of the stable and imperishable essences grounding a well ordered natural world, Goethe was persuaded of the affinity between his own reason with the reason governing the universe. This in turn gave him confidence and peace of mind in the conviction that through sympathetic participation in organic life, nature divulged its mysteries and became intelligible. By subduing his affects to achieve a lucid, dispassionate mode of seeing, while cultivating a universal perspective enabling him to grasp his place in the natural scheme of things, Goethe came to derive contentment from pursuing a reason governed mode of natural inquiry in Italy. Such existential fulfillment was played out in the activity of parsing nature's polarity of forces, working through the laws of metamorphosis to discern the oneness of form inhering in related organisms and practicing a synthetic method of observation to ascend to the divine essences lying at the heart of nature. By thus engendering a fundamental shift in perspective on the universe as well as a more accurate view of his own perceptual capacities, Goethe's cosmic vision fundamentally transformed him. Indeed, in a revealing passage in the *Italian journey*, in which he revelled in Italy's luminous firmament, Goethe intimated the wisdom of living in sync with himself and the cosmos, allowing him to enjoy an exceptional state that needed only to be embraced as an eternal, natural necessity: "Wenn mein Entzücken hierüber jemand vernähme, der in Süden wohnte, von Süden herkäme, er würde mich für sehr kindisch halten. Ach, was ich hier ausdrücke, habe ich lange gewußt, so lange, als ich unter einem bösen Himmel dulde, und jetzt mag ich gern diese Freude als Ausnahme fühlen, die wir *als eine ewige Naturnotwendigkeit immerfort genießen sollten*."[206]

[206]HA XI, 25.Italienische Reise, Trient, 11 Sept 1786

Chapter 4 Goethean Spiritual Exercises in Observing and Producing Artworks

"Das ist Goethes Genie: im tiefsten Reiz der Kunst den Anreiz zur Lebenskunst fortzupflanzen."[1]

There is perhaps no better testimony of Goethe's alleged rebirth in Italy than his revealing statement: "Ich darf wohl sagen: ich habe mich in dieser anderthalbjährigen Einsamkeit selbst wiedergefunden; aber als was? - Als Künstler!"[2] That Goethe's rebirth was an artistic one is undeniable. It was only through undergoing systematic training as a figural artist that Goethe was able to reclaim his identity as a poet. Eventually ascertaining that his innate abilities were unsuited to the vocation of a painter, he voluntarily embraced renunciation in order to preserve what befitted his true poetic calling: "Täglich wird mir's deutlicher, daβ ich eigentlich zur Dichtkunst geboren bin,."[3]Notwithstanding, an artistic detour in Italy was the necessary precondition for retrieving the loose threads of his inborn literary talents. Goethe thus emphasized the emancipatory effects of his artistic apprenticeship, deeming the traversal of a repertoire of exercises in the reception and production of art responsible for engendering a veritable transfiguration of his selfhood that led him to ascertain nature's creative impetus exhibited in Italy's artistic masterpieces: "Die Revolution, die ich voraussah und die jetzt in mir vorgeht, ist die in jedem Künstler entstand, der lang emsig der Natur treu gewesen und nun die Überbleibsel des alten groβen Geists erblickte, die Seele quoll auf und er fühlte eine innere Art von Verklärung sein selbst ein Gefühl von freierem Leben, höherer Existenz Leichtigkeit und Grazie."[4]Discovering a productive principle unifying natural organisms and the work of art,

[1]Adolf Muschg, *Goethe als Emigrant. Auf dem Suche nach dem Grünen bei einem alten Dichter* (Frankfurt am M.: Suhrkamp 1986) 43.
[2]GB 2, 85. Brief an Carl August 17 März 1788
[3]HA XI, 517. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 22 Februar 1788
[4]MA 3.1, 95. Reise Tagebuch, Venedig 30.Sept. 1786

Goethe underwent an epiphany on the nature of form that ultimately served to cultivate his aesthetic judgment while resuscitating his poetic talents to allow him to embark on a new phase of literary productivity.

If Goethe's engagement with the arts in Italy evinced a radically self-transformative character crucially indebted to a practice of exercises in art reception and production, much is to be gained by interrogating the trajectory of his artistic development and the conditions that made possible what essentially amounted to an aesthetic spiritual rebirth. In this chapter, I therefore situate Goethe's artistic apprenticeship in an ancient tradition of spiritual exercises, with the caveat that while in the domain of natural investigation, a rich legacy of spiritual exercises can be educed to identify inheritances and affiliations, in the domain of art, there is no comparable paradigm to borrow from. Despite a lack of ancient sources, I nonetheless argue that the central cognitive activities that inform ancient spiritual exercises including attention, memory, judgment and imagination find their ideal expression in the aesthetic operations that actualize the sensuous experience of the reception and production of art. Indeed, art in a way lends itself to spiritual exercise, providing a fruitful framework for it. Moreover, if Goethe was persuaded that the methods and objectives of artistic practice dovetailed with those of natural scientific inquiry, then the spirituality of the latter, namely the injunction to modify perceptual faculties through exercise to fundamentally transform the self, necessarily applies to the former.

In endeavoring to demonstrate the fundamentally spiritual nature of Goethe's apprenticeship in the arts in Italy, my initial discussion centers on his insistence on a species of journeying that sustained a principled distinction between self-education and self-formation informed by two competing conceptions of knowledge acquisition. Employing the fundamental difference between factual knowledge and knowledge as know-how, I argue that rather than

pursue travel based on self-educative motives aspiring to acquire the cultural capital of authoritative facts and doctrinaire teachings on art, Goethe entertained quintessentially spiritual ambitions focusing on the self-transformative effects of cultivating his faculties of vision to enable him to perceptually assimilate Italy's wealth of extraordinary art objects. Conceiving travel as a means of obtaining a practical know-how of art observation capable of underwriting his aesthetic judgment, the lynchpin of Goethe's mode of travel in Italy was his practice of what one might appropriately dub objectual journeying ('gegenständliches Reisen'), in which the traveler fundamentally transformed his perceptual powers by adapting them to the objects of his observation. The inherently self-transformative character of gegenständliches Reisen underscores Goethe's unmistakably spiritual orientation in Italy.

The second part of my exposition of Goethe's artistic training conceived as a spiritual undertaking seeks to show that it was informed by a twofold therapeutic agenda. If ancient spirituality importantly involved a curative dimension based on appeasing desire and disciplining the passions, one of the central animating principles of Goethe's apprenticeship in the arts in Italy was the practice of a therapeutics of presence. Playing on the double connotation of 'Gegenwart' as a physical as well as temporal phenomenon, I suggest that Goethe's artistic training valorized the former by seeking to redress his artistic privation of the figural arts through the first-hand reception of works within empirical reality. Goethe was indirectly acquainted with the lionsshare of art he encountered in Italy through his prior reception of prints, models and copies. But the opportunity to see works up close in person not only alleviated stymied desires, it led him to cultivate new perceptual aptitudes that unlocked a whole new perspective on them. As with his affirmation of temporal presence, embracing the physical meaning of presence bestowed unparalleled import and intensity to his observations.

A related dimension of Goethe's therapeutic mode of art observation rested on the systematic practice of interpreting artworks bearing intimations of death in terms of their life-affirming properties. I argue that Goethe's reception of the arts in Italy was partially driven by the need to extricate himself from reminders of human mortality inimical to constructive everyday living. Goethe sought to combat self-defeating passions, such as the fear of death, by systematically exercising strategies designed to annul impressions of death and demise evinced in the representational content of Italian artworks, while simultaneously attempting to deflect attention away from the deteriorating facades and ravaged exteriors of ancient monuments and buildings. By consistently disentangling artworks from allusions to forces destructive of life, Goethe overcame debilitating affects that enabled him to affirm temporal presence or mindfulness towards the incomparable value of immediate existence.

The final part of my discussion offers a programmatic analysis of Goethe's artistic apprenticeship as a spiritual practice through a meticulous exploration of his development of self transformative exercises in the reception and production of artworks. Here, I draw on Alexander Baumgarten's highly pertinent account of what essentially represents an eighteenth century variant of spiritual exercises applied to art. Widely recognized as having offered the first systematic elaboration of a science of sensuous cognition in his acclaimed treatise *Aesthetica* (1750), Baumgarten importantly suggested that aesthetics was essentially a practical discipline demanding the schooling of perceptual aptitudes through the activities of art reception and production.[5] Part and parcel of his endeavor to develop an epistemology and theory of fine art, Baumgarten expounded a set of aesthetic exercises (ästhetische Übungen) serving to methodically train and fundamentally modify the practitioner's sensible faculties. Such exercises

[5]Frederick C. Beiser, *Diotima's children: German aesthetic rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009)121.

opened up the possibility for the formation of an altogether new form of life, the happy aesthete (*felix aestheticus*), whose identity rested on interminably cultivating his sensuous cognitive abilities, the perfection of which became the very foundation of his happiness.[6]Baumgarten's work thus serves as a crucial link between ancient and modern regimes of spiritual exercises in self-cultivation (askesis). His account importantly aids in substantiating my claim that Goethe's apprenticeship in the arts retrieved an ancient tradition of spiritual exercise, embedding it in an artistic practice that gave new impetus to the central intent and purpose of constitutively forming and transforming the exercising subject. Moreover, if the *Aesthetica* remained a fragmentary, unfinished work focused almost exclusively on poetics and rhetoric, I read Goethe's artistic practice as an enterprise that renews the spiritual tradition from the ancients to Baumgarten, by methodologically exploring the nature and dynamics of exercises in the figural and plastic arts.

The mainspring of Goethe's rebirth can be located in his sustained practice of self-transformative dialectical exercises in the reception of painting, sculpture and architecture. Goethe effectively devised a repertoire of exercises in art observation designed to explore the inner polarities of artworks through critically probing oppositions including subjective and objective, real and ideal, historical and ahistorical, both in order to determine how they impacted artistic form and to ascertain the way in which such polarities conditioned the apprehension of artworks. The artistic specificity of Goethe's spiritual practice comes to the fore in his conception of dialectical self-shaping exercises that accorded the senses and the imagination a leading role. Moreover, once he exhausted the scope of exercises turning on the inspection of polarities, Goethe attempted to reconcile them in a higher synthesis. Here, the transition from polarity to

[6]Gabriel Trop, "Aesthetic Askesis: Aesthetics as a Technology of the Self in the Philosophy of Alexander Baumgarten," *Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert*. 37.1 (2013) 56-57. It should be noted that Trop's work focuses primarily on one species of aesthetic exercise, namely reading technologies, through which he examines the development of a poetic askesis in which sensually-oriented spiritual exercises generate new forms of cognition in the work of Holderlin, Novalis, Brockes, Hagedorn and Gleim.

heightened visual awareness occurred through the practice of a different kind of exercise; namely the concrete production of artistic form. I argue that through producing artworks based on methodic exercises harmonizing opposites to overcome a tension of extremes, Goethe succeeded in obtaining an enhanced intuition of artistic form that served to ground his aesthetic judgment. Goethean aesthetic exercises in the observation and production of artworks thereby offer an unprecendented paradigm of eighteenth century spiritual practices; their scope, diversity and objectives going beyond Baumgarten's purely theoretical exposition to bring to bear a practical form of self-transformative artistic engagement.

Goethe's training in the arts during his Italian journey thus marks a significant retrieval of the ancient tradition of spiritual exercise, innovatively embedding it in the fine arts to transform the practitioner according to the ideal of the aesthete. In developing a form of art appraisal based almost exclusively on his own schooled response to artworks that, whilst making minimal recourse to prevailing authority, nonetheless transcended the particularity of individual preference to claim validity, Goethe fashioned his powers of aesthetic judgment to reconstitute his identity. Indeed, through his concerted efforts to emulate the artist and approximate the man of taste, he developed a gegenständliches Sehen, equipping him with the power to intuit the prototypical form comprehending individual instantiations of a given artistic genre, that importantly served to invest his appraisal of art with objectivity. With its well discernable set of self-transformative exercises in the observation and production of art that aimed to perfect sensuous cognition, the *Italian Journey* documents a Goethean paradigm of spiritual exercises that exploits, in a unique way, the potentialities of the artistic discipline.

I. Self-Formative Travel & Spiritual Knowledge

'Die beste Bildung findet ein gescheiter Mensch auf Reisen' *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*

Undertaking his journey in an era in which Italy was considered the premiere destination for travelers in search of cultural learning, it is striking that Goethe should have rejected self-educative forms of knowledge acquisition during his travels.[7] Indeed, the epistemic premises informing Goethe's method of inquiry in Italy reveal the quintessentially spiritual nature of his aims. Upon arriving in a country laden with exceptional yet unfamiliar art objects, Goethe was persuaded that ordinary forms of knowledge acquisition were inappropriate to gain genuine access to them. In order to disclose a foreign and initially inscrutable world of Greco-Roman artworks, he adopted techniques that constitutively altered his perceptual faculties to approximate the objects of his observation. He thereby consciously rejected a self-educative form of knowing resting exclusively on the observation of a designated corpus of authoritative works, that required him neither to alter his perceptual constitution nor to subject his judgment to scrutiny, allowing him to take for granted his capacity for observation to conform to accepted standards of cultural expertise. By Goethe's lights, such self-educative travel, aiming to ameliorate ignorance and rectify gaps in knowledge failed to equip one with the capacity for aesthetic judgment, aiding only insofar as it provided the learning needed to make a show of culture. Dismissing such philistine motives, Goethe pursued a diametrically opposed mode of knowing that demanded substantive changes in his perceptual comportment as the very condition of acquiring knowledge. By constitutively altering his perceptual habits to conform to the art object's he examined, Goethe radically altered his way of knowing, seeking autonomously to adjudge works worthy of his attention.

That Goethe was no proponent of journeying predicated on educative forms of knowledge acquisition becomes evident through comparison with alternative visions of travel that prevailed

[7]For a contemporary account of how the art of travel contributes to an understanding of the Greek conception of Eudaimonia or human flourishing see Alain de Botton, *The Art of Travel* (New York: Pantheon 2002).

in his day. While the proliferation of travel in the 18th century implied no want of available models, Goethe's journey stands apart. Bearing little in common with the grand tours (Kavaliertour), scholars' peregrinations or cultural pilgrimages through Italy of the time, Goethe distanced himself from an artistic rite-of-passage exposing him to reputed works that merely served to confer him the pedigree of good taste. Dismissing such conventionally self-educative motives, he remarked of travelers hastening to acquire the credentials of learning through first-hand acquaintance with Italy's masterpieces: "eine blose Durch und Umreise, die bald gemacht ist, wovon man aber nur das: ich habs gesehen! für seine Mühe und Geld mitbringt."[8] Elsewhere, he derided the superficial pretensions of those who followed the well worn path of an orthodox itinerary in order to check off the sites deemed worthy of attention: "er reist durch Italien bequem, aber geschwind, um es doch einmal gesehen zu haben, und mag sich gern im Vorbeigehen soviel wie möglich unterrichten."[9] In his drive to acquire knowledge, the self-educative traveler left no stone unturned to acquaint himself with the breadth of Italy's cultural patrimony. Exhibiting a systematicity symptomatic of Enlightenment standards of knowledge acquisition, he was preoccupied with redressing an epistemic deficit by availing himself of the accredited repertoire of canonical works. The educative traveler thereby took for granted the exceptional status of the objects he inspected, seeking to amass a compendium of images indispensable to the consolidation of his tastes. So lasting was the impression made on Goethe by uncritical travelers, avidly seeking more or less to consume art, that he dealt them a scathing blow in his novel *Wilhelm Meister*:

> es fällt mir dabei jener junge Engländer in Rom ein, der abends in einer Gesellschaft sehr zufrieden erzählte: daß er doch heute sechs Kirchen und zwei Galerien beiseite gebracht habe. Man will mancherlei wissen und kennen, und gerade das, was einen am wenigsten angeht, und man bemerkt nicht, daß kein Hunger dadurch gestillt wird, wenn man nach der Luft

[8]WA IV, 8, 119. Brief an Weimarer Freudeskreis, 6 Jan 1787
[9]HA XI, 96. Italienische Reise, Venedig 11 Okt 1786

schnappt.[10]

Judging educative motives that neither called into question the nature of objects under inspection nor subjected the observer's mode of perception to critical interrogation fundamentally misguided, Goethe enjoined the traveler to labour on himself to adapt his sensuous-cognitive powers to unfamiliar objects, and abandon efforts to enlarge his stock of knowledge through exhaustive, but at best, superficial inspection.

Goethe was likewise keen to distinguish himself from northern travelers who, encumbered by their obscured senses and restrictive way of thinking ("jenen kimmerischen Vorstellungen und Denkweisen des Nordens"[11]**)**, were all too predisposed to see artworks through prior knowledge derived from their fastidious book learning. Entertaining a mode of apprehension permeated by received wisdom, northern observers remained remarkably unseeing when they encountered works for the first time in person: ".... (sie) suchten das auf, was sie vergessen sollten, und konnten das, was sie schon lange gewünscht hatten, nicht erkennen, wenn es ihnen vor Augen lag."[12] An attendent obstacle lay in the tendency to catalogue observed objects according to pre-established categories: "Recht bedauerlich waren mir einige Reisende die ich habe kennen lernen, die jung und unvorbereitet und doch mit Eifer und Ernst *unter der Last von Begriffen* die auf sie zudrangen es gleichsam erlagen."[13]Failing to recognize that acquaintance with foreign objects implied eschewing conceptually laden ways of seeing, the northerner's predominantly intellectual reception subordinated the sensuous, material character of art to discursive imperatives. Goethe maintained that such a theoretically informed approach fundamentally contradicted the artwork's nature, where the proper reception of art depended on perceptual uptake that mitigated discursive elements: "Es sind Werke an denen sich die Welt

[10]HA VII, 406. Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele
[11]HA XI, 429. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt Bericht Okt
[12]HA XI, 430.Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Okt 1787
[13]WA IV, 8, 168. Brief an Carl August 3 Feb 1787

Jahrtausende freuen und bilden kann *ohne den Wert des Künstlers durch Gedanken zu erschöpfen*."[14]Prone to a scholastic form of engagement with art, in which prior knowledge obstructed discernment gratifying to the senses, the northern journeyor was prevented from achieving a conceptually unmediated grasp of artworks. Goethe thus endeavored to rely exclusively on his senses, taking in Italian art in a manner that while not uninstructed, avoided over-intellectualization.

The inherently non-educative character of Goethe's mode of travel is brought into relief by examining the critiques leveled against his journey revealing its systematic conflation with an 'aesthetic education.' Assuming the primary motive for his travels to be one of obtaining erudition in the arts, close friends and distant observers alike tended to censure Goethe's neglect of prestigious works deemed indispensable to an appreciation of Italy's artistic heritage. In particular, recurring criticism was directed at his almost exclusive reception of antique and neoclassical art and architecture, to the detriment of Italy's no less impressive Byzantine, Medieval and Baroque patrimony.[15] Goethe was undeniably lukewarm in his assessment of the Byzantine Basilica, St. Mark, pejoratively likening it to a giant crab,[16]remained reticent about impressive Gothic structures such as the Ducal palace in Venice, while all but closing his eyes to Bernini's 'baroquification' of Rome. He likewise harbored no qualms about dismissing Italy's wealth of proto-Renaissance painting, neglecting to visit Giotto's famed frescoes (first in Padua) in Assisi, and preferring to pay homage to a Greco-Roman temple located on the city's outskirts.[17] The notable lacunae in his cultural itinerary, together with a marked preference for antique works, was perceived as a dogmatic privileging of Italy's Greco-Roman heritage. Goethe

[14]HA XI, 87. Italienische Reise, 8. Okt 1786
[15]Camillo von Klenze, *From Goethe to Hauptmann; studies in a changing culture* (New York: The Viking Press, 1926) 33.
[16]See Goethe's Tagebuch, Michälistag 1786 "Die Markus Kirche muβ in einem Kapfer von dir gesehen werden die Bauart ist jeden Unsinns werth der jemals drinne gelehrt oder getrieben worden seyn mag. Ich pflege mir die Facade zum Scherz als einen kolossalen Taschenkrebs zu dencken.
[17]Helmut Prang, *Goethe und die Kunst der italienischen Renaissance* (Berlin: E. Ebering 1938) 76-77.

was thereby accused of impermissible deficits in knowledge that betrayed a certain dilletantism, such that eminent scholars like the Roman historian, Barthold Niebuhr, dismissed his manner of proceeding a poor excuse for an aesthetic education. The rising German artist Peter Cornelius proffered an equally damning verdict of Goethe's methods in Italy: "er hat das Ehrwürdige nicht an sich herankommen lassen und das Mittelmässige gelobt."[18]Meanwhile, later Romantic readers of the *Italian Journey* reprehended Goethe for what they took to be a dogmatic defense of classicism. Friedrich Schlegel thus disparagingly wrote: "Von den unbedeutendsten oder gemeinsten Sachen macht er einen großen Lärm und das Größte läßt er unbemerkt vorübergehn." [19]Ludwig Tieck's assessment in a letter addressed to Karl Ferdinand Solger proved no less charitable: "wie dieses herrliche Gemüt eigentlich aus Verstimmung, Überdruß sich einseitig in das Altertum wirft vorsätzlich nicht rechts und nicht links sieht."[20]While it remains debatable whether in the course of editing the account of his travels, Goethe exaggerated a preference for the classical in retaliation against a mounting Romantic challenge to his aesthetic authority, his discretionary selectivity and blatant omissions, transgressing eighteenth century standards of encyclopedic forms of knowledge acquisition underwriting scholarly authority, earned him a certain notoriety.

If his reception of Italian art was far from all-inclusive, going against the grain of accepted standards of aesthetic literacy in currency, Goethe repudiated a connoiseurship of the arts premised on endorsing conventions of the establishment. Rather than defer to expertise, he sought to establish an unmediated relation to artworks that would permit him to evaluate them by

[18]Wölfflin Heinrich, "Goethes Italienische Reise," Festvortrag, gehalten am 29. Mai 1926 rpt. in *Das Werk: Architectur und Kunst*, 14.1 (1927)1.
[19]Friedrich von Schlegel, *Der Briefwechsel Friedrich und Dorothea Schlegels 1818-1820 während Dorotheas Aufenthalt in Rom* ed Heinrich Finke (Bremen: Europäischer Literaturverlag 2011) 284. Friedrich an Dorothea 15 Septembre 1815
[20]J. W. Goethe, *Goethe in vertraulichen Briefen seiner Zeitgenossen*, ed. Wilhelm Bode (Weimar: Aufbau 1979), 667. F. Tieck to Solger, 16 Dezember 1816

the light of his own perception.[21]That such a conception of art observation was far removed from the orthodoxy of the day, becomes increasingly apparent upon examining his drive towards self-sufficient modes of art reception intended to foster objective aesthetic judgment. Goethe essentially envisaged a traveler, who actively engaging in observation, strove to develop his own perceptual discernment. While no advocate of uninformed travel, he was reluctant to rely on external sources to the detriment of first-hand viewing conducive to the independent estimation of an object's merit. This is not to say that Goethe made his way blindly through Italy. Like many of his contemporaries, he sought guidance for his observations by consulting connoisseurs with established credentials. But while he drew on reputed works, such as J. J. Volkmann's monumental *Historische-kritische Nachrichten von Italien* in order to orient his travels, he frequently called into question their authority.[22] More often than not, Goethe invoked Volkmann's reception of specific artworks in order to illustrate how expert judgment patently contradicted his own on-site observations. Referring to his assessment of a series of church frescos attributed to Raphael, he insisted, "Unser guter Volkmann, sonst so aufmerksam und als Führer nützlich genug, scheint sich durchaus an *jene fremden Urteiler gehalten zu haben*, deswegen denn seine eigenen Schätzungen gar wunderlich hervortreten."[23]Similarly challenging his appraisal of the Il Redentore Church, Goethe maintained that Volksmann was liable to err due to his unqualified confidence in established opinion, leading to a curious discrepancy between the descriptive facts he related and the immediate evidence of the senses: "Volkmann sagt etwas davon, er trifft aber den Nagel nicht auf den Kopf."[24]Goethe thus insisted that second-hand judgment, being notoriously unreliable, made it imperative to maintain a steady gaze devoid of prejudicial influences: "Auf den ersten sichern Blick kommt alles an, das übrige gibt sich, und durch Schrifft

[21]Edward F. McGushin, *Foucault's askesis: an introduction to the philosophical life* (Evanston: Northwestern UP 2007) 126.
[22]Prang, 50.
[23]HA XI, 454. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Dez 1786
[24]HA XI, 72. Italienische Reise 3 Okt 1786

und Tradition hat man keinen sichern Blick."[25]Thus cautioning against undue faith in ostensibly unassailable expertise, while reiterating his critique of educative modes of travel relying on precedent, Goethe advocated methods much more exploratory in nature. The traveling observer had to take certain liberties in his inspection of objects, departing from established opinion to engage in hands-on investigative methods of examination that served to facilitate immanent standards of observation. But if Goethe insisted on the traveler's self-reliance in the cultivation of autonomous aesthetic judgment, such an objective was importantly linked to the therapeutic agenda informing his travels.

II. Therapeutics of Art Observation

The artwork's presence

Beyond its undeniably spiritual self-formative impetus of tutoring the senses to cultivate independence in matters of artistic appraisal, a dominant concern of Goethe's mode of travel in Italy was the realization of therapeutic objectives. In exploring art objects that awakened his aesthetic sensibilities, Goethe repeatedly emphasized the salutary nature of a journey that indulged his perceptual faculties: "Für meine Sinnesart ist diese Reise heilsam, ja notwendig."[26] Notwithstanding, therapeutic effects could only be enjoyed provided the observer engaged in a specific mode of art reception. Goethe thus spoke of a visual appropriation of sorts, involving due and detailed examination that made him worthy of apprehending great works. Only the traveler who set out day after day to form his sensible faculties through diligent inspection could achieve an enhanced state of mental wellness. Heinrich Heine's well known comparison between what he took to be an enfeebled mode of perception symptomatic of his Romantic contemporaries that bifurcated the observer from the sensible world and Goethe's healthy way of

[25]WA IV, 8, 105. Brief an Charlotte von Stein 29 Dez 1786
[26]HA XI, 221. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 26. März 1787

picturing things in seamless unity with reality, aptly captures the therapeutic tenor of Goethe's mode of observation in Italy:

> Das ist ein Verdienst Goethes, das erst spätere Zeiten erkennen werden; denn wir, die wir meist alle krank sind, stecken viel zu sehr in unseren kranken, zerrissenen, romantischen Gefühlen, die wir aus allen Ländern und Zeitaltern zusammengelesen, als daß wir unmittelbar sehen könnten, wie gesund, einheitlich und plastisch sich Goethe in seinen Werken zeigt. Er selbst merkt es ebensowenig; in seiner naiven Unbewußtheit des eignen Vermögens wundert er sich, wenn man ihm »ein gegenständliches Denken« zuschreibt[27]

Heine attributed to Goethe a salutary form of apprehension that prevented him from hermetically turning inwards and anchored him in the sensuous matter of empirical reality. Alluding to Christian Heinroth's well known characterization of Goethe's perceptual mode as 'gegenständliches Denken,' he held up a mode of cognition exhausted by the sensuous grasp of the object that reinforced the observer's healthy unity with the empirical world. Indeed, in Italy, Goethe claimed to enjoy the therapeutic benefits of being immersed in the external world to refashion his senses through daily intercourse with sensuous art objects: "diese Anlage an so herrlichen Gegenständen Tag für Tag, Stunde für Stunde auszubilden, ist *das seligste aller Gefühle*." Throughout his journey, he repeatedly invoked the spiritual nature of incrementally improving his perceptual faculties, empowering him to adjudge a work's real value: "Ich habe keine Worte, die stille, wache *Seligkeit* auszudrücken, mit der ich nun die Kunstwerke zu betrachten anfange; mein Geist ist erweitert genug, um sie zu fassen, und bildet sich immer mehr aus, um sie eigentlich *schätzen zu können*."[28] Moreover, beyond transforming perceptual powers in a way conducive to developing aesthetic judgement, a further spiritual effect of his self-schooling in observation included enlightenment on his very identity: "Ich mache diese wunderbare Reise nicht, um mich selbst zu betriegen, sondern *um mich an den Gegenständen*

[27]Heinrich Heine, *Heinrich Heine: Werke und Briefe in zehn Bänden*. vol. 3 ed. Hans Kaufmann, (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1972) 96.
[28]HA XI, 446. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 25 Dez 1787

kennen zu lernen."[29] Goethe's mode of self-formative travel was importantly motivated by the desire to know himself in and through the apprehension of objects. One way of acquiring such self-consciousness was through the strict disciplining of the affects demanded by an art object's reception. In endeavoring to reign in his subjectivity to minimize the sway of emotions on his observations, Goethe gleaned insight on the nature of his passions, becoming aware of the need to attend to the character of his aesthetic responses in order adequately to appreciate artworks. Observations of art in Italy thus led to the renewal not only of Goethe's aesthetic but his ethical sensibilities: "Ja, *es ist zugleich mit dem Kunstsinn der sittliche, welcher große Erneuerung leidet*."[30] Goethe's increasing awareness of the need to conduct his observations in such a way that aimed to minimize subjective interference and valorize the observed object was thus importantly informed by a therapeutic agenda. Goethe would subsequently lament the dominant tendency of his day that prioritized reflective self-scrutiny at the expense of achieving self-discernment through concrete artistic praxis: "Unser Zeitalter wendet seinen ganzen Verstand auf Moral und Selbstbetrachtung, daher er in der Kunst und wo er sonst noch tätig sein und mitwirken muβ, fast gänzlich mangelt."[31]Goethe was persuaded that art was the appropriate medium through which to gain self-enlightenment.

Therapeutic primacy of Presence

Goethe's effort to therapeutically grasp art objects was significantly linked to the apprehension of their immediate physical presence. Although he had experienced no want of reproductions of renowned artworks in Germany offering him a foretaste of Italy's artistic patrimony, he was persuaded of the need to apprehend them in their immediate physical presence. Intimately familiar with the trove of engravings his father had procured on his Italian

[29]HA XI, 44. Italienische Reise, 17 Sept 1786
[30]HA XI,149. Italienische Reise, 20 Dez 1786
[31]GG 2, 27. Gespräch mit Riemer, 10 Mai 1806

journey, while having grown up surrounded by illustrations of Roman cityscapes donning the walls of his parental home, by the time he reached adolescence, images of the Piazza Poppola, the Coliseum and Saint Peter's Cathedral had become permanently ingrained in his visual memory. The effect of exposure to a wealth of Italian masterworks in reproduction, not to mention a set of model gondolas transporting him to the magical canalways of Venice, was an overpowering desire to experience first-hand works which had engrossed his imagination since childhood. Indeed, by 1780, fast approaching the mature age of forty and long having been prevented from embarking on a journey to Italy, Goethe was overwhelmed by a sense of urgency fueling his need to behold Rome's art objects in person. Claiming that the least reminder of his persisting lack of immediate acquaintance engendered untold suffering, he refused to accept all forms of surrogates in place of the art objects that eluded him: "Schon einige Jahre hab ich keinen lateinischen Schriftsteller ansehen, nichts was nur ein Bild von Italien erneuerte berühren dürfen ohne die entsetzlichsten Schmerzen zu leiden."[32]Prey to a psychology of privation that engendered a deep-seated need, Goethe would come to insist on the experience of 'gegenwärtige Gegenständen.' He eventually deemed his burning desire to set foot in Italy, a full-fledged sickness of the passions, the sole cure for which lay in the immediate presence of art objects: "die letzten Jahre wurde es eine Art von *Krankheit* von der mich *nur der Anblick und die Gegenwart heilen konnte*...Die Begierde, dieses Land zu sehen, war überreif."[33]Goethe's self-diagnosis effectively demanded a therapeutics of presence, making it indispensable to be in the immediate vicinity of long withheld art objects. Even after having embarked on his journey, he emphatically reiterated the dire consequences of failing to actualize images over-ripe with desire: "Hätte ich nicht den Entschluß gefaßt, den ich jetzt ausführe, so wär' ich rein zugrunde gegangen:

[32]FA 15,713. Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise
[33]HA XI,125. Italienische Reise, Rome, 1 Nov 1786

zu einer solchen Reife war die Begierde, *diese Gegenstände mit Augen zu sehen*, in meinem Gemüt gestiegen."[34]The practice of a therapeutics of physical presence thus implied rectifying a state of protracted denial through experiencing the effects of direct and palpable commerce with original artworks.

Goethe insisted on making good on the physical meaning of presence in his spiritual exercises in art observation. While never losing sight of the temporal notion of presence as acquiescence to the 'here and now,' he also set out to concentrate on the real, physical import of presence tantamount to the experience of an object's immediate existence. Writing an acquaintance from Rome, he emphasized the extent to which the object's presence resonated with him:"Du weißt, was *die Gegenwart der Dinge* zu mir spricht..."[35]In order to effectively apply the precept of embracing physical presence, Goethe made a point of beholding artworks first hand, visiting their premises to engage in their immediate spatial apprehension. He thereby reappropriated the ancient practice of concentrating on the value of the present in physical terms, focusing his attention on an object's "lebendige Gegenwart," in order to experience the pervasive quality of life that arose from being in direct contact with it. By thus seeking to establish real proximity to artworks, Goethe affirmed his committment to the physical as well as the temporal significance of presence.

Viewing artworks in their physical presence was particularly pertinent to the traveler in Italy who benefitted almost exclusively from original artworks, the specificity of which was their transmission of an enlivened quality. Indeed, the perceptual difference separating a bona fide original and its artistic reproduction did not escape the notice of even the most inexperienced observer. The qualitative distinctness of an original artwork was salient even in the case of

[34]HA XI, 97-98. Italienische Reise, 12 Okt 1786
[35]HA XI, 219. Italienische Reise, 21 Sept 1786

antique statuary, where one benefited from exposure to plaster casts that perfectly reproduced a sculpture's three dimensional, palpable presence. Notwithstanding, such replicas were deemed radically incommensurable with their originals. Goethe accordingly maintained that his first-hand acquaintance with the Apollo of Belvedere, was marked by an incomparably animate impression: "Und so hat mich Apoll von Belvedere *aus der Wirklichkeit hinausgerückt*. Denn wie von jenen Gebäuden die richtigsten Zeichnungen keinen Begriff geben, so ist es hier mit dem Original von Marmor gegen die Gipsabgüsse, deren ich doch sehr schöne früher gekannt habe."[36] While likening the disparity between plaster cast and marble original to the non-equivalence between a drawing of a building and its actual presence, unlike the unbridgeable chasm separating the latter, a well executed plaster cast could capture a statue's corporeal presence to achieve a more or less exact reproduction of the original. Nonetheless, for Goethe, as for many of his contemporaries, the move from plaster to marble gave rise to a qualitative distinction in the work's phenomenal apprehension. Indeed, he went so far as to claim that observing a plaster cast of a marble, was tantamount to never having laid eyes on the original: "Denn so viel ich auch Abgüsse gesehen habe, selbst ein gutes Bruststück besitze; so glaubt man doch die Statue nie gesehn zu haben."[37]The defining feature of the marble original that was wanting in the plaster duplicate was its capacity to transmit an aura of life to the beholder. And indeed Goethe would demonstrate that only by being in the immediate presence of an original artwork,whether it be statuary, painting or architecture, could the observer experience its truly enlivening properties.

Italy's wealth of predominantly ancient works was further reason for apprehending the real physical presence of an artwork. Goethe held the view that the observer's ability to

[36]HA XI, 133. Italienische Reise, Rom, 9 Nov 1786
[37]WA IV, 8, 44. Brief an den Weimarer Freundeskreis, 7 Nov 1786

internalize an artwork's real presence was importantly a function of the degree to which it instantiated an objective character. Here, the ancient artwork was especially vested with the ability to transmit presence due to the imperceptible character of its creator. Unconcerned to exhibit his subjectivity, the ancient artist revealed himself exclusively through his technique. His artistic discretion meant that he refrained from soliciting the beholder's attention, fashioning works manifestly indifferent to their reception. Goethe found such unalloyed objectivity evinced in the work of the early Renaissance painter Andrea Mantegna, who he deemed carried on the tradition of the ancients. Transmitting the object in its pure presence, where nothing was overstated or introduced for its mere decorative effect, Mantegna's works seemed the quintessential expression of the objective presence distinctive of ancient art: "Was in diesen Bildern für *eine scharfe, sichere Gegenwart* dasteht! Von dieser ganz wahren, nicht etwa scheinbaren, effektlügenden, bloß zur Einbildungskraft sprechenden, sondern *derben, reinen, lichten, ausführlichen, gewissenhaften, zarten, umschriebenen Gegenwart*, die zugleich etwas Strenges, Emsiges, Mühsames hatte..."[38] Completely impervious to his work's reception, Mantegna put neither his subjectivity on display nor addressed himself to the beholder. He simply depicted the object of representation in its self-sufficient presence, allowing it to impose itself on the world. Hence if the overriding intent and purpose of the ancient and classical artwork was to convey the pristine presence of the object, then its appreciation required that the beholder assume an attitude attuned to such physical presence. This in turn proved therapeutic for the beholder as he was spared the artist's pretensions and avoided unwittingly succumbing to influences depriving him of his own interpretive autonomy. The self-enclosed objective character of such works placed a premium on the experience of presence, enjoining the observer to adopt a disinterested mode of aesthetic contemplation that was mindful of its pure immanence.

[38]HA XI, 61. Italienische Reise, Padua, 27 Sept 1786

Goethean exercises in animating presence

Convinced of the primacy of presence, Goethe was determined to actualize the ensemble of latent images residing in his visual consciousness by seeing things up close to experience the living aura of works he knew but vicariously. His enthusiastic exclamation upon reaching the city of Venice typifies his pressing desire to embrace the immediate physical presence of things: "So ist denn auch, Gott sei Dank, Venedig mir kein bloßes Wort mehr, kein hohler Name!"[39] He expresses similar thoughts of the need to experience the real presence of a place in relation to Rome: "Man kann sich nichts dencken, was man nicht gesehen hat, Rom am Wenigsten."[40] Indeed, Goethe went on to describe the transition from representations of artworks, known by heart, inside and out, to their real physical uptake, akin to a spiritual awakening:

> Denn *es geht*, man darf wohl sagen, *ein neues Leben an*, wenn man das Ganze mit Augen sieht, das man teilweise in- und auswendig kennt. Alle Träume meiner Jugend *seh' ich nun lebendig*; die ersten Kupferbilder, deren ich mich erinnere (mein Vater hatte die Prospekte von Rom auf einem Vorsaale aufgehängt), *seh' ich nun in Wahrheit*, und alles, was ich in Gemälden und Zeichnungen, Kupfern und Holzschnitten, in Gips und Kork schon lange gekannt, *steht nun beisammen vor mir*; wohin ich gehe, finde ich eine Bekanntschaft in einer neuen Welt;[41]

Notwithstanding prior acquaintance with numerous works he encountered in Italy, authentic contact, far from a repetition of the same, assumed an epiphanic character. While the live perceptions perfectly coincided with the intuitions anchored in his visual memory, the real impingement of sensations proved so determinate and coherent that it was as though he beheld the works for the very first time. Indeed, the contrast between the reproduction of an artwork and its actual physical presence was reinforced by Goethe's past, whereby a mind laden with anticipatory images was liberated of pent up expectations.

Undertaking his voyage in an age in which artistic reproductions had become increasingly

[39]HA XI, 64. Italienische Reise, 28 Sept 1786
[40]WA IV, 8, 81. Brief an Seidel, 9. Dez 1786
[41]HA XI, 126. Italienische Reise, Rom, 1. Nov 1786,

commonplace, Goethe was not alone in his practice of observing art as the actualization of anticipated images. 18th-century travelers were for the most part well acquainted with surrogate images of monuments and artifacts prior to encountering them in reality. With the popularization of veduta prints as well as the circulation of copies of prestigious works among collectors and curators, the typical Italian traveler was furnished with a "well-established circuit of images" in which artworks "were understood through their media representation, rather than through the existential perception of their space."[42]Exposure to such medial intermediaries meant that a traveler's first impression of a work was commensurate with a kind of 'deja vu': "Es ist mir wirklich auch jetzt *nicht etwa zumute, als wenn ich die Sachen zum erstenmal sähe, sondern als ob ich sie wiedersähe*."[43]But while Goethe undeniably saw works through prefatory images, the 'seeing again' of an object in its tangible presence was nothing like the prosaic observation of the modern traveler, who acquainting himself with an illustrated guidebook, takes for granted the seamless correspondence between photographic reproduction and first-hand reality. Goethe on the contrary maintained that seeing artworks in real life retained an unprecedented character: "Wenn man diese Wercke nicht *gegenwärtig* sieht, hat man doch keinen Begriff davon."[44]He was conscious of an experiential excess that outstripped the mere coincidence between image recalled from the mind's eye and empirical encounter with the original:"es ist alles, wie ich mir's dachte, und alles neu."[45]Indeed, if the saturation of sensuous intentions was incomparably vivid and intense, Goethe was compelled to devise visual exercises playing on the dialectic between an artwork's physical presence and absence.

Goethe initially developed techniques and exercises aimed at animating the sensuously

[42]Daniel Purdy. "The Building in Bildung: Goethe, Palladio and the Architectural Media," *Goethe Yearbook* XV (2008) 57.
[43]HA XI, 99. Italienische Reise, 12 Okt 1786
[44]MA 3.1, 71. Reisetagebuch, 19 Sept 1786
[45]HA IV, 125. Italienische Reise, Rom, 1. Nov 1786

irreducible substrate of the artwork's concrete presence. Persuaded that most travelers were negligent of the experiential surplus characterizing the transition from artistic reproduction to full-fledged reality, Goethe made a point of spelling out the features of an art object's full bodied presence. The reason for the prevalence of a superficial sight-seeing mentality, lay in the failure to appreciate the phenomenal difference between the second-hand seeing of an object 'in absentia' and its first-hand apprehension 'in situ.' Indeed, observing art objects in their concrete 'Gegenwärtigkeit' was, in the first instance, a means of rediscovering the sensuous dimension of reality. Goethe thus insisted that the actual presence of a work furnished sensible impressions that no image was capable of transmitting: "*Mir ist nur jetzt um die sinnlichen Eindrücke zu tun* die mir kein Buch und kein Bild geben kann."[46]Indeed, upon making the acquaintance of the Il Redentore Church, he pointed to the unrivalled character of his perceptions: "Diese mehrmals in Kupfer gestochenen Werke müsste man vor sich sehen, um das Gesagte verdeutlichen zu können....*So kann uns die beste Kupfer nicht lehren wie die Gegenwart*."[47] Die Basilika ist und bleibt ein herrliches Werck, man kann sich's nicht dencken wenn man's nicht in der Natur gesehn hat." For Goethe, no amount of examining various represention of an artwork was a substitute for its immediate perceptual uptake. Moreover, if illustrations fell short of conveying the phenomenal quality of an object's presence, written explication was powerless to put the artistic recipient in touch with its sensuous character. Goethe dismissed the meticulous descriptions of monuments furnished by Italian experts, encouraging observers to take stock of their own immediate perceptions: "Es ist alles schon so durch beschrieben, so durch dissertirt, dass man nur erst die Augen aufthun, erst sehen lernen muss."[48]Unable to get at the qualitative character of unmediated sensuous apprehension, technical treatises and critical commentaries failed to

[46]MA 3.1, 39. Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise Frau von Stein, 11. Sept 1786
[47]HA VI, 72. Italienische Reise 3 Okt 1786
[48]WA IV, 8, 65. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 24 Nov 1786

capture 'what it was like' to be in the presence of an art object. The authentic character of the artwork could only be appreciated by experiencing its concrete immediacy, whereby Goethe deemed the power of written media vastly inferior to direct uptake: "Die Kunst ist deshalb da, dass man sie sehe, nicht davon spreche, als höchstens *in ihrer Gegenwart*."[49]Goethe ultimately concluded that the sensible impressions an artwork conveyed made all commentary gratuitous, compelling a pythagorean silence that called on the viewer to internalize its image: "Gut ist es und noth, hier wenn man kommt ein Pythagoräisches Stillschweigen zu halten. Jahre lang könnt ich hier seyn ohne viel zu reden. "[50]Neither surrogate representation nor descriptive account spoke directly to the senses, such that the affimation of a work in its pure palpable presence retained, for Goethe, the final word in matters of art reception.

Despite the assertion that description was unable to do justice to the sensorial experience of being in the presence of an art object, Goethe employed various analogies in his *Italian Journey* to render the phenomenal character of first-hand perceptions. Referencing the case of Pygmalion, he invoked the sculptor, who despite knowing every detail of his composition, was astounded upon its arousal to life by the discrepancy between animated form and hewed stone. The direct apprehension of an artwork's tangible presence was likened to the statue's enlivened pronouncement to Pygmalion, "I am," wherein the perceptions themselves spoke to assert a life of their own.[51] Indeed, the defining attribute of apprehending a work's immediate presence was the appearance of its being vested with life, announcing its "lebendige Gegenwart." Goethe accounted for such enlivened presence in terms of the persuasive force exercised on the observer, appealing to the case of meeting someone known exclusively through written communications

[49]HA XI, 371. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 29 Juli 1787
[50]WA IV, 8, 65. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 24 Nov 1786
[51]HA XI, 125. Italienische Reise, 1. Nov 1786 "Da Pygmalions Elise, die er sich ganz nach seinen Wünschen geformt und ihr so viel Wahrheit und Dasein gegeben hatte, als der Künstler vermag, endlich auf ihn zukam und sagte: »***Ich bin's!***«, wie anders war die Lebendige als der gebildete Stein!"

for the first time in person. Unlike the image arising from an epistolary exchange in which the correspondent was envisioned by drawing inferences from written testimony, face-to-face confrontation fully determined one's impression. Goethe described, in precisely such terms, the experience of rediscovering Raphael's fresco cycle of Psyche and Amor in the Villa Farnesina, a copy of which donned his own chambers in Germany. The demonstrative testimony of the work's tangible presence superseded all former impressions to compel instant acquiescence to reality:

> Ich sah in der Farnesina die Geschichte der Psyche, deren farbige Nachbildungen so lange meine Zimmer erheitern, dann zu St. Peter in Montorio die »Verklärung« von Raffael. Alles alte Bekannte, wie Freunde, die man sich in der Ferne durch Briefwechsel gemacht hat, und die man nun von Angesicht sieht. *Das Mitleben ist doch ganz was anders, jedes wahre Verhältnis und Mißverhältnis spricht sich sogleich aus*.[52]

In confrontation with the real, prior image and actual presence coincided, whereby any discrepancies were immediately rectified in deference to reality. Goethe thus reiterated his committment to apprehending the living presence of artworks: "Ich will...nicht mehr ruhen, bis mir nichts mehr Wort und Tradition, sondern *lebendiger Begriff* ist."[53] The object's real presence imposed its immediate self-evidence and imbued the observer's perceptions with unspeakable life.

If Goethe was persuaded of the therapeutic import of experiencing the presence of art objects, he lost no time attempting to develop a know-how designed to elicit their enlivening qualities. To do so, he began by attending to the nexus of a work's interconnections with reality. Indeed, the distinctive feature of art in Italy was that it was rarely merely accessory or ornamental; amphitheaters were the scene of spectacle, churches the setting for elaborate processions or ceremonies, and obelisks and fountains living monuments defining the space of bustling piazzas. If Italian art virtually imposed its presence on onlookers, Goethe maintained

[52]HA XI, 136. Italienische Reise, 18. Nov 1786
[53]HA XI, 351. Zweite römischer Aufenthalt, 27 Juni 1787

that it compelled them to engage in animated, interactive forms of observation. He claimed, for instance, that the Roman amphitheatre at Verona had to be observed seated, in the presence of other spectators. The spectator participated in an exercise of physically embodied seeing that made him a living extension of its structure. Its symmetrical, encircling form created a natural connection between viewers, embracing each as an integral part of a living, artistic whole. In similar fashion, the viewer of a church or palazzo could not rest content to cast an immobile and confined gaze. He had to partake in a spatial assimilation of its volumes and dimensions through the dynamic advance and retreat of an embodied form of viewing:

> Wenn man nun diese Werke *gegenwärtig* sieht, so erkennt man erst den großen Wert derselben; denn *sie sollen ja durch ihre wirkliche Größe und Körperlichkeit das Auge füllen* und durch die schöne Harmonie ihrer Dimensionen nicht nur in abstrakten Aufrissen, sondern *mit dem ganzen perspektivischen Vordringen und Zurückweichen den Geist befriedigen*.[54]

Replacing abstract, passive forms of apprehension with an embodied incorporation of a structure's concrete volumes, Goethe not only took the habit of acquainting himself with the floorplans of buildings prior to going on location to see how they were materially realized, he made a point of repeatedly entering and leaving a structure's premises to gauge its relation of interior to exterior. Systematically mounting towers and city walls in order to gain an aerial perspective of a building from all angles, he was persuaded that appreciating a work's immediate presence demanded a versatile, dynamic viewer who went to great lengths to take in a construction's full-bodied presence. Neither architectural plans nor perspectival representations could do justice to the feeling of presence experienced at the site of an architectural work, whereby Goethe recounted moving about the Greco-Roman Tempels at Paestum, confiding himself to their tangible presence until he physically sensed the intentions of their builders. Through the systematic practice of embodied exercises in observation that served to animate

[54]HA XI, 51. Italienische Reise, Vincenza 19 September 1786

presence, works that Goethe had formerly known exclusively through second-hand observation began to attain a real foothold in his mind's repertoire of artistic images: "Die Hauptsache ist, daß alle diese Gegenstände, die nun schon über 30 Jahre auf meine Imagination *abwesend* gewürckt haben und also alle zu hoch stehn, nun in den ordentlichen Cammer und Haus Ton der Coexistenz herunter gestimmt werden."[55]

The Therapeutics of life-affirming art interpretation

Beyond attending to the physical presence of art objects, Goethe pursued a further form of therapeutic art observation involving the interpretation of a work's representational content. Having little tolerance for images of death and suffering, he systematically averted his gaze from their artistic depiction. On the face of it, this appears to directly contradict an important species of ancient spiritual exercises, which though not intended to instruct man in his reception of figurative representations of pain and suffering, enjoined him to meditate on death and misfortune as a way of inuring himself to them. For the ancients, the prospect of enduring suffering had to be explicitly invoked precisely in order to effectively surmount it. As the ultimate, unavoidable trial, it was especially important to overcome the fear of death through cultivating a psychology of willed detachment. Here, Stoicism and Epicureanism entertained differing approaches to defeat the fear of death. The Stoic made death the object of regular, sustained contemplation in order to impress upon himself that, belonging to nature's necessary course, it depended in no measure on man and was consequently not really an evil. [56] By coming to accept death as part of the reason inhering in nature, the Stoic endeavored to make himself imperturbable to necessity's inescapable dictates. The Epicurean, by contrast, espoused a strategy of reigning in the fear of death through persuading himself that death, being a state of mere

[55]WA III, 1, 226. Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, 24 Sept. 1786
[56]Hadot, 85.

dissolution, strictly speaking, was not part of life and therefore not to be feared.[57] By adopting the perspective that death was external to life and hence unfathomable to man, while simultaneously drowning out reminders of it with thoughts of pleasure, the Epicurean sought to eviscerate intimations of human mortality.[58]The ancient Stoic and Epicurean schools thus espoused differing attitudes towards man's finitude, though both adhered to the necessity of reflecting on death and adversity in order to transcend it.

Underpinning Goethe's strategy of counteracting artistic representations of death and suffering was his ultimate rejection of the ancient dictum 'memento mori' or the need for man to explicitly contemplate death. Loathe to obsess over life's miseries, Goethe recoiled from the practice of deliberately reflecting on its greatest misfortune, electing rather to embrace his mortality in an attitude of 'memento vivere.' But while repudiating the underlying premise that informed an ancient art of dying, Goethe was not indifferent to the idea of removing vulnerability to misery and hardship. Not unsusceptible to harassment by the recurrent anguishes of existence, he sought to break free of them, grappling with pain by fortifying himself against it. Indeed, in order to shield himself from the specter of death, Goethe, like Spinoza, was mindful of death in thinking first and foremost of life.[59]Spinoza had maintained: 'A free man thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is a meditation not on death but on life.'[60]Precisely in the spirit of his preferred philosopher, Goethe practiced a therapeutic mode of art observation that sought to keep suffering and death at bay through adopting a wholly life-affirming perspective on things. Applying this attitude to his observations of art in Italy, he systematically checked visual intimations of adversity and pain, replacing them with sensible valorizations of

[57]Hadot, 87.
[58]Hadot,87.
[59]Hans-Jürgen Schings, ""Gedenke zu Leben" Goethes Lebenskunst" in *Wilhelm Meister und seine Nachfahren*. ed. Helmut Fuhrmann. (Kassel: Georg Wenderoth Verlag, 2000) 34.
[60]Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics* in A Spinoza reader: The Ethics and other Works, ed. and trans. E. Curley (Princeton: PUP, 1994), 125. Pt. IV, Prop. LXVII

life. This was particularly important in light of the fact that he was perpetually confronted with works suggesting human distress and destruction: "Alle Kirchen geben uns nur die Begriffe von Martern und Verstümmlung."[61]Endeavoring to deflect attention away from the precarity of existence, Goethe viewed art as an invitation to apprehend manifestations of life's ever renewable vitality. He was persuaded that its veritable function was not to bring death to the forefront of consciousness to impress upon the viewer the need to master his finitude, but to give him the strength of mind needed to affirm everyday existence to the fullest at each moment. Goethe thus systematically endeavored to interpret the representational content of artworks that thematized death and suffering as a call to ennoble immediate existence and give life incomparable, lasting value.

Goethe's therapeutic technique of warding off reminders of life's pain and adversity was particularly noteworthy in the context of his observation of religious art in Italy. Harboring a marked distaste for Christian iconography, he spurned depictions of "abscheulichen, dummen,...erniedrigenden Gegenständen"[62] such as crucifixions and martyrdoms and was likewise hostile to the artistic deployment of sacred symbols including the 'unaesthetische Kreuzesform.' Goethe made no secret of his disapprobation for religion's life-negating themes of self-immolation, ultimately deeming them unworthy of artistic representation. He saw the sanctimonious asceticism of religious motifs serving to depreciate mundane existence, fundamentally unsuited to art, the main purpose of which was to convey sensible affirmations of life. For Goethe, art was a medium meant to appeal to the physical senses rather than address the scruples of belief: "Auch sind Glaube und Unglaube durchaus nicht diejenigen Organe, mit welchen ein Kunstwerk aufzufassen ist, vielmehr gehören dazu ganz andere menschliche Kräfte

[61]WA IV, 8, 57. Brief an Carl Ludwig von Knebel, 17 Nov. 1786
[62]WA III, 1, 306. Tagebuch der italienischen Reise, 19. Okt 1786

und Fähigkeiten. Die Kunst aber soll für diejenigen Organe bilden, mit denen wir sie auffasen."[63]The veritable artist was charged with producing images immediately intelligible to the senses, whereby doctrinaire themes of human suffering could only compromise the nature of his craft: "Ein großes Hindernis der reinen Betrachtung und der unmittelbaren Einsicht sind die meist unsinnigen Gegenstände der Bilder..."[64] Goethe ultimately claimed that attempting to unify artistic imperatives with religious doctrine was inherently unnatural, akin to wedding two incompatible species to produce a mongrel: "Es ist, als da sich die Kinder Gottes mit den Töchtern der Menschen vermählten, daraus entstanden mancherlei Ungeheuer."[65]He thus disparaged art objects serving as a vehicle for the propagation of religious teachings as they prompted the observer to engage in abstract existential reflection contradicting artistic techniques addressed foremost to the senses.

Goethe's therapeutic strategy of circumventing themes of Christian suffering assumed its most insistent form in the context of his observations of Renaissance art. Despite being bound to depict sacred themes espoused by their ecclesiastic patrons, the Renaissance masters saw religious conventions at variance with their humanistic worldview and took pains not only to avoid depicting tormented martyrs and macabre crucifixions but to refrain from thematizing self-sacrifice, repressed sensuality and a negation of pleasure antithetical to life. In seeking to debase what it meant to be mortal, such themes contradicted the edifying values that lay at the foundation of their humanistic allegiances. Moreover, Christian themes with their turgid allegories sought to undermine the viewer's faith in this world by introducing miraculous interventions into the mundane suggesting that man's absolution lay in transcending rather than faithfully adhering to reality. Sanctioning human suffering to vitiate man of his very humanity,

[63]FA, 39, 114. Gespräche mit Eckermann, 2. Mai 1824
[64]HA XI, 104. Italienische Reise, Bologna, 19. Okt 1786
[65]HA XI, 104. Italienische Reise, Bologna, 19. Okt 1786

Goethe decried religious sujets undermining human dignity:

> Man ist immer auf der Anatomie, dem Rabenstein, dem Schindanger, immer *Leiden* des Helden nie *Handlung*. Nie ein gegenwärtig Interesse, immer etwas phantastisch erwartetes.Entweder Mißethäter oder Verzückte, Verbrecher oder Narren. Wo denn nun der Mahler um sich zu retten einen nackten Kerl, eine schöne Zuschauerinn herbeyschleppt. Und seine geistliche Helden als Gliedermänner tracktirt und ihnen recht schöne Faltenmäntel überwirft. Da ist nichts was nur einen Menschenbegriff gäbe. Unter 10 Süjets nicht eins das man hätte mahlen sollen und etwa das eine hat er nicht von der rechten Seite nehmen dürfen.[66]

If Goethe repudiated depictions of human suffering in the name of religion, he deemed the Renaissance masters' treatment of such life-denying themes eminently worthy of emulation. He initially lamented the denigration of the talents of painters like Guido Reni, commissioned to paint the most inartistic motifs, among them, Christ's Circumcision:

> Indem der himmlische Sinn des Guido, sein Pinsel, der nur das Vollkommenste, was geschaut werden kann, hätte malen sollen, dich anzieht, so möchtest du gleich die Augen von den abscheulich-dummen, mit keinen Scheltworten der Welt genug zu erniedrigenden Gegenständen wegkehren, und so geht es durchaus;[67]

But despite being condemned to depict religion's inflictions of demeaning pain unworthy of his talents, Reni sought to escape barbarism and rescue the human element through his masterful realizations:

> Das große Bild von Guido in der Kirche der Mendicanti ist alles, was man malen, aber auch alles, was man Unsinniges bestellen und dem Künstler zumuten kann. Es ist ein Votivbild. Ich glaube, der ganze Senat hat es gelobt und auch erfunden. Die beiden Engel, die wert wären, eine Psyche in ihrem Unglück zu trösten, müssen hier - Der heilige Proclus, eine schöne Figur; aber dann die andern, Bischöfe und Pfaffen! Unten sind himmlische Kinder, die mit Attributen spielen. Der Maler, dem das Messer an der Kehle saß, suchte sich zu helfen, wie er konnte, *er mühte sich ab, nur um zu zeigen, daß nicht er der Barbar sei.*[68]

As much as Renaissance painters took pains to avoid the physical disfiguration and spiritual demeanment sanctioned by religion, the attempt to make spiritual sujets palatable to the observer was no simple undertaking. While Goethe lauded Reni's efforts, he ultimately found him incapable of avoiding traces of the repugnant, be it mouths agape or bodily contortions, that were

[66]WA III, 1, 306. Tagebuch der italienischen Reise, 19. Okt 1786
[67]HA XI, 104. Italienische Reise, 19. Okt 1786
[68]HA XI, 105. Italienische Reise, 19. Okt 1786

used to convey the menacing authority of religion.

> Zwei nackte Figuren von Guido: ein Johannes in der Wüste, ein Sebastian, wie köstlich gemalt, und was sagen sie? der eine sperrt das Maul auf, und der andere krümmt sich. Betrachte ich in diesem Unmut die Geschichte, so möchte ich sagen: der Glaube hat die Künste wieder hervorgehoben, der Aberglaube hingegen ist Herr über sie geworden und hat sie abermals zugrunde gerichtet.[69]

Goethe thus lamented art fettered by regressive Christian dogma. Describing an altar piece in the St. Giorgio church, he suggested that even innocuous scenes catering to religious feeling, whilst not overtly offensive, were lacking in human drama and hence unsuitable for figurative depiction:

> Alle Altarblätter wo nicht gleich doch alle merckwürdig. Aber die unglückseeligen Künstler was mußten sie mahlen? und für wen. Ein Mannaregen 30 Fus vielleicht lang und 20 hoch, das Wunder der 5 Brodte zum Pendant. Was war daran zu mahlen. Hungrige Menschen die über kleine Körner herfallen, unzähliche andre denen Brod präsentirt wird. Die Künstler haben sich die Folter gegeben um solche Armseeligkeiten nur einigermassen bedeutend zu machen[70]

The portrayal of petty pedantic themes inevitably predisposed an artwork to deformation:

> Der Künstler hatte einen grosen Gedancken auszuführen, ein groses Bedürfniß zu befriedigen, oder auch nur einen wahren Gedancken auszuführen und er konnte gros und wahr in der Ausführung seyn wenn er der rechte Künstler war. Aber wenn das Bedürfniß klein, wenn der Grundgedancke unwahr ist, was will der grose Künstler dabey und was will er daraus machen? er zerarbeitet sich den kleinen Gegenstand gros zu behandeln, und es wird was, aber ein Ungeheuer, dem man seine Abkunst immer anmerckt[71]

Religion effectively did the artist a disservice when it confined him to themes wanting in narrative richness and human grandeur. That Goethe claimed that the artist who exerted himself to glorify the trivial could only invite ridicule, is testament to his conception of the inextricable unity of the artwork's form and content, whereby the dignity of the subject matter had implications for its formal character.

But if Goethe dismissed the sanctimonious pedantry and insipid banality of certain Christian themes in Renaissance painting, he sought to deflect attention away from distasteful

[69]HA XI, 105. Italienische Reise, 19. Okt 1786
[70]WA III, 1, 200. Reise Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, Verona, 15 Sept. 1786
[71]WA, III, 1, 196. Reise Tagebuch, Verona 15. Sept. 1786

displays of self-deprecation typically linked to religious rites and uncouth superstition. When an artwork's representational content failed to meet his standards of adequacy, he shifted the focus from symbolic content to practical execution, honing in on its technical aspect: "Meine Aufmerksamkeit, *meine Betrachtung kann nur auf den praktischen Teil, auf den Gegenstand und auf die Behandlung desselben im allgemeinen gerichtet sein*."[72] Abstracting from pathetic themes of self-denial and otherwordly redemption, Goethe systematically called attention to the artist's painterly technique. He thus offered an apology for Guercin's Circumcision: "So sprach mich eine Beschneidung von Guercin mächtig an...*Ich verzieh den unleidlichen Gegenstand und freute mich an der Ausführung*."[73] Similarly, where the great master Tintoretto's fantastic, visionary perspective failed to become manifest through the choice of a strong dramatic subject, his work was vindicated the extraordinary facility of his brushstrokes and the profound diversity of expression he wielded: "Ein Paradies von Tintoret oder vielmehr die Krönung Mariä zur Himmelskönigin in Gegenwart aller Erzväter, Propheten, Heiligen, Engel etc., *ein unsinniger Gedancke mit dem schönsten Genie ausgeführt*. Eine Leichtigkeit von Pinsel, ein Geist, ein Reichthum im Ausdruck..."[74] Goethe could only stomach infelicitous spiritual motifs in Renaissance paintings by interpreting them with regard to the pictorial techniques developed by their creators. He thus emphasized the way in which they cast human figures in sumptuous classical forms gratifying to the senses. Insisting that they were motivated by sensible imperatives, he claimed that they were bent on employing the human body as a vehicle to realize tactile values that spoke to the beholder's sensuous imagination. Hence, notwithstanding an intrinsic reverence for the spiritual, the Renaissance masters essentially deployed their talents to celebrate the physical significance of things. Far from depicting disembodied apparitions,

[72]HA XI, 45. Italienische Reise, 17. September 1786
[73]HA XI, 106. Italienische Reise, 19 Okt 1786
[74] WA III, 1. 206. Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise für Frau von Stein, 17. Sept. Verona

Michelangelo's grandiose figures exalted virility and glorified corporeal forms, Guercin's stirring sense of color lent man's image incomparable vitality, while the perfect harmony and serene expressions of Raphael's characters bespoke nothing but a pure affirmation of life. By deliberately subordinating the sacred to the technical aspects of Renaissance art, Goethe's practice of viewing artistic intimations of suffering through the lens of technical virtuosity permit him not only to abstract from the institutional markers of Christianity and artistic formulas employed to represent them, but to avoid unhealthy preoccupation with themes of moral transgression to appraise works exclusively through the testimony of the senses.

Goethe's practice of therapeutic observations of Renaissance painting nonetheless went beyond a systematic focus on painterly method, throwing overboard a serviceable set of religious idioms to deliberately construe its representational content in purely secular terms. Goethe thus in a way disavowed the centrality of the sacred, systematically reinterpreting Renaissance themes through the lens of a humanistic ethos of fidelity to the mundane. Indeed, he went out of his way to endow depicted figures with temporal preoccupations and profane motives, seeing in them the incarnation of universal qualities. A reverent Madonna thus embodied the quintessence of motherhood, while all too human sentiments were attributed to the traditional cult of saints and apostles. Goethe made a point of demonstrating that the expressions and gestures of spiritual personages revealed their subjection to the same hopes, fears, passions and hatreds as ordinary men. He thus noted of Titian's portrayal of the Assumption of Mary in Verona: "Der Gedanke gefällt mir daß er die Himmelfahrende Maria nicht hinaufwärts sondern nach ihren Freunden niederwärts blicken läßt.[75]But if his attempt to humanize biblical figures remained subtle in certain cases, it was unapologetically blatent in others. He thus facetiously played down the

[75]WA III, 1, 200. Italienische Reise,Verona, 16 September 1786

spiritual connotations of a Virgin and infant by Correggio: "Es stellt eine Mutter Gottes vor, das Kind in dem Augenblick, da es zwischen der Mutter Brust und einigen Birnen, die ihm ein Engelchen darreicht, zweifelhaft ist. Also eine 'Entwöhnung Christi.'"[76]Seeking to undermine the moral weight of Christian motifs, Goethe focused on prosaic concerns and healthy sensibilities. Thus, not all religious themes were subject to his rebuke provided that they remained devoid of religious sanctimony. Goethe commended a biblical painting he viewed in Verona, that he ultimately reduced to the bare narrative essentials: "Die beste Composition fand ich hier: einen entschlafnen Simson im Schoos der Delila die eben leise nach der Scheere hinübergreift. Der Gedancke und die Ausführung sind sehr brav."[77]He likewise praised a painting of Saint Agatha, that bore no trace of otherworldly asceticism and martrydom, her fresh complexion emanating a salubrious virginity that would serve as the inspiration for the protagonist of his *Iphigenie*. Convinced that Renaissance art was imbued with the life-affirmative classical norms thematizing what was vigorous, joyous and above all marked by health, Goethe's art reception ultimately set out to classicize the biblical. Rather than flee from the mundane to seek redemption in the otherworldly, Raphael's figures embodied the fortitude and forebearing that came from their unqualified adherence to the temporal world, whereby the apprehension of such steadfast devotion to the mundane exercised a salutary effect on the beholder: "Trifft man denn gar wieder einmal auf eine Arbeit von Raffael...*so ist man gleich vollkommen geheilt und froh*."[78] But while beholding vigorous figures in the bloom of health bound to the interests of everyday existence was eminently therapeutic, such life-embracing depictions were not the sole prerogative of Renaissance painters. In espousing a renewal of the classical, they had simply adopted and enlarged upon the spirit of life prominent in the artwork of the ancients.

[76]HA XI, 217. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Naples, 22 März 1787
[77]WA III, 1, 204.Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, Verona, 17 September 1786
[78]HA XI, 106. Italienische Reise, 19 Okt 1786

In line with his therapeutic, classicizing mode of art reception, Goethe went out of his way to demonstrate that the most striking evidence of the ancients' unflagging allegiance to life was to be found in their depictions of death. Goethe's appreciation of a Roman copy of a late Hellenistic work, the Medusa Rodanini, was a case in point, whereby he drew attention to the ancient artist's substitution of the ostensibly hideous gorgon head of mythical accounts with a beautiful but indomitable female countenance. Here, the contradiction of life and death was born out in Manichean terms, rendering her mien through the simultaneous articulation of grief and ecstasy that wielded undefinable power over the viewer: "Zwiespalt zwischen Tod und Leben, zwischen Schmerz und Wollust."[79] Goethe claimed that the Medusa's polar attributes, evincing the peril of death, but avoiding all trace of the sinister, never trespassed the bounds of the living, conveying a gaze of death that paradoxically elicited a curative sense of well-being in the beholder: “Das Medusenhaupt, sonst wegen unseliger Wirkungen furchtbar, erscheint mir *wohltätig und heilsam*."[80]That the ancients produced artistic representations that succeeded in annuling death's menacing aspect was testament to their healthy attitude of unfaltering fidelity towards life.

For Goethe, the gap separating ancient from the modern depictions of death revealed a normative difference in their conceptions of the value of existence. If there was no such thing as the triumph of salvation over death in the pagan world, the ancients met the violence of death with courage and integrity, never capitulating to evasions of finality. Moreover, in sharp contrast with Christian iconography's odious and menacing depictions of death that repulsed and alienated the beholder, classical artists typically depicted death as the enemy of life, while casting man as a proponent of existence whose valiant demeanor instinctively resonated with the

[79]HA XI, 546. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt Bericht April
[80]WA IV, 40,194. Brief an den König Ludwig I. von Bayern, 26. Dec 1825

viewer. The ancients portrayed the suffering hero as possessing virtue and hence the power to moderate affects of fear and loathing. His dignified resoluteness in the face of peril served to reassure the beholder that one need not succumb to life's difficulties. Indeed, Goethe systematically interpreted classical depictions of protagonists in the grips of death, whether it be in a combative effort or in acquiescence to an inescapable state of nature, as mastering their passions. Recalling Lessing's attempt to mitigate the violence concentrated in the gaping mouth of Laocoon's scream, Goethe characterized a representation he observed in Italy as masterfully intertwining fear and striving in such a way as to counteract the former through the latter: "Furcht und Streben sind herrlich mit einander verbunden..es ist Angst in dem Munde, aber feste Angst, teilnehmende gegenwürckende Angst."[81] Personifying a noble struggle for life and the concomitant refusal to yield to suffering, Laocoon's composure, mastering his emotions to avoid all trace of disfigurement, spared the beholder a sense of fatality. Comparable portrayals of the figure of Niobe highlighted the ancients' insistence on containing the affects to evince an intrepid beauty: "höchste Subordination unter die höchsten Ideen von Würde, Hoheit, Schönheit, gemästigten Betragen."Goethe thus described the Farsetti collection as consisting in a Niobe valiantly defending her kin, gladiators staking their lives in contest to display their dauntless mettle and a serene Cleopatra in passage to eternal sleep.[82]

Depicting figures who refused to flee from the trials and tribulations of existence to succumb to defeat, the ancients celebrated life even in the face of death, rendering finitude an accomplishment rather than a condition to be endured. Indeed, such fidelity to existence resonated with Goethe's belief that death was a pernicious imposition, man's ultimate truth lying in an instinctive and tenacious adherence to life. He thus insisted that the classical served as an

[81]MA 1.2, 490. Laokoon Fragment 1774
[82]HA XI, 86. Italienische Reise, 8. Okt 1786

antidote to the feeble pretensions of Christian art that thematized nothing but ignoble suffering, human vulnerability and a yearning for the soul's salvation: "Diese *edlen Gestalten waren eine Art von heimlichem Gegengift, wenn das Schwache, Falsche, Manierierte über mich zu gewinnen drohte*."[83] He accordingly remarked on a work, produced by an artist of the French Academy in Rome, depicting the tragic Greek hero paradoxically embracing his demise in a moment of supreme happiness: "Pindar, der die Götter um ein glückliches Ende bittet, fällt in die Arme eines Knaben, den er sehr liebt, und stirbt. Es ist viel Verdienst in dem Bilde."[84] Goethe thus suggested that even neoclassical artists of his day acknowledged the ancient wisdom that the tragedy of death lay in the forfeiture of life's irredeemable felicity. The epitome of the classical thus lay in its articulation of a categorical defense of the value of existence, whereby the beautiful manifestation of human noblesse contesting the cruel vagaries of fate aimed to engage the beholder in such a way as to solicit his own commitment to life. Goethe thus practiced a therapeutic mode of art observation in Italy deriving inspiration and fortitude from artistic allusions to death by systematically interpreting them in terms of an unassailable allegiance to life. Thereafter, he would consistently oppose 'Kunst und Leben gegen Erinnerung an Tod und Grab,' perhaps most memorably in his *Wilhehlm Meister*, where the symbolism of a classical mausoleum adorned with paintings and sculpture thematizing an instinctual reverence for life articulated in the spirit of 'memento vivere' served to anul and extinguish the scepter of death.

Exercises in averting one's gaze from death & directing one's gaze towards life

Goethe further practiced a form of therapeutic observation premised on systematically avoiding the intimations of destruction and decay visible in Greco-Roman and Italian architecture. He thus conscientiously steered clear of morbid locales, recusing himself from the

[83]MA 15, 643. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht April 1788
[84]HA XI, 386. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 28 August 1787

inspection of places bearing excessive trace of dissolution and demise. If he abruptly terminated his visit of the St. Sebastian catacombs in Rome, upon feeling ill at ease amid its gloomy, macabre passages, he likewise abandoned the idea of excavating the ruins of Messine and Catane, claiming that it depressed him to probe Sicily's wasteland of rubble (Einöde der Trümmer).[85] Indeed, Goethe consistently shunned the "morbiden Boden" of archaic landscapes, recoiling from vestiges of ancient ruins that conveyed the least impression of atrophy and deterioration. Branding the Tempels at Agrigent a 'Schutthaufen,' he immediately gave up the idea of a comprehensive visit of Segesta in the wake of surveying its dilapidated ancient amphitheater: "Die Mühseligkeit, in den unscheinbaren Trümmern eines Theater herumzusteigen, benahm uns die Lust, die Trümmer der Stadt zu besuchen."[86] But Goethe's systematic eschewal of desolate locations and decrepit exteriors was merely one facet of his concerted efforts to negate artistic reminders of death and decay while concomitantly embracing works that emanated vitality.

In confrontation with artworks that explicitly thematized death and degeneration, Goethe employed a further observational strategy premised on valorizing their material properties. While he emphatically announced that Italy's artistic patrimony consisted chiefly in artifacts suggesting degeneracy and decline, "so sind Musea und Gallerien auch nur Schädelstätten, Gebeinhäuser und Rumpfkammern..."[87], he nonetheless strove to observe them in constructive ways: In order to counteract the aura of death that surrounded certain works, he focused exclusively on their material properties, concentrating on their tangible dimension to ameliorate the fatality of their representational content. In the context of his observations of antique statuary, Goethe systematically focused on the characteristics of marble, interpreting its concrete specificity in

[85]Ernst Grumach, *Goethe und die Antike: Eine Sammlung* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co. 1949) 999.
[86]HA XI, 269. Italienische Reise, Segest, 20 April 1787
[87]HA IV, 8, 57. Brief an Carl Ludwig von Knebel, Rom 17 Nov. 1786

terms of its transmission of an impression of life. Goethe pointed to the way in which antique representations of the human figure, executed in marble, transmitted an unparalleled sensation of life. In order to illustrate marble's life-awakening character, he invoked the disparity separating the apprehension of a plaster cast from a marble original: "Der Marmor ist ein seltsames Material, deswegen ist Apoll von Belvedere im Urbild so grenzenlos erfreulich: *Denn der höchste Hauch des lebendigen, jünglingsfreien, ewig jungen Wesens verschwindet gleich im besten Gipsabguss*."[88] Despite the fact that antique sculpture typically depicted immortal gods and blossoming youths, the impression of "eternal life" ("das ewige Lebendige") it conveyed was owed foremost to the material properties of marble and not, as one might suppose, to its representational content. Marble captured the impression of immortality because of its smooth, gleaming, almost translucent surface quality. Applying this material difference to the case of artworks thematizing death, Goethe invoked a marble mask of a Medusa, paradoxically claiming that it brought death to life. He insisted that marble, like no other material, could endow an art object with an extraordinary aura of vitality, casting an enlivening spell on even the ineffable expression of the Medusa's frightful gaze of death. Hence, far from arousing a sense of atrophy and decline, antique statues intimating death succeeded in conveying an animate, enlivened quality due, in part, to a felicitous accord between material composition and representational content. For just as there were materials that awakened an artwork to life, there were those that predisposed it to convey an impression of death and decay. Goethe thus regretted obtaining plaster casts of famous statuary that failed to do justice to the living quality of their marble originals. He exclaimed of his copy of the Medusa Rodanini, "Das edle Halbdurchsichtige des gelblichen, der Fleischfarbe sich nähernden Steins ist verschwunden. Der Gips sieht immer

[88]HA XI, 150. Italienische Reise, 25. Dec 1786

dagegen *kreidehaft und tot*."[89] With its chalky, brittle texture, the plaster cast gave the impression of a work bereft of life. The use of marble was thus best reserved to pagan sujets including mythical gods and heroes, whereby it was patently unsuited to convey the ethereal quality of an angel or the pallor of a Christian Saint. Such spectres of life, inherently contradicting marble's phenomenal properties of robustness and vitality, were better cast in materials such as terracota, wood, or stone.

Similar considerations concerning an artwork's material properties conditioned Goethe's observations of architecture. Goethe lamented the fact that Italy's archaic temples were frequently built of shell bearing limestone (Muschelkalk), the soft composition of which was prone to weathering and erosion that, with time, manifested signs of disintegration. Goethe thus notes of the Juno tempel at Girgenti: "Und so gelangten wir an das östliche Ende der Stadt, wo die Trümmer des Junotempels jährlich mehr verfallen, weil eben der lockre Stein von Luft und Witterung aufgezehrt wird."[90]Later temples built of marble, being more resilient, avoided conspicuous deterioration, retaining an appearance of robust life even after the passage of centuries. Goethe not only appreciated marble for its robustness, he deemed it the sole material capable of evincing the harmony and simplicity characteristic of classical architecture. He thus censured the builders of the Milan Cathedral for hewing the life out of marble and forcing it into ornate Gothic pilasters and belfries that he considered fundamentally at odds with its materiality: "Gestern war ich auf dem Dom, welchen zu erbauen man ein ganzes Marmorgebirg in die abgeschmacktesten Formen gezwungen hat. Die armen Steine werden noch täglich gequält, denn der Unsinn oder vielmehr der Armsinn ist noch lange nicht zu Stande."[91]Regarding specific materials appropriate to specific forms, Goethe accused the architects of the Milan cathedral of

[89]HA XI, 150. Italienische Reise, 25. Dec 1786
[90]HA XI, 274. Italienische Reise, Girgenti, 25. April 1787
[91]WA IV, 8, 372. Brief an Carl August, 23 Mai 1788

creating an artistic monstrosity of the most miserable, convoluted forms that did violence to the nature of marble as a material intended to assume clear, harmonious contours that conformed with its intrinsically vivifying properties.

Apprehending the enlivening character of architectural works also importantly involved engaging in a therapeutic mode of interpretation that discerned the ways in which it was invested with the life-promoting purposes inhering in nature. Ancient artists who mimicked the necessity of nature's organic forms brought forth works that paradigmatically expressed the conditions of life: "Dieses ist eben der alten Künstler Wesen das ich nun mehr anmuthe als jemals, daβ sie wie die Natur sich überall zu finden wuβten und doch etwas wahres etwas lebendiges hervorzubringen wuβten."[92] Indeed, Goethe saw each element of a classical structure an integral constituent of an organic whole serving a necessary purpose. For instance, upon observing the Roman acquaducts at Spoleto, he immediately discerned an architectural form organic with its function. At once functioning as a bridge from one mountain to another and transporting water to neighboring areas, the ten arches spanning the Spoleto valley employed nature's laws to serve human purposes. Goethe drew a damning contrast between such life-promoting ingenuity and the deficiencies of the Kassel Winterkasten:

> Nun fühle ich erst, wie mir mit Recht alle Willkürlichkeiten verhaßt waren, wie z. B. der Winterkasten auf dem Weißenstein, ein Nichts um Nichts, ein ungeheurer Konfektaufsatz, und so mit tausend andern Dingen. Das steht nun alles *totgeboren* da, denn was nicht eine wahre innere Existenz hat, hat *kein Leben* und kann nicht groß sein und nicht groß werden.[93]

Built without attention to natural laws and maladapted to its function, the water basin was a stillborn work that failed to promote the conditions of life. Goethe similarly described the Verona amphitheater as an ancient architectural form embodying a natural function. He observed that whenever there was an event on display, humans instinctively formed elevations, constructing

[92]WA III,1, 326. Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, 27. Okt 1786
[93]WA III,1, 326. Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, 27. Okt 1786

platforms and hoisting themselves atop one another in order to obtain a view of things from ahigh. The graduated, symmetrical form of Roman amphitheatres was simply a reproduction of such natural purposes, enabling viewers to observe the spectacle beneath them in a way that conformed with their instincts. Goethe thus insisted that classical structures such as acquaducts, amphitheatres and baths, built to accommodate natural needs, demonstrated the way in which art could be fashioned as an extension of nature in the service of life. Indeed, the purposiveness evinced by ancient artworks was ultimately the product of the ancient artist's will to reproduce nature's productive laws to enhance the quality of human life. Indeed, Goethe unequivocally claimed that Greco-Roman art evinced nature's necessary laws: "Alles Willkürliche, Eingebildete fällt zusammen...da ist die Notwendigkeit, da ist Gott."[94]

Goethe further maintained that viewing the works of neoclassical artists who carried on the classical tradition, served to school the observer in identifying natural regularities in the structure of great works of art. The methods of Palladio and Raphael, inspired by the ancients' fidelity to nature, endeavored to proceed according to nature's lawfulness to avoid all trace of the arbitrary: "Es war an ihnen nicht ein Haarbreit *willkührliches*, nur daß sie die Gränzen und Gesetze ihrer Kunst im Höchsten Grade kannten und mit leichtigkeit sich darinn bewegten, sie ausübten, macht sie so groß."[95]Intimately apprised of nature's ways, neoclassical artists assimilated its laws until they became second nature. Raphael's work thus surpassed nature only through conforming with it: "er (Raphael) hat, wie die Natur, jederzeit Recht."[96]Indeed, the pinnacle of neoclassicist virtuosity was manifest through works which were 'übernatürliche, aber nicht auβernatürlich.' Not content to simply emulate nature's lawful mode of production, the neoclassical artists strove to bring it to consummate perfection.

[94]HA XI, 395. Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt, 6.Sept.1787
[95]WA III, 1, 309. Tagebuch an Frau Stein 19 Okt 1786
[96]HA XI, 454. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Dezember

In stark contrast with Greco-Roman and neoclassical structures, later architectural forms often reflected contingent conditions and a piecemeal mode of construction egregiously indifferent to nature's purposivity. Deficient in order and clarity, Goethe claimed that the cathedral of Palermo suffered from the absence of artistic laws serving as an extension of natural ones: "Hier ist nicht wie in Rom ein Kunstgeist, welcher die Arbeit regelt; nur von Zufälligkeiten erhält das Bauwerk Gestalt und Dasein."[97] With its medieval edifice and basilica plan that simultaneously bore Norman and Arabic influences, the cathedral had become an amalgamation of arbitrary styles through successive additions that betrayed its want of natural necessity. In Padau likewise, Goethe branded the church of St. Anthony a 'barbarisches Gebäude,' mingling incongruous French Gothic elements with oriental domes to create a loathsome 'Mischkonstruktion.'[98] In Assisi, fleeing from the exceedingly elaborate and flamboyant Gothic facade of the St. Francis church to take refuge in the harmonious forms of the Temple of Minerva, he polemically exclaimed: "Die ungeheueren Substruktionen der babylonisch übereinander getürmten Kirchen, wo der heilige Franziskus ruht, lieβ ich links mit Abneigung, denn ich dachte mir, daβ darin die Köpfe so wie mein Hauptmannskopf gestempelt würden."[99] But Goethe was perhaps most alienated by the arbitrary conception and gaudy ostentation of the Baroque Villa at Pallagonia; it's layout and construction displaying a contradiction wherein art was allowed to degenerate into a chaos at odds with nature's lawfulness. To add insult to injury, the masons had assaulted stone materials to produce a host of monstrous, misshapen figures: "Das Widerliche dieser von den gemeinsten Steinhauern gepfuschten Misbildungen."[100] Covered in grotesque protruberances and constructed form a haphazard combination of architectural elements devoid of rational order and arrangement, the villa negated the idea of a natural unity

[97]HA XI, 234. Italienische Reise, Palermo, 5. April 1787
[98]For further discussion on this point see Helmut Prang, *Goethe und die Kunst der italienischen Renaissance* (Berlin: Ebering, 1938) 145.
[99]HA XI, 116. Italienische Reise, 25. Okt 1787
[100]HA XI, 243. Italienische Reise, Palermo 9 April 1787

and awakened a strong sense of dissonance with its natural environs:

> Denke man sich nun dergleichen Figuren schockweise verfertigt und ganz ohne Sinn und Verstand entsprungen, auch ohne Wahl und Absicht zusammengestellt, denke man sich diesen Sockel, diese Piedestale und Unformen in einer unabsehbaren Reihe, so wird man das unangenehme Gefuehl mit empfinden, das einen jeden ueberfallen muss, wenn er durch diese Spitzruten des Wahnsinns durchgejagt wird.[101]

Indeed, the excesses of Gothic and Baroque architecture were the antithesis of the moderation and symmetry of classical buildings that were devoid of gratuitous ornamentation and harmonized with their natural surroundings. Upon beholding the ancient Roman temple of Antoninus and Faustina in Rome, Goethe thus emphatically concluded: "Das ist freilich etwas anderes als unsere kauzenden, auf Kragsteinlein übereinander geschichteten Heiligen der gotischen Zierweisen, etwas anderes als unsere Tabakspfeifen-Säulen, spitze Türmlein und Blumenzacken; diese bin ich nun, Gott sei Dank, auf ewig los!"[102]

Whether it be his investment in the palpable presence and living aura of artworks or his systematic interpretive efforts to avoid connotations of death to read a spirit of life into artworks, the curative function of Goethe's mode of art observation in Italy is unmistakable. Such therapeutic art reception incorporates a spiritual or self-transformative dynamic, whereby Goethe saw his valorization of predominantly classical and neoclassical artworks justified in lieu of their normative influence on the observer. Recognizing that pain and suffering are immanent to life and need not be portrayed in a desperate fashion, Goethe was persuaded that valuable lessons could be drawn from beholding artistic representations of life's trials and tribulations, provided the artist conveyed the right perspective. The ethic of surmounting difficulties in defense of mundane existence enshrined in classical artworks went some way towards positively shaping the beholder's construal of events in the world, constructively influencing his behavior. Indeed,

[101]HA XI, 244. Italienische Reise, 9. April 1787
[102]HA XI 87-88. Italienische Reise, 8. Okt 1786

Goethe's deliberate reinterpretation of the meaning of the motto 'Et in Arcadia ego,' originally held to enjoin 'memento mori' by alluding to the presence of death even in Arcadia (in the paintings by Guercino (1623) and Nicholas Poussin (1645)) with 'Auch ich in Arkadien' as the epigraph for his *Italian Journey* is revealing. Suggesting that he too had savored the fruits of heaven on earth, he underscored his therapeutic repudiation of death and its negative associations in favor of a life affirming classical spirit. But notwithstanding the significance of the therapeutic dimension of his art reception, the central aim of Goethean spirituality, lay in attempting to fundamentally transform perceptual faculties through the practice of novel and demanding exercises in observation.

III. Goethean Aesthetic exercises in the observation of art through polarities

Baumgarten's Conception of Aesthetic Exercises & its Goethean Resonances

While there is no evidence of an ancient tradition of spiritual exercises in the reception and production of artworks, the prominent 18th century German scholar, Alexander Baumgarten, rehabilitated the crucial notion of a regime of practical exercises designed to form the self, importantly applying it to the aesthetic domain. Indeed, Gabriel Trop argues that an essential albeit overlooked aspect of Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* was the elaboration of a practice of concrete exercises intended to train sensuous cognition, resting on "the injunction to continually modify, hone, and attune one's perceptual access to the world."[103] Trop reads Baumgarten's discourse as a "phenomenological practice of the self" that enumerates specific "techniques through which the malleable apparatus of sensibility empowers the self's projects to modify and be modified by its own perceptual opening onto the world." Indeed, if such a self-transformative ethic dovetails with the central intent and purpose of ancient spiritual exercises, Baumgarten's conception of

[103] Gabriel Trop, "Aesthetic Askesis: Aesthetics as a Technology of the Self in the Philosophy of Alexander Baumgarten," *Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert.* 37.1 (2013): 62.

aesthetic exercise furnishes a theoretical point of departure for understanding Goethe's artistic schooling in Italy as a self-shaping enterprise predicated on absolving a practical regimen of aesthetic exercise. In order to draw out some relevant connections, Baumgarten's basic premises warrant examination.

Baumgarten's conception of beauty importantly informed his vision of aesthetic exercise. Furnishing two distict definitions, he considered beauty both in terms of a cognitive state of thinking beautifully and as the materially embodied ordered of beautiful phenomena.[104]In § 662 of the *Metaphysica* he asserted: "Die Vollkommenheit der Erscheinung oder diejenige, die vom Geschmack im weitern Sinne bemerkt werden kann, ist die Schönheit."[105]While in §14 of the *Aesthetica* he maintained: "Der Zweck der Ästhetik ist die Vollkommenheit der sinnlichen Erkenntnis als solche. Dies aber ist die Schönheit."Baumgarten thus conceived beauty both as the perfection inhering in the object and the bringing to perfection of sensible cognition. The former ontological category of beauty was closely linked to his metaphysical conception of aesthetic truth in the *Metaphysica*, while the latter definition reflected the *Aesthetica*'s epistemic preoccupation of elaborating a science of sensuous cognition. As numerous commentators have argued, Baumgarten envisaged a productive nexus between apprehending subject and beautiful object: "Das Erlebnis eines schönen Gegenstandes verweist somit einerseits auf metaphysische Vollkommenheit, die anderseits nur im menschlichen--und damit notwendig subjektiven-Vollzug zugänglich ist und erscheint."[106]Hence, on the one hand, Baumgarten's conception of aesthetic exercise invested art objects exhibiting perfection with a force capable of activating cognitive and somatic sensuous operations of the mind and body.[107] On the other hand, it directed the

[104]Trop, 59.
[105]Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Ästhetik*. ed Dagmar Mirback (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 2007) LIII
[106]Claudia Gerdenitsch, *Erst kommt die Asthetik, dann kommt die Moral*. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 2010) 31.
[107]Trop, 57-58.

practitioner's perceptual faculties to the exterior world, orienting them in ways that enlarged and enhanced attunement to sensuous reality, to bring them to ever increasing perfection.

Baumgarten's understanding of the apprehension of beauty was importantly informed by the idea of sensuous cognitive faculties developed and honed through the practice of aesthetic exercises. The systematic cultivation of the basic aptitudes conditioning sensuous experience including memory, judgment, attention and imagination essentially enabled the experience of what was delivered to the senses as constructed beauty. Baumgarten defines ästhetische Übungen in § 47 of *Aesthetica* as follows:

> die häufigere Wiederholung gleichartiger Handlungen, zu dem zweck, daβ sich eine Übereinstimmung des Geistes und Gemütsart...ergibt,...im Hinblick auf nur einen Gegenstand, der gedacht werden soll, nur eine Sache, damit die Fertigkeit, schön zu denken, allmählich erworben wird.[108]

Several features of this definition are noteworthy. To begin with, Baumgarten underscored the importance of adopting the right cognitive attitude in order to facilitate apprehensions of beauty, where upper and lower cognitive faculties of the intellect had to be brought into concert with the affective disposition. Aesthetic exercises were thus intended to train "*nicht allein den Geist, sondern auch die Gemütsart und das ästhetische Temperament* in eine Fertigkeit und wird durch die Gewohnheit bestärkt..."[109]Indeed, the emphasis on disciplining the affects to harmonize with rational cognition resonates with ancient spiritual exercises aimed at constraining the passions to develop rational responses. Moreover, Baumgarten believed that the ability to regulate affects would only become permanent and reliable through the training of ritualized exercise. The practitioner had to labor on himself to become proficient in suppressing affects that interfered with and even impeded beautiful thinking. Once he mastered his passions he proceeded to inspect the art object in a systematic and exhaustive manner as possible so as to appreciate its

[108]Baumgarten, 39.
[109]Baumgarten, 47.

manifold attributes and discern its fundamental nature. Aesthetic exercises were thus importantly defined by their object-centered character. As Claudia Gerdenitsch argues, the central objective of Baumgarten's aesthetic exercises involved "Gegenstände in ihrem Reichthum, in ihrer Fülle zu denken und vorzustellen."[110]Finally, contrary to what one might suppose, aesthetic exercises were characterized by an openendedness and indeterminacy with respect to content, stipulating neither specialized knowledge nor the application of specific artistic doctrines: "Die ästhetischen Übungen werden Improvisationen aus dem Stegreif sein, die noch ohne die Lenkung durch durch die gelehrte Kunst, aus welcher der Übende seine Kraft schöpfen mag, begonnen werden."[111]Aesthetic exercises consisted in sensuous-cognitive activities of an extremely general nature, deploying perception, memory and imagination in novel ways in order to disclose the essence of art objects without drawing on specific aesthetic principles. Not necessarily intended to be undertaken by one already versed in the canon of aesthetic precepts, the subject of exercise disposed over a certain leeway to improvise according to his level of aesthetic competence. The sustained practice of aesthetic exercise was thus indispensable to the perfection of sensuous cognition supporting beautiful thinking. For according to Baumgarten, beauty as the perfection of the object could only be apprehended provided the perceiving subject's perceptual faculties were brought to perfection (§§19–20); such perfection in turn serving as the foundation for the practice of more advanced forms of artistic self-instruction.[112]

Baumgarten placed particular emphasis on the fact that the key to perfecting the panorama of sensuous-cognitive capacities equipping the practitioner to think beautifully, lay in rigorous, unceasing exercise. Although sensuous cognitive dispositions were fundamentally

[110]Claudia Gerdenitsch, "Ästhetik als Lebens-Kunst-Theorie. Pädogogische Momente in Baumgartens Asthetica" in ed Edvard Protner, Vladimir Wakounig, Robi Kroflic. *Pädogogische Konzeptionen zwischen vergangenheit und Zukunt* (Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main 2009)138.
[111]Baumgarten, 68.
[112]Frederick Beiser, *Diotima's Children German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009) 146.

malleable, he was persuaded that absent exercise, their default condition was one of stasis and languishing:"Die Natur, kann sich auch für kürzere Zeit nicht auf derselben Stufe halten. Wenn daher entweder ihre Anlagen oder ihre Fertigkeiten nicht durch stetige Übungen vermehrt werden, nimmt sie, so groβ sie auch immer angelegt sein mag, um einiges ab und erlahmt."[113] The difficulty of sustaining the quality of perceptual dispositions even temporarily made it imperative that they be constantly reactivated through incessant exercise:[114]"Der schöne Geist wird, wann er auch alle die Gaben besitzt (...) dennoch nicht weit kommen, wann er die mancherlei Handlungen nicht sehr oft wiederholet."[115] Baumgarten thus envisaged the cultivation of aesthetic abilities ocurring by way of a fitness regimen of repeat exercise that aimed both to keep the senses in shape and to boost their performance. Beautiful thinking was thereby an achievement won in the wake of absolving a process of sensuous-cognitive work that depended upon interminable exercise.

Goethe's conception of art reception in Italy, premised on developing perceptual faculties capable of apprehending the idea of artistic form informing various artistic genres, can be understood in terms of Baumgarten's conception of self-transformative aesthetic exercises. Throughout his apprenticeship in the arts, Goethe maintained that every intensified act of art reception served to mold and modify sensuous cognitive capacities. As with Baumgarten's aesthetic exercises, the aim was to develop sensuous cognitive aptitudes that adequately responded to the sensible appeal of artworks, whereby the specificity of Goethean exercises lay in the need to achieve a cognitive attitude of 'Gegenständlichkeit' in which the practitioner strove to adapt his perceptual apparatus to assimilate the very features determining an artwork's essential form. A significant aspect of this undertaking involved disciplining affective

[113]Baumgarten, 87.
[114]Trop, 64.
[115]Trop, 65.

dispositions to eliminate undue subjective influences. Goethe endeavored systematically to curb his emotions and hold in check received opinion liable to interfere with and adulterate his discrimination of art objects. Moreover, 'gegenständliches Sehen' also implied orienting perceptual capacities in ways that brought to light an artwork's fundamental form. Goethe thus devised exercises designed to elicit a range of aesthetic properties facilitating an appreciation of an art object's complex historical legacy and its indebtedness to specific artistic traditions. Indeed, Goethean exercises in 'gegenständliches Sehen' were informed by a dialectical structure, designed to probe a wide range of polarities facilitating the art beholder's discernment of conditions generative of artistic form. Goethe thereby cultivated an ability to identify and track form transformations by extrapolating from an artwork's present state to recuperate past states, while projecting transformative possibilities to envision future states that could aid him in distilling a universal form underlying the various manifestions a given genre of artworks could assume. Guided by a polar dynamic that tested the powers of his visual aptitudes, he strove to ascertain the manifold conditions impacting an art object's assumption of form.

The principle means of achieving perceptual faculties capable of grasping aesthetic form lay in engaging in the systematic practice of repeatedly observing art objects. Subscribing to the idea of an inherently malleable observer whose aesthetic capacities were constitutively shaped through a daily regimen of arduous exercise, Goethe practiced a sensuous askesis. Commencing his observations of art on route to Italy in the Munich art gallery, he acknowledged the deficiencies in his aptitude for observation for want of sufficient habituation: "In der Bildergalerie fand ich mich nicht einheimisch; ich muβ meine Augen erst wieder an Gemälde *gewöhnen*...Im Antikensaale konnte ich recht bemerken, daβ *mein Augen auf diese Gegenstände*

nicht geübt sind,..."[116] Goethe's ability to apprehend art had atrophied in Weimar due to a lack of objects demanding judicious observation needed to qualitatively maintain his senses. Once in Italy, faced with no paucity of choice works available for inspection, he committed himself to a program of disciplined, exhaustive exercises in viewing, setting out to find rhyme and reason in the morass of unfamiliar art objects he daily encountered. Upon arrival in each new Italian city, he sought to acclimatize his vision by repeatedly directing his gaze at art objects. No sooner had he arrived in Verona, his first major destination on route to Rome, he set out to habituate his vision to unaccustomed forms: "Diesen Abend ging ich *wieder* ins Amphitheater. Ich muss erst mein Auge bilden, mich zu sehen gewöhnen."[117] Four days later he reiterated the need to school his powers of vision through further exercises in observation: "Ich gehe nur *immer herum und herum* und sehe und *übe* mein Aug und meinen innern Sinn."[118] In Bologna, likewise, he pursued a circuit of repetitive viewing : "Meinen Tag habe ich bestmöglichst angewendet, um *zu sehen und wiedersehen*."[119]Incessantly reiterating his committment to a rigorous regime of observation, he remarked: "Gestern hab' ich vieles *gesehen* und *wieder gesehen*, ich bin vielleicht in zwölf Kirchen gewesen, wo die schönsten Altarblätter sind."[120] And in Rome, the site of the most intense repeat viewing, he announced: "Seit vierzehn Tagen bin ich von Morgen bis in die Nacht in Bewegung; was ich noch nicht gesehn, such' ich auf. Das Vorzüglichste wird zum *zweiten und dritten Mal betrachtet*..."[121]Overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of noteworthy artworks making it easy to overlook what was exemplary, Goethe underscored the necessity of repetitive viewing: "Die Gebäude hab ich *wieder und wieder besehn und begangen*...Der Kirchen und Altarblätter

[116]HA XI, 11. Italienische Reise, 6. Sept 1786
[117]WA III, 1, 205. Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, Verona, 16 Sept 1786
[118]WA III, 1, 219. Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, Verona, 21 Sept 1786
[119]HA XI, 104. Italienische Reise, Bologna, 19 Okt 1786
[120]HA XI, 365. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 9. Juli 1787
[121]HA XI, 172. Italienische Reise 17 Feb 1786

kriegt man so satt daß man manches Gute übersieht und ich bin nur im Anfange." [122]Eventually, Goethe's art observations took the form of promenades, in which the principle rationale for his walks lay in repeatedly retracing terrain to expose himself to the same objects in a kind of visual meditation in motion. Indeed, the more he revisted the same objects, the greater intimacy he achieved: "Daß ich jede Gelegenheit ergreife, die besten Sachen *wieder und wieder zu sehen*, können Sie leicht denken. Je mehr man sie sieht, desto mehr wird man an ihnen gewahr und desto mehr möchte man sie sehen."[123] Even at the close of his two-year stay in Italy, Goethe continued to make recourse to an itinerant mode of repeat viewing. He thus recounted making a tour of Rome's significant monuments in a single, uninterrupted meditation, so as to renew visual aspects of objects that had long become familiar:

> Stellen wir uns vor, wir kämen soeben in Rom an und müßten als eilige Fremde geschwind von den vorzüglichsten Gegenständen uns unterrichten. Beginnen wir einen Umgang in diesem Sinne, damit das schon Bekannte möchte in Geist und Sinn wieder neu werden.[124]

Repeated attempts in viewing artworks thus represented the mainstay of Goethe's art reception, whereby his ultimate rationale for multiple observations lay in his desire adequately to appraise art objects: "Fast bis zur Ermüdung hab ich bisher fortgefahren Rom zu durchwandern, auch habe ich das meiste *gesehen.* Was heisst aber das *Sehen* von Gegenständen bey denen man lange verweilen, zu denen man oft zurücke kehren müsste um sie kennen und *schätzen zu lernen*."[125]

Once in Rome, the necessity of rigorously training his sensuous cognition became all the more evident upon frequenting art connoisseurs whose facilities in observation made apparent his comparative lack of proficiency: "Gemälde und Statuen zu sehen hilft mir des Hofrath Reifenstein *lange Pracktick* und Tischbeins *Künstler Auge* und *ich sehe denn nur so*

[122]WA III, 1, 230.Tagebuch der Italienische Reise an Frau Stein
[123]WA IV, 8, 263. Brief an Christian Freidrich Schnauβ 1. Oct 1787.
[124]HA XI, 447. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt Bericht Dezember
[125]WA IV, 8, 81. Brief an Carl August, 12 Dez 1786

hin."[126]Surrounded by experts who set the standard for a practiced eye, Goethe deemed exercise essential to acquiring the perceptual habits needed to resuscitate his latent visual aptitudes: "Meine größte Freude ist, daß mein Auge sich *an sichern Formen bildet und sich an Gestalt und Verhältnis leicht gewöhnt* und dabei mein alt Gefühl für Haltung und Ganzes recht lebhaft wiederkehrt. *Auf Übung käme nun alles an*."[127]Ever preoccupied with the nature of artistic form and its generative conditions, Goethe was cognizant of the magnitude of the task of identifying the factors engendering form, conceding time and again that absolving a program of exercises was an interminable undertaking: "Ich habe diese Tage immer weiter um mich gegriffen in Betrachtung der Kunst, und übersehe nun fast das ganze Pensum, das mir zu absolvieren bleibt; und wenn es absolviert ist, ist noch nichts getan."[128]Only in embarking on a seemingly endless regimen of exercises in observation, could Goethe hope to alter his powers of visual discernment to apprehend the fundamental forms of Italy's impressive wealth of artworks.

Baumgarten on the regulation of subjective affects & Goethe on 'gegenständliches Sehen'

If an essential function of Baumgarten's aesthetic exercises involved ameliorating the adulterations of cognition to facilitate beautiful thinking, he expended considerable efforts to demonstrate the dangers accruing from neglecting the mind's affective dimension. Once again, Baumgarten stipulated that not only upper and lower cognitive powers (Geist) be in sync but that they be brought in agreement with the affective disposition (Gemütsart):

> Ich fordere bei den ästhetischen Übungen nicht allein eine gewisse Übereinstimmung innerhalb des Geistes, sondern auch zwischen demselben und der Gemütsart...wurde...die Gemütsart ganz und gar vernachlässigt oder gänzlich verderbt und hinabgezogen...dann wird...was auch immer schön gedacht zu sein scheinen mag, verunstaltet.[129]

Baumgarten maintained that the failure to control the affective disposition jeopardized a capacity

[126]WA IV, 8, 40. Brief an Carl August, 3 November 1786
[127]HA XI, 370. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 22 Juli 1787
[128]HA XI 386. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 28 August 1787
[129]Baumgarten, 50.

for beautiful thought by permitting the emergence of various unconstrained affects that became manifest as presumptiousness, affectation, competitiveness, extravagance, inattentiveness and apathy. In keeping with ancient spiritual exercises in which a spectrum of unruly passions had to be subdued and even suppressed, Baumgarten prescribed the regulation of affective excesses that if left unbridled, came to debase apprehensions of beauty. He thereby deemed aesthetic exercise indispensable in ameliorating human perception's proneness, under the influence of the affects, to corruptibility and reductionism. Moreover, alongside the conscientious regulation of affects, Baumgarten also envisaged exercises designed to constructively orient perception prone to deviation, omission, dispersion and disorder. Contriving various exercises designed to remedy such perceptual deficiencies, he strove to ameliorate gaps in sensuous experience, eliminate errant and unreliable acts of memory and rectify perceptual inconsistencies. As Gabriel Trop argues, beautiful thinking implied eliminating perceptual failings to create "coherence in a world saturated with contingency, ambiguity, overwhelming detail and obscurity."[130] Hence aesthetic exercise turned on fulfilling the dual demands of eliminating affective sources of contamination and effectively guiding sensuous inputs in disarray to organize them in ways conducive to the apprehension of beauty.

Baumgarten's aesthetic exercises, by no means exhausted by the necessity of disciplining the affects and coordinating sense data, also importantly aimed to tap into an artwork's sensuous surplus in order to facilitate a qualitatively enlarged and amplified apprehension of it. As one commentator notes, the aim of beautiful thinking lay "not just—in the representation of some objective perfection in a form accessible to our senses, but rather—or also—in the exploitation of the specific possibilities of sensible representation for their own sake."[131]While Baumgarten

[130]Trop, 61.
[131]Leonard P. Wessel Jr., "Alexander Baumgarten's Contribution to the Development of Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.

maintained that objective knowledge demanded cognitive determinations ensuring a thoroughgoing distinctness and clarity of perception, the aesthetic apprehension of beauty was not amenable to such analytical reduction. If rational cognition sought to impoverish and even eliminate the sensuous material constitutive of aesthetic experience, aesthetic sense-making was based on exploiting the variety, richness and vividness forfeited by conceptual determination.[132]

Goethe not only set store in the virtue of practice, he was persuaded that the ability to penetrate the fundamental forms of artworks in Italy depended on containing subjective affects that threatened to corrupt aesthetic perception to refocus on the sensuous essence of the art object. This implied adopting a mode of perception wherein sensuous-cognitive faculties were made to approximate the objects of observation to grasp them in as pure a form as possible: " *das Objekt rein, als nur zu tun wäre, in mich aufzunehmen*."[133]Indeed, the prominent feature of Goethe's practice of 'gegenständliches Sehen,' was its object-centered character that placed a premium on perception free of the impurities of an excessively subjective perspective. Goethe's contemporaries thus pointed to his unceasing commitment to defeat subjectivism so as to disclose the true colors of the objects of his observation. Heinrich Heine famously characterized Goethe's objectual mode of apprehension as one that avoided the pitfalls of subjective particularism to realize a lucid, all-embracing perspective:

> In dieser Hinsicht möchte ich am liebsten auf Goethes »Italienische Reise« hindeuten, indem wir alle, entweder durch eigne Betrachtung oder durch fremde Vermittelung, das Land Italien kennen, und dabei so leicht bemerken, wie jeder dasselbe mit subjektiven Augen ansieht, dieser mit achenhölzern unmutigen Augen, die nur das Schlimme sehen, jener mit begeisterten Corinnaaugen, die überall nur das Herrliche sehen, während Goethe, mit seinem klaren Griechenauge, alles sieht, das Dunkle und das Helle, nirgends die Dinge mit seiner Gemütsstimmung koloriert, und uns Land und Menschen schildert, in den wahren Umrissen und wahren Farben, womit sie Gott umkleidet.[134]

30:3 (Spring 1972) 337.
[132]Beiser, 147.
[133]BA 16, 12-14. Tag und Jahres Hefte 1789
[134]G. A. E. Bogeng, *Heines Werke in Einzelausgaben* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1826) 131-132.

Heine alludes to the defects of J. W. von Archenholz's tendentious observations of Italy, which systematically disparaged its cultural heritage by way of prejudicial comparison with Britain.[135] He likewise dismisses Madame de Staël's romantic apprehension of Italy, which expressed unqualified veneration for its artistic patrimony. Avoiding the antipodes of dismissive critique and adulation that arose from giving way to affects and subjective bias, Goethe practiced an objectual mode of observation characterized by a certain reserve and sobriety that endeavored to see art objets for what they were by avoiding the dictates of the passions and the influence of specious opinion.

The defining feature of a 'gegendständliches Sehen' of art objects was the scrupulous limitation of subjective affects inimical to attaining a higher disinterested perspective. Insisting that a clear distinction be made between the object's identity and its capacity to arouse or repel desire in the observing subject, Goethe noted the tendency of traveling observers to conflate the nature of the object with the impressions it made on them: "Ich muß immer heimlich lachen wenn ich Fremde sehe, die beym ersten Anblick eines groβen Monumentes *sich den besondern Effekt notiren, den es auf sie macht*."[136]Susceptible to the whims of their emotions, most travelers were oblivious to the true nature of the object. But while seeking to distinguish himself from such impressionable observers by divesting himself of subjective pretensions, Goethe was confronted with a whole new class of art objects resisting simple disclosure that made the adoption of a dispassionate, circumspect form of investigation, indispensable. In order to keep from sullying his observations with illegitimate sources of subjectivity, he conscientiously exercised self-censorship, curtailing his affects insofar as possible: "Ich lebe sehr diät und halte

[135]WA IV, 8, 75. Italienische Reise, Brief an Johann Gottfried und Caroline Herder, 2. Dez 1786 "Zufällig habe ich hier Archenholzens "Italien" gefunden. Freilich hat er die Sachen gesehen aber um eine groβtuige, verachtende Manier galten zu machen, besitzt er viel zu wenig Kenntnisse und stolpert lobend und tadelnd."
[136]WA IV, 8, 292. Brief an Carl August, 17 Nov 1787

mich ruhig *damit die Gegenstände keine erhöhten Seele finden...*"[137]Goethe recognized that the failure to arrest the vagaries of the emotions, made one prone to affectation. But notwithstanding his acute awareness that subjective presumption was liable to compromise perception, he acknowledged the difficulty of visual apprehension unmoved by feelings and sentiments: "Aber wenn es nun darauf ankommt *die Sachen um ihrer selbst willen zu sehen*, den Künsten aufs Marck zu dringen, das Gebildete und Hervorgebrachte *nicht nach dem Effeckt den es auf uns macht*, sondern nach seinem innern Werthe zu beurtheilen; dann fühlt man erst wie schwer die Aufgabe ist..." [138]Indeed, in the context of Italy's impressive array of exceptional artworks, the observer was all the more susceptible to feeling overwhelmed, mistaking features of the observed object with the overpowering affects it elicited. Goethe thus endeavored to appropriate a 'gegenständliches Sehen' purified of subjective influences that would permit him to access the essence of objects of his observation. This involved devising a host of strategies that not only monitored the affects but served to creatively reorient perception, compensating for perceptual incoherencies and rectifying sensible contingencies to organize the sensuous plentitude of Italy's art objects in ways conducive to distilling their underlying forms. Indeed Goethean exercises involved redirecting impurities arising from deficient viewing conditions, ameliorating artifacts corrupted by human negligence, recuperating sculpture disfigured by the wear and tear of time, eliminating discordant elements of successively rebuilt architectural structures and states of indeterminacy to optimize aesthetic apprehension of artworks and attain eever enhanced levels of sophistication in the manipulation of sensuous inputs.[139]

Ideal and Real Observations of art: Seeing 'in concreto' vs. Seeing 'in abstracto'

Beyond his efforts to assimilate 'gegenständliches Sehen' by curbing subjective affects to

[137]WA III, 1, 226.Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, Vincenza, 24 Sept. 1786
[138]WA IV 8, 96. Brief an Herzogin Louise, 23 Dez 1786
[139]Trop, 71.

adhere exclusively to the object, Goethe, like Baumgarten, set out to exhaust the sensuous plentitude inhering in the artwork. He too recognized that while discursive exercises of rational thought endeavored to reduce sensuous work, streamlining complexity to minimize the risk of cognitive error, aesthetic exercises strove to maximize sensible qualities, mining the density of sensuous signification latent in the artwork. He thereby set out to cultivate the specific ability to differentiate, intensify and exhaust an art object's sensuous phenomenality.[140]Indeed, Goethe in a way went much beyond the techniques envisaged by Baumgarten by probing an entire spectrum of polarities conditioning both his perceptual faculties and the objects of his observation, devising novel aesthetic exercises designed to exploit sensible representation and extract the plethora of sensuous meaning residing in art objects. One way that he attempted to ascertain the character of such a sensible surplus was by probing the opposition between the real and ideal in his observations of artworks.

Perceptual discrepancies between ideal and real

Throughout his journey, Goethe alerted readers of the *Italian Journey* to the necessity of grasping the difference between experiencing artworks in their facticity (seeing in concreto) and apprehending them in their ideality (seeing in abstracto). Here, he was no longer concerned with the observer's degree of responsiveness to reality, his capacity to affirm an artwork's living presence, but rather his mode of apprehension as a function of the state of the object in the world. Indeed, in the late 18th century, Italy's artistic patrimony was such that travelers were frequently confronted with noteworthy discrepancies between their ideal expectations of a work and its actual condition. This was partially owed to the fact that the artists of his day tended to portray Italy in a misleading way, producing images that left illusory impressions on their viewers'

[140]Trop, 65.

consciousness. Exercising considerable artistic discretion, they tended to abstract from a work's empirical state in order to contrive idealized, pristine states, nowhere to be found in reality. Among the liberties they took included juxtaposing monuments to create the illusion of harmonious contiguity, depicting unfinished buildings in their fully completed states, significantly ameliorating dilapidated structures and embellishing ancient ruins in an effort to evoke the picturesque. Goethe remarked on the disingenuous methods of vedute artists, who were particularly skilled at deploying such artifice: "die Trümmer der Antoninischen oder Caracallischen Bäder, von denen uns Piranesi so manches Effektreiche vorgefabelt, konnten auch dem malerisch gewöhnten Auge in der Gegenwart kaum einige Zufriedenheit geben."[141] Long won over by the fictions invoked in vedute, the traveler in Italy typically found himself disenchanted. Depictions showcasing the unblemished splendour of Italy's architectural patrimony blatently contradicted the real circumstances of cities littered with hovels and haphazard dwellings, sprawling with derelict churches and unfinished palazzi. Goethe aptly likened the discrepancy to the contrast between the lofty images of a poetic imagination and the much more banal impressions awakened by the prose writer: "Tausendmal habe ich klagen hören, dass ein durch Erzählung gekannter Gegenstand *in der Gegenwart nicht mehr befriedige*; die Ursache hiervon ist immer dieselbe: Einbildung und Gegenwart verhalten sich wie Poesie und Prosa, jene wird die Gegenstände mächtig und steil denken, diese sich immer in die Fläche verbreiten."[142] In an effort to reorient an eye prepossesed by overstated representations of Italy's cultural landscape, Goethe consciously endeavored both to filter out the idealized prefigurations imprinted on his visual consciousness and to develop specific techniques designed to achieve a productive synthesis between the real and the ideal.

[141]HA 11, 451. Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Dezember
[142]HA XI, 312. Italienische Reise, Messina, 13 Mai 1787

But perceptual incongruities between an art object's ideal and real states were not simply the residue of fictitious depictions, their actual source lay in the disheartening state of Italy's empirical reality. Goethe remarked of the illusions harbored by the conventional traveler: "Er erwartet alle die Gegenstände von denen er so vieles hat reden hören, nicht zu finden, wie der Himmel und die Umstände wollen, sondern so rein wie sie in seiner Imagination stehen und fast nichts findet er so, fast nichts kann er so geniessen."[143] Transported to a world in which human feces littered public courtyards and rubbish cast out into the streets collected around civic monuments, Goethe bemoaned the despoilment of the public space of art in Italy:"Hier ist was zerstört, hier was angekleckt, hier stinckts, hier rauchts, hier ist Schmutz."[144] But the negligence of the indigenous population was not the sole cause of Italy's debased artistic patrimony, it suffered equally at the hands of those entrusted with its preservation. Goethe thus met with churches fallen into disrepair, villas housing blemished frecoes, and art collections replete with carelessly exhibited artifacts. Little wonder that the pitiful state of Italian museums with their poor lighting and obstructionist modes of display, immediately provoked comparison with the Mannheim gallery's irreproachable conditions: "Alle diese herrlichen Gebilde konnten durch Auf- und Zuziehen der Vorhänge in das vorteilhafteste Licht gestellt werden; überdiess waren sie auf ihren Postamenten beweglich und nach Belieben zu wenden und zu drehen."[145] Prior exposure to circumstances designed to enhance observations of art objects exacerbated Italy's suboptimal viewing conditions. Scandalized by the frequently abysmal state of art, Goethe's initial enthusiasm for enlivened, first impressions increasingly gave way to the need to achieve a pure, unadulterated impression (einen reinen Eindrück) through techniques designed to mediate ideal and real facets of art objects.

[143]WA III, 1, 230. Italienische Reise 25. Sept 1786
[144]WA III, 1, 230. Italienische Reise 25. Sept 1786
[145]HA IX, 500. Dichtung und Wahrheit, Dritter Teil, elftes Buch

Aesthetic Exercises Mediating Ideal and Real

Goethe employed various strategies to redress perceptual incommensurabilities that drove a wedge between ideal and empirical states of artworks in Italy. While he could do little to avoid the defiled and unkempt state of artworks suffering from pollution and dilapidation, the deficient conditions of certain works occasioned experimentation designed to ameliorate their apprehension. For instance, in the case of observing sculptural fragments, Goethe strove to productively harness ideal and real elements in seeing. Conversant with the then fashionable idea that the studied inspection of a well-executed torso enabled an observer to visualize its missing appendages, Goethe made recourse to aesthetic exercises simulating ideal-real seeing to imaginatively reconstitute fragmentary sculptures. In the case of the Belvedere torso, for instance, he carefully inspected its contorted pose, marshaling his powers of extrapolation to project the missing elements to see it whole and complete. [146] Goethe deployed similar methods in his observations of a work he initially beheld with artistically recreated lower limbs, which he subsequently re-observed upon the recovery of its originals. Versed in a form of visual deduction mediating ideal and real visual elements, he claimed to immediately discern the superiority of the original limbs of the Farnese Hercules, questioning how he could ever have appreciated the replacements. Goethe thus strove to exploit the sensuous signification latent in works that were no longer whole and complete. Exhibiting a exceptional perfection of form, their technical virtuosity could be ascertained through exercises of the imagination despite their partial, incomplete states. Indeed, in endeavoring to recuperate the ruptured meanings of antique torsos, Goethe came to recognize that vision operated through a complex cognitive interplay of idealization and real determination that could be creatively configured through aesthetic exercises devised to compensate for the all too often fragmentary state of ancient statuary.

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But if Goethe sought to redress the deficits of Italy's artifacts, imaginatively compensating for their suboptimal conditions, he also returned to the idealized representations that had determined his first impressions. Rather than dismiss the artistic license exhibited in them, he began to inspect the way in which they added or took away from reality. This in turn helped him to monitor his own tendencies to embellish or impoverish the objects of his immediate observation, whereby he had to perpetually guard against drawing illegitimate inferences that served to distort an object's real character. At the same token, idealization aided the observer to discover dimensions of an artwork not immediately perceptible. Goethe thus devised exercises premised on inspecting reproductions of artworks he had beheld in person, asking his painter friend, Wilhelm Tischbein, to procure a set of the best masters in charcoal and watercolor to compare artistic idealizations with reality. Switching back and forth between artistic image and reality proved instructive insofar as it drew attention to dimensions of a work normally taken for granted. Moreover, by collecting representations of a given work executed by several different artists to juxtapose them against one another, Goethe was able to draw out disparities in emphasis. Viewing one and the same work through the eyes of diverse artists, helped him to obtain a nuanced overview, discovering aspects of a work that went unnoticed when viewed in reality. The juxtaposition of ideal and real thus brought to the fore the aesthetic surplus of sense that escaped a one dimensional apprehension of an artwork.

Once he had exhausted exercises designed to delineate ideal from real elements in seeing, Goethe strove to create a productive nexus between them. Indeed, if Baumgarten had pointed to the necessity of training the mind to recognize and remember diverse aspects of artworks, Goethe developed and honed his capacities for image retention and retrieval, resuscitating artworks from memory to project them onto reality. Endowed with an eidetic ability that

permitted him to recall paintings beheld in the past with impressive detail and accuracy, Goethe took to exercising a mode of ideal-real seeing in which he perceived the forms of reality through previously beheld artistic images. He first mentioned his capacity to see nature through the discerning eyes of the painter in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*: "Es war das erstemal, daβ ich auf einem so hohen Grad die Gabe gewahr wurde, die ich nachher mit mehrerem Bewuβtsein übte, die Natur nämlich mit den Augen dieses oder jenes Künstlers zu sehen, dessen Werken ich soeben eine besondere Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet hatte."[147] Later, in the *Italian Journey*, he pondered the consequences of his aesthetic ability: "Meine alte Gabe, die Welt mit Augen desjenigen Malers zu sehen, dessen Bilder ich mir eben eingedrückt, brachte mich auf einen eignen Gedanken."[148] Prior to his journey, Goethe essentially valued art for its capacity to render the world in all of its realism. He thus harbored a strong preference for faithful imitations of nature: "Was ich nicht als Natur ansehen, an die Stelle der Natur setzen, mit einem bekannten Gegenstand vergleichen konnte, war auf mich nicht wirksam."[149]Furnished with a robust sense for the empirical, he had long proceeded from perceptions of the real to search for their presence in artworks. He was accordingly especially fond of Dutch landscape painting, that displaying a marked fidelity to nature, recreated an ambience of the real.[150] In Italy, by contrast, Goethe began to see reality through the ideal forms endowed to it by artists. His first glimpse of the Tyrol landscape immediately conjured up images of the Dutch master, Everdingen, while a view of the village of Sterzing became the scene of Heinrich Roos' idyllic pastorals.[151] Goethe effectively engaged in the exercise of transposing familiar artworks into his daily perceptions of reality. In Rome he maintained, "Man darf nur auf der Straße wandeln und Augen haben, man sieht die

[147]HA IX, 320. Dichtung und Wahrheit, 2. Teil, 8. Buch
[148]HA XI, 85. Italienische Reise, 8. Okt 1786
[149]WA I, 27, 349. Dichtung und Wahrheit
[150] Petra Maisak, "Der Zeichner Goethe oder Die practische Liebhaberey in den Kunsten" in *Goethe und die Kunst* ed. Sabine Schulze (Ostfidern: Hatje, 1994) 110.
[151]HA XI, 25. Italienische Reise, 11.Sept.1786.

unnachahmlichsten Bilder."[152] Likewise, a visit to the house of Palladio led him to imagine it as a representation by Canaletto. Upon catching sight of a Gondolier's oars tracing brushstrokes across the pale green laguna in Venice, he claimed to lay eyes on the best work of the Venetian masters:

> Als ich bei hohem Sonnenschein durch die Lagunen fuhr und auf den Gondelrändern die Gondoliere, leicht schwebend, bunt bekleidet, rudernd, betrachtete, wie sie auf der hellgrünen Fläche sich in der blauen Luft zeichneten, so sah ich das beste, frischeste Bild der venezianischen Schule.[153]

Elsewhere, Goethe wrote of perceiving landscapes in Palermo refined by an artistic varnish that made it impossible to see them as products of raw nature: "Man sah keine Natur mehr, sondern nur Bilder, wie sie der künstlichste Maler durch Lasieren auseinander gestuft hatte."[154] But perhaps the most telling admission of his growing proclivity to see reality through the ideal lens of art arose in the wake of exposure to the Sistine chapel. Goethe maintained that having seen reality through Michelangelo's grandiose vision, he could no longer appreciate what was merely found in nature.[155]Engaging in aesthetic exercises that superimposed artistic images onto reality to achieve a perfect continuity between them thus helped Goethe to discern the contours of artistic form that lay at the very intersection between real and ideal. Moreover, ideal-real seeing sowed the seeds for Goethe's growing conviction that the artist could not be content to simply reproduce nature in all of its empirical detail.

The activity of apprehending the world through ideal artistic forms retained in his memory took on its most tangible manifestation in Goethe's practice of perceiving reality through the plastic forms of statuary. With his growing familiarity with antique sculpture, Goethe came to exercise a mode of seeing empirical human forms through their ideal contours. Upon

[152]HA XI, 212. Italienische Reise, Neapel 19 März 1787
[153]HA XI, 86. Italienische Reise, 8. Okt 1786
[154]HA XI, 240. Italienische Reise, Palermo, 7. April 1787
[155]Vittorio Hösle, "Religion of Art, Self-Mythicization and the function of the church year in Goethe's Italienische Reise," *Religion & Literature* 38.4 (Winter 2006): 5.

observing a group of agile, Italian youths playing football in the Verona amphitheatre, he thus remarked: "Die schönsten Stellungen, wert, in Marmor nachgebildet zu werden... sie nähert sich der des Borghesischen Fechters."[156] Calling to mind the life-size Hellenistic sculpture, the 'Borghese gladiator,' Goethe saw the players' physiques through ideal proportions, apprehending them as approximations of artistic canons of human form. Elsewhere, he reflected on his discernment of anatomical proportions amongst the Italian masses that perfectly coincided with classical aesthetic norms: "Ich habe in Italien unter der gemeinsten Menschenklasse Körper gesehen gleich den schönsten Antiken und andere, die entkleidet, dem Künstler durch die Regelmäβigkeit ihres Baues den vollkommensten Torso vertraten..."[157] Goethe's practice of aesthetic exercises involving the visual recall of ideal forms from memory to pick them out in reality habituated him to apprehending human body through aesthetic criteria of ratio, proportion and symmetry. Indeed, his discernment of a perfect convergence between ideal standards and real life figures is perhaps best illustrated in his reception of the tableaux vivants put on by Lady Hamilton, the wife of the British envoy to Sicily. Bedraped in Greek raiments, her physical frame became for Goethe, the living incarnation of the totality of antique sculpture. He remarked, "Man schaut, was so viele tausend Künstler gerne geleistet hätten, hier ganz fertig in Bewegung und überraschender Abwechslung."[158]Hamilton's physiognomy called to mind all the Roman profiles engraved on Sizilian coins, while her supple figure evoked the harmonious proportions of the most acclaimed sculptures, not least, the Apollo of Belvedere. By extrapolating from a canon of human proportion acquired through his study of ancient statuary, Goethe came to apprehend real-life human specimens as exemplars of ideal artistic forms.

Finding himself in an environment particularly conducive to engaging in aesthetic

[156]HA XI, 44, Italienische Reise, Verona 16 Sept 1786
[157]GG 1, 149. Gespräch mit Johann Daniel Falk 1794
[158]HA XI, 208, Italienische Reise, Caserta, 16. März 1787

exercises coalescing ideal representation and real perceptions, Goethe tapped into an unexplored reservoir of aesthetic meaning in order systematically to view artworks as ideal extensions of nature's products. He came to believe that the task of the artist was not to reproduce reality, but to bring to bear a 'second nature' that at once real and artistically ideal, consummated nature's unfulfilled intentions to render visible its higher ideals. Rediscovering the pastoral scenes of his preferred painter, Claude Lorrain, on the outskirts of Rome, Goethe thus maintained: "Die Mahlerey ist für das Auge wahrer, als das Wirkliche selbst. Sie stellt auf, was der Mensch sehen möchte und sollte, nicht was er gewöhnlich sieht."[159] The ability to resuscitate artistic images fusing them with the exact sensory representation of his own vision to establish continuity between them thus profoundly influenced Goethe's conception of art, persuading him that the purpose of art was not to faithfully adhere to the world, but to capture reality's higher truth by bringing its mundane features under an ideal aspect.[160]

Historical versus Ahistorical exercises in Seeing

Through the practice of historical and ahistorical modes of observation, Goethe explored a further variant of visual exercise premised on probing oppositions to exploit the sensuous plentitude of artworks and cultivate his objective powers of aesthetic judgment. If the prominent feature of Italy's cultural topography was its manifestation of the past, no itinerary of aesthetic exercises would be complete without accounting for the visual effects of the historical progression of time. Here, diverse capacities that Baumgarten had identified as the appropriate object of aesthetic exercise were brought to bear. Baumgarten recommended the cultivation of memory, which connected present perceptions with perceptions previously experienced (§ 33),

[159]WA II, 5, 12. Über die Farbenlehre

[160]GG 7, 73. Goethe indicates his ultimate position on mimesis in the context of discussing Lorrain in a conversation with Eckermann dating 10.4. 1829 "Die Bilder haben die höchste Wahrheit, aber keine Spur von Wirklichkeit. Claude Lorrain kannte die reale Welt bis ins kleinste Detail auswendig, und er gebrauchte sie als Mittel, um die Welt seiner schönen Seele auszudrücken. Und das ist eben die wahre Idealität, die sich realer Mittel so zu bedienen weiβ, daβ das erscheinende Wahre eine Täuschung hervorbringt, als sei es wirklich."

foresight, which connected the past with the future through the present (§ 36), and reproductive imagination, which brought the past to mind when the object is no longer present (§ 31). Goethe creatively brought to bear each of these abilities in the form of aesthetic exercises probing the historical evolution of classical artworks. Faced with ancient monuments and buildings that had undergone transformation in the course of centuries through destruction, decay or conversion, he developed a historical regard in which he invoked states of a structure absent to direct sensory intuition in order to identify its no longer discernible origins and project the character of its future manifestations.

While the facades and exteriors of Italy's ancient architectural structures offered posterity a particularly revealing visual record of its artistic legacy, the fact that they were often ill preserved and in a state of ruin presented the observer with a formidable challenge. Alongside relatively well intact monuments including Greco-Roman temples, tombs, aqueducts, triumphal arches, mausoleums, and amphitheaters, the Italian journeyer met with an impressive mass of cultural wreckage. While certain fragmentary structures such as the Caracalla baths were of a scale and magnitude that enabled the viewer to resuscitate an image of their former glory, others had deteriorated to perceptually irrecuperable states. Goethe thus complained of the lamentable conditions of Italy's historical objects: "(man) muss alles aus unendlichen, obgleich überreichen Trümmern zusammenstoppeln."[161] In Sicily, where volcanic forces also contributed to the general state of degradation, he recognized the need to exercise restorative viewing techniques that drew on expertise of ancient architecture:

> Unser geistlicher Begleiter...führte uns, die Reste alter Baukunst zu sehen, *zu welchen der Beschauer freilich ein starkes Restaurationstalent mitbringen muss*. Man zeigte die Reste von Wasserbehältern, einer Naumachie und andere dergleichen Ruinen, die aber bei der vielfachen Zerstörung der Stadt durch Laven, Erdbeben und Krieg dergestalt verschüttet

[161]HA XI, 163. Italienische Reise, Rom, 22. Januar 1786

> und versenkt sind, dass Freude und Belehrung nur dem genauesten Kenner altertümlicher Baukunst daraus entspringen kann.[162]

Faced not only with the wear and tear of time, but with natural catastrophes or damage from war, Goethe had to account for the effects of successive invasion, looting, abandonment and neglect. Upon leaving Sicily to return to Naples, he reflected on the natural ravage and cultural despoilment that had progressively beset Italy's extraordinary patrimony:

> Wir hatten doch eigentlich nichts gesehen, als durchaus eitle Bemühungen des Menschengeschlechts, sich gegen die Gewaltsamkeit der Natur, gegen die hämische Tücke der Zeit und gegen den Groll ihrer eigenen feindseligen Spaltungen zu erhalten. Die Karthager, Griechen und Römer und so viele nachfolgende Völkerschaften haben gebaut und zerstört.[163]

If the partial, fragmentary character of damaged and destroyed architectural structures proved a real impediment to observation, their visual grasp was further complicated by local building practices. Indeed, the ubiquity of haphazard rebuilding in Italy yielded a labyrinthine sedimentation of architectural forms spanning across historical periods. For example, the ruins comprising the Roman Forum, marked by successive periods of building in which earlier structures were incorporated into newer ones without discrimination, subjected the viewer to a staggering heterogeneity of architectural styles. By Goethe's time, the Forum had become the scene of large-scale dismantling and rearrangement, where rather than rebuild former monuments, shortsighted modern architects either took them apart or arbitrarily built over them to obscure their original character.[164] Goethe thus remarked: "...es ist ein saures und trauriges Geschäft, das alte Rom aus dem neuen herauszuklauben...Was die Barbaren stehen liessen, haben die Baumeister der neuen Roms verwüstet."[165] But despite the fact that the Roman capital was nothing but a heap of ruins marked by often indiscriminate rebuilding, an appreciation of its artistic evolution was crucial: "Gewiß man muß sich einen eignen Sinn machen Rom zu sehn,

[162]HA XI, 295. Italienische Reise, Catania, 6. Mai 1787
[163]HA XI, 313. Italienische Reise, Messina 13 Mai 1787
[164]David Watkin, *The Roman Forum*. (London: Profile, 2009) 46.
[165]HA XI, 129. Italienische Reise, Rom, 7. Nov 1786

alles ist nur Trümmer, und doch, wer diese Trümmer nicht gesehn hat, kann sich von Größe keinen Begriff machen."[166] If Italy's cityscapes were saturated with relics of the past, no negligible part of which had suffered disfigurement, Goethe pursued visual exercises cultivating a historical regard permitting him to grasp their original grandeur and progressive modification.

Exercises in Historical regard

Notwithstanding Goethe's initial dismay at finding Italy's monuments and artworks in ruins, the more he became acquainted with its wealth of 'artistic rubble,' the more he was cognizant of the need for a historically informed mode of observation. Disabused of the myth of unchanging monuments existing in unblemished perfection, he developed techniques to visually salvage them from the decay, ruin and deformation suffered over succeeding generations, whereby his response to the unsatisfactory condition of Roman ruins was to cultivate a historical regard equipping him to discern their prior, unadulterated states. The most extreme case necessitating such exercises in restorative viewing, was one in which the dismanteled remains of a given structure were used to create a completely new one elsewhere. Goethe thus noted of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls,

> ein aus alten herrlichen Resten groß und kunstreich zusammengestelltes Monument... Mancher wundersame Rest kolossaler höchst verzierter Architektur an Kapitälen findet sich hier anständig aufbewahrt, aus den Ruinen von dem ehmals nahe gelegenen, jetzo fast ganz verschwundenen Palast des Caracalla entnommen und gerettet.[167]

Italy's buildings often underwent such radical transformation that in order to recognize their conversion, remains from one location had to be reconstituted in another, whereby the viewer had to perceive the way in which a new whole had been recreated from a previous, unrelated one. If Goethe intimated that a literal recycling of architectural elements served to preserve important remains, it likewise complicated an already intricate legacy of inheritance.

[166]WA IV, 8, 56-57. Brief an Knebel, 17 Nov1786
[167]HA XI, 451. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Dez 1787

Notwithstanding, determined to acquire the expertise needed to perform feats of observation capable of deciphering architectural transmutations, Goethe set out to absolve a repertoire of aesthetic exercises in historical seeing.

Goethe initially sought to probe the form transformations impacting architectural works that had remained relatively well intact over the centuries. Given that the majority of important Roman buildings were inspired by the Greek architectural tradition, it was imperative to identify the standard upon which they had been modeled. Once the observer singled out the prototype, he could determine the way in which vestiges of diverse artistic traditions made their appearance in their later, modern manifestations. Goethe thus traveled to Magna Graecia in search of originary sources. Initiated for the first time into the foundations of Italy's classical architectural past, he was exposed to Greek originals untouched by Roman influences. Here, he recounted the alienation he felt upon encountering the unwieldy features of the fifth century Doric temples of Paestum.[168]Faced with mammoth structures that appeared weighed down by voluminous, cumbersome columns, he sought to alleviate the deleterious impression they made on him. Like most of his contemporaries, Goethe was accustomed to Greek architecture of a more evolved build and design, incorporating Ionic or Corrinthian columns, the slender proportions of which imparted a sense of grace and harmony.[169]Upon surveying the ruins at Girgenti, he thus remarked of the contrast that progressively characterized building styles: "Der Tempel der Konkordia hat so vielen Jahrhunderten widerstanden; seine schlanke Baukunst nähert ihn schon unserm Maßstabe des Schönen und Gefälligen, er verhält sich zu denen von Pästum wie Göttergestalt zum Riesenbilde."[170] In order to do justice to the comparatively coarse Doric build, Goethe had to reorient his gaze, making recourse to a historical regard that required him to call to mind the

[168]Simon Richter, *The Literature of Weimar Classicism* (Rochester : Camden House, 2005) 71.
[169]HA XI, 218-219. Italienische Reise, Neapel, Freitag, den 23. März 1787
[170]HA XI, 274. Italienische Reise, Girgenti 25 April 1787

visual severity of an earlier more primitive artistic period:

> Ich befand mich in einer völlig fremden Welt...Doch nahm ich mich bald zusammen, erinnerte mich der Kunstgeschichte, gedachte der Zeit, deren Geist solche Bauart gemäβ fand,vergegenwärtigte mir den strengen Stil der Plastik, und in weniger als einer Stunde fühlte ich mich befreundet...[171]

By drawing a mental comparison with primitive Etruscan and ancient Greek statuary that struck one as less refined than their Roman successors, Goethe sought to contextualize his observations of Doric architecture. Once he had become sufficiently accustomed to its archaic form, he came to appreciate its distinctive features, claiming to discern its culmination as an architectural style:

> In dem weiten Raum zwischen den Mauern und dem Meer finden sich noch die Reste eines kleinen Tempels, als christliche Kapelle erhalten. Auch hier sind Halbsäulen mit den Quaderstücken der Mauer aufs schönste verbunden, und beides ineinander gearbeitet; höchst erfreulich dem Auge. Man glaubt genau den Punkt zu fühlen, wo die dorische Ordnung ihr vollendetes Maß erhalten hat.[172]

The more Goethe became familiarized with the formal attributes of pre-Roman architecture, the more he was able to see the solid virtues of what had initially struck him as crude, heavy and excessive in scale. He eventually concluded of the archaic style: "An allen seinen uns überlieferten Trümmern erkennen wir, wieviel uns die alte Welt an freudigem Kunstsinn voraus war, wenn sie gleich *in strenger Handwerksfertigkeit weit hinter uns zurückblieb*."[173] Acquaintance with the foundational features of an earlier Greek tradition thus paved the way for Goethe's discernment of the ways in which Italian architects had absorbed classical influences. This in turn alerted him to later, specifically Roman architectural innovations including the development of arches, vaults and domes and street colonnades, where structures were pushed to their maximum potential in the form of soaring arches, double tiered arches and domes which spanned seemingly impossible distances.[174]

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[171]HA XI 218-219. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 23 März 1787
[172]HA XI, 277. Italienische Reise, Girgenti 16 April 1787
[173]HA XI 342. Italienische Reise, 1. Juni 1787
[174]Mark Cartwright, "Roman Architecture." *Ancient History Encyclopedia*., (Oct 2013) Web. 24 Sep 2017 Available FTP; https://www.ancient.eu/Roman_Architecture/

In light of the relatively eclectic range of Roman appropriations of Greek architecture, Goethe saw the need to school himself in a genuinely historical mode of viewing. As Herbert von Einem maintained,Die Erfahrung der Geschichtlichkeit der Kunst ist Goethe in Italien aufgegangen.”[175]Goethe accordingly embraced the prescriptions of the pioneering Hellenist, art historian and archeologist, J.J. Winckelmann, who claimed that classical Roman structures bid the viewer to study their historical past: "*Zuerst* also wird man bei dem ungeheueren und doch nur trümmerhaften Reichtum dieser Stadt, bei jedem Kunstgegenstand aufgefordert, *nach der Zeit zu fragen, die ihm das Dasein gegeben*."[176] Given the need to fathom the historical character of Italy's artistic remains, Goethe conscientiously subjected himself to a regimen of exercises in visual excavation that attempted to reconstruct works in the states first conceived by their creators. He described his recuperative efforts as follows:

> ...in dem Kunstwerck nur den Gedancken des Künstlers, die erste Ausführung, das Leben der ersten Zeit da das Werck entstand heraussuchen und es wieder rein in meine Seele bringen, abgeschieden von allem was die Zeit, der alles unterworfen ist und der Wechsel der Dinge darauf gewürckt haben.[177]

In order to identify the true provenance of a structure, the observer had to determine which tradition it relied upon. Once he unearthed its origins, he sought to visualize its initial condition by exercising restorative efforts and abstracting from the alterations it underwent in the course of history. Recuperating originary forms implied that the observer exercise a certain latitude, superimposing missing structures or disregarding foreign annexations. He then proceeded to meticulously probe the derivative forms the structure assumed, forever keeping in mind its indebtedness to its antecedents. While the attempt to resuscitate the original state of a building required abstracting from temporal influences, it effectively presupposed acquaintance with an entire historical lineage. Such a historical regard could only be developed through absolving a

[175]Herbert von Einem, *Goethe-Studien* (München: Wilhelm Fink 1972) 120.
[176]HA XI, 166. Italienische Reise, Rom 28 Jan 1787
[177]WA III, 1, 231.Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, 25 Sept 1786

rigorous regimen of aesthetic exercises that systematically compared past and present forms of various constructions: "*man kann das Gegenwärtige nicht ohne das Vergangene erkennen und die Vergleichung von beiden erfordert mehr Zeit*."[178] Once again, Goethe took his cue from Winckelmann, holding up the necessity of comparative exercises discriminating between architectural periods in order to recognize stylistic modifications and discontinuities:

> Durch Winckelmann sind wir dringend aufgeregt, die Epochen zu sondern, den verschiedenen Stil zu erkennen, dessen sich die Völker bedienten, den sie infolge der Zeiten nach und nach ausgebildet und zuletzt wieder verbildet.[179]

Appreciating Italy's patrimony thus involved acquiring a sense for the architectural changes that transpired over the course of centuries :

> Wenn man bedenkt, daß Jahrhunderte hier im höchsten Sinne architektonisch gewaltet, daß auf übriggebliebenen mächtigen Substruktionen die künstlerischen Gedanken vorzüglicher Geister sich hervorgehoben und den Augen dargestellt, so wird man gegreifen, wie sich Geist und Aug' entzücken müssen..[180]

The ascertainment of a structure's point of departure and its subsequent trajectory of development shed light on the way in which later architects were indebted to their predecessors to build upon the past in ever new configurations that delighted the schooled observer.

The attainment of a genuinely historical grasp of architecture, permitting the observer to discern the form transformations required to historically situate and stylistically appraise a structure, depended in no negligible measure on an extended period of self-instruction:

> *Eine vieljährige entschiedene Übung des Auges ist nötig, und man muß erst lernen, um fragen zu können*. Da hilft kein Zaudern und Zögern, die Aufmerksamkeit auf diesen wichtigen Punkt is nun einmal rege, und jeder, dem es Ernst ist, sieht wohl ein, daβ auch *in diesem Felde kein Urteil möglich ist, als wenn man es historisch entwickeln kann*."[181]

Ever concerned to develop his aesthetic judgment, Goethe knew all too well that a historical grasp of Italy's monuments was one element upon which a claim to taste could be based,

[178]HA XI, 164. Italienische Reise, Rom 25.1.1787
[179]HA XI, 166. Itlienische Reise, Rom 28.1.1787
[180]HA XI, 407. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht September 1787
[181]HA XI, 166. Italienische Reise, 28 Jan 1787

whereby such a facility was not achieved overnight, demanding lengthy and comprehensive visual training. In light of such demands, one way of cultivating a historical regard was by deferring to evidence that lent insight on the circumstances of the past. Goethe thus recounted making recourse to documentation serving to reveal the former states of important monuments that had since undergone substantive change. He noted of his discovery of an illuminating set of sixteenth century copper prints:

> Dabei aber hatte sein Bücherforschen den Erfolg, daß er uns auf die ältern Kupferwerke des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts aufmerksam machte... Diese...haben besonders einen großen Wert, wenn man sie in guten Abdrücken vor sich sieht: *sie vergegenwärtigen jene frühere Zeit*, wo das Altertum mit Ernst und Scheu betrachtet und die Überbleibsel in tüchtigem Charakter ausgedrückt wurden. So näherte man sich z.B. den Kolossen, wie sie noch auf dem alten Fleck im Garten Colonna standen; die Halbruine des Septizoniums Severi gab noch den ungefähren Begriff von diesem verschwundenen Gebäude; die Peterskirche ohne Fassade, das große Mittel ohne Kuppel, der alte Vatikan, in dessen Hof noch Turniere gehalten werden konnten, *alles zog in die alte Zeit zurück und ließ zugleich aufs deutlichste bemerken, was die zwei folgenden Jahrhunderte für Veränderungen hervorgerufen und ungeachtet bedeutender Hindernisse das Zerstörte herzustellen, das Versäumte nachzuholen getrachtet*.[182]

Prints evincing artworks as they existed in the past not only helped Goethe to visualize their former states but aided him in bringing into relief the changes that had since transpired. Despite its often conjectural nature, Goethe took a noteworthy interest in artwork that aimed to artistically resuscitate Italy's architectural past:

> Ein Architekt hat eine gar artige Idee ausgeführt, er hat das jetzige Rom von einer Seite gezeichnet, wo es sich mit allen seinen Teilen gut ausnimmt. Dann hat er auf einem andern Blatte das alte Rom vorgestellt, als wenn man es aus demselben Standpunkt sähe. Die Orte, wo die alten Monumente gestanden, weiß man, ihre Form auch meistens, von vielen stehen noch die Ruinen. Nun hat er alles Neue weggetan und *das Alte wiederhergestellt, wie es etwa zu Zeiten Diokletians ausgesehen haben mag*, und mit ebensoviel Geschmack als Studium, und allerliebst gefärbt.[183]

Drawings exhibiting hypothetical historical reconstitutions thus contributed to Goethe's efforts to recover Italy's architectural past, not only by permitting him to envision structures in their original states but by facilitating comparison with their actual conditions.

[182]HA XI, 437. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht November
[183]HA XI, 386. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 28 August 1787

In addition to habituating his vision to the historical evolution of ancient structures by drawing on evidence revealing their former states, Goethe insisted that grasping the historical transmutations of Italy's remains necessitated acquaintance with its technical foundations. Here, it was incumbent upon the observer to study the methodological principles underwriting architecture: "Die Baukunst steigt vor mir wie ein alter Geist aus dem Grabe, *sie heist mich ihre Lehren wie die Regeln einer ausgestorbnen Sprache studieren*..."[184] Goethe began his studies by making recourse to the canonical authority on classical method, Vitruvius's *Ten Books on Architecture.*The sole architectural treatise surviving from antiquity, he quickly found its arcane style impenetrable, eventually turning to the work of a modern architect. In procuring a copy of Andrea Palladio's *Four Books on Architecture*, he was privy to a more transparent explication that permit him to better recognize the classical rules informing Italy's architecture: "In Padua fand ich erst das Buch, jetzt studier ich's und *es fallen mir wie Schuppen von den Augen, der Nebel geht auseinander und ich erkenne die Gegenstände*."[185] Rearticulating Vitruvian theory through exhibiting its principles in his building projects, Goethe credited Palladio for making its doctrines infinitely more accessible: "Palladio hat mir durch seine Worte und Werke, durch seine Art und Weise des Denkens und Schaffens den Vitruv schon nähergebracht..."[186]Indeed, if Vitruvius exposed the antique roots of Roman architecture, Palladio's work illustrated its modern reappropriation. As one of the leading proponents of Vitruvian doctrine, his drawings resuscitated the past, giving Goethe a concrete intuition of Rome's former character: "Ich leße den Vitruv, daß der Geist der Zeit mich anwehe wo das alles erst aus der Erde stieg, ich habe den Palladio, der zu seiner Zeit noch vieles ganzer sah, maß und mit seinem großen Verstand in

[184]WA III, 1, 288. Tagebuch der italienischen Reise, Venedig 10. Okt 1786
[185]WA III, 1, 249. Tagebuch der Italiänischen Reise 30 Sept 1786
[186]HA XI, 97. Italienische Reise 12 Okt 1786

Zeichnungen herstellte, und so steigt der alte Phönix Rom wie ein Geist aus seinem Grabe..."[187] By thus coming to discern foundational tenets of ancient Greek architecture through the work of a modern architect, Goethe ascertained what he took to be the rebirth of classical antiquity.

Illustrative of Goethe's internalization of authoritative architectural treatises, was the proficiency he acquired with the architectural orders. A doctrine indispensable in fathoming classical structures,[188]it defined a canon of ancient style through "an assemblage of parts subject to uniform established proportions, regulated by the office that each part had to perform."[189]One of the most significant elements of this scheme included the type of column, whether Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian, utilized in a building that served to situate the order employed in the structure as a whole. Recognizing the importance of a structural rule that effectively generated the building's design as a whole, Goethe set about to discover the conditions determining the use of each respective column:

> wenn man ins Wasser kommt, lernt man schwimmen. Ich habe mir nun auch die Ordnungen der Säulen rational gemacht und kann das Warum meist schon angeben. Nun behalt ich auch die Maβe und Verhätnisse, die mir als blos Gedächtniswerk immer unbegreiflich und unbehaltbar blieben.[190]

If Goethe expended considerable efforts to attain a concrete intuition of the measure and proportion adapted to a given type of column, Palladio himself had grappled with the establishment of rules for the useage of the orders. Endeavoring to adhere to classical imperatives to preserve continuity with the past, he nevertheless deployed them in unprecedented ways to fashion structures appropriate to his age.[191]Adopting a formula of superimposing the three orders — Ionic on Doric and Corinthian on Ionic to create a harmonious impression

[187]WA IV, 8, 57. Brief an Knebel 17 Nov 1786
[188]Ernst Osterkamp, *Goethe-Handbuch Supplemente*: Band 3: Kunst ed. Gabriele Busch-Salmen, Manfred Wenzel, Andreas Beyer, Ernst Osterkamp (Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2011) 9.
[189]Joseph Gwilt, *An Encyclopaedia of Architecture: Historical, Theoretica and Practical* (London: Longmans Green, 1872) 217.
[190]WA III, 1. 266.Tagebuch der italienischen Reise, 5. Okt 1786
[191]Davide Lowe & Simon Sharp, *Goethe & Palladio* (Great Barrington, MA : Lindisfarne Books, 2005) 34.

through the distribution of pilasters, arches and balustrades, Palladio brought modern innovations to bear on ancient models so as to adapt them to contemporary needs.[192] In so doing, Goethe maintained that Palladio "leiste zu Gebrauch und Anwendung mehr als Vitruv selbst, denn er habe die Alten und das Altertum gründlich studiert und es unsern Bedürfnissen näherzuführen gesucht."[193] Indeed, the more Goethe studied Palladian structures, the more he became attuned to the liberties the architect took. While unquestionably indebted to the classical tradition, Palladio's buildings were without parallel: "völlig die Force des groβen Dichters, der aus Wahrheit und Lüge ein drittes bildet, das uns bezaubert."[194]Combining ancient exemplars with his own ingenuity, his buildings reflected the classical in their perfect symmetry and proportion despite creatively employing elements such as colonnades or pilasters unknown to their antique forebearers. Indeed, upon visiting the Rotonda, a renowned Palladian summer villa incorporating a classical temple front into its four façades,[195]Goethe immediately noted the contradiction of integrating columns supported by pediments into walls as part of a building's exterior.[196]Palladio employed columns where they were no longer structurally necessary primarily using them for decorative purposes. Through his audacious designs, he combined the unthinkable without ever transgressing a critical threshold: "Im einzelnen mag manches gegen seine Kühnheit zu erinnern seyn, im Ganzen sind seine Werke eine Grenzlinie die niemand ausfüllt und die so bald überschritten ist."[197]Conscious of Palladio's inventive latitude, Goethe marveled at methods that were never a mere application of classical rules but essentially an architectural feat reconciling tradition with modern exigencies to produce groundbreaking forms that had become representative of the times. If he deplored the abuses, unfelicitous compromises, superfluous

[192]Guido Beltramini, *The private Palladio* (Zürich : Lars Müller, 2012) 226.
[193]HA XI, 58. Italienische Reise, 27 Sept 1786
[194]HA XI, 53. Italienische Reise, 19. Sept 1786
[195]HA XI, 54. Italienische Reise, 21 Sept 1786
[196]Lowe, 28.
[197]WA IV, 10, 360. Brief an Johann Heinrich Meyer, 30 Dez 1795

designs and outright barbarisms committed by many a modern architect who sought to reincarnate the classical without mastering its fundamentals, Goethe credited Palladio with preserving an antique legacy that while adapted to modern necessities, was never arbitrary or gratuitous and perfectly conformed to classical lawfulness.

In painting too, Goethe underscored the importance of contextualizing a given artist's work in terms of its antecedents so as to identify a historical succession of form transformations. He thus endeavored to see artists as part of a temporal continuum, each inheriting a tradition maintained through the master-pupil relationship that determined the features of a given artistic school. Here, the great masters preserved classical techniques while incrementally modifying an accredited currency of artistic forms to pass on important variations to their successors. Persuaded that probing the foundational precursors to Renaissance painting furnished signposts for discerning trajectories of form development, Goethe probed the lineage of European painting: "ich kenne nun die Urväter recht genau und so lernt man ihre Schüler und Nachfolger erst kennen und schätzen."[198] He insisted that the methods and formulas of artists like Tizian, far from sui generis, were inextricably bound up with their predecessors, whereby while adopting the artistic know-how of those who came before them, they strove to build upon and transcend it: "und nun konnte die Lebhaftigkeit ihres Genies, die Energie ihrer Natur, *erleuchtet von dem Geiste ihrer Vorfahren, auferbaut durch ihre Kraft, immer höher und höher steigen,* sich von der Erde heben und himmlische, aber wahre Gestalten hervorbringen. *So entwickelte sich die Kunst,* nach der barbarischen Zeit."[199] Inspired by the virtuosity of their predecessors, each generation of artists aspired to ascend to new heights in order to outstrip precursors, perfecting and at times eclipsing the fundamental canon of artistic forms. Elsewhere Goethe thematized art's historically

[198]WA IV, 8, 370. Brief an Carl August 6.Mai 1788
[199]HA XI, 61. Italienische Reise, Padua, 27 Sept. 1786

determined character in reference to Raphael:

> Um ihn aber recht zu erkennen, ihn recht zu schätzen und ihn wieder auch nicht ganz als einen Gott zu preisen, der wie Melchisedek ohne Vater und ohne Mutter erschienen wäre, muß man seine Vorgänger, seine Meister ansehen. Diese haben auf dem festen Boden der Wahrheit Grund gefaßt, sie haben die breiten Fundamente emsig, ja ängstlich gelegt und miteinander wetteifernd die Pyramide stufenweis in die Höhe gebaut, bis er zuletzt, von allen diesen Vorteilen unterstützt, von dem himmlischen Genius erleuchtet, den letzten Stein des Gipfels aufsetzte, über und neben dem kein anderer stehen kann.[200]

By Goethe's lights, no artist, however great, could be seen in isolation from previous masters. Far from elicit an anxiety of influence, artists like Raphael readily embraced the fact that their work had been made possible by those who preceded them.[201] Hence, any adequate estimation of a painter's work could not afford to discount the impact of historical debt. Moreover, in line with his growing classical allegiances, Goethe intimated that the masters of the high Renaissance represented the apogee of art's evolution from 'barbaric times.' Sidestepping the fraught question of whether Goethe envisaged the possibility of art that eclipsed their achievments, there is little doubt that he felt that the art observer could only come to discern important affinities of form linking artists through acknowledging a legacy of inheritance.

The practice of viewing a painting within a historical progression wherein compositional features were owed to predecessors, laid the groundwork for Goethe's development of his powers of aesthetic judgment. Indeed, exploring historical sources influencing painterly techniques required that he account for the ways in which a host of contextual factors determined a given painting's acquisition of sensual form. Surrounded by observers who hastened to deliver artistic judgments without heeding context, Goethe censured the widespread failure to scrutinize the conditions of production influencing the development of artistic form:

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[200]HA XI, 102. Italienische Reise, Bologna, 18 Okt 1786

[201]GG 6, 4. Gespräch mit Eckermann, 4 Januar 1827. "Es geht,« fuhr Goethe fort, »durch die ganze Kunst eine Filiation. Sieht man einen großen Meister, so findet man immer, daß er das Gute seiner Vorgänger benutzte, und daß eben dieses ihn groß machte. Männer wie Raphael wachsen nicht aus dem Boden. Sie fußten auf der Antike und dem Besten, was vor ihnen gemacht worden. Hätten sie die Avantagen ihrer Zeit nicht benutzt, so würde wenig von ihnen zu sagen sein.«"

> Es gibt eine gewisse Art von empirischem Urteil, welches seit längerer Zeit zumal durch englische und französische Reisende besonders in den Gang gekommen; man spricht sein augenblickliches unvorbereitetes Urteil aus, ohne nur irgend zu bedenken, dass *jeder Künstler auf gar vielfache Weise bedingt ist*, durch sein besonderes Talent, durch Vorgänger und Meister, durch Ort und Zeit, durch Gönner und Besteller. Nichts von allem dem, welches freilich zu einer reinen Würderung nötig wäre, kommt in Betrachtung, und so entsteht daraus ein grässliches Gemisch von Lob und Tadel, von Bejahen und Verneinen, wodurch jeder eigentümliche Wert der fraglichen Gegenstände ganz eigentlich aufgehoben wird.“[202]

All too aware of the need to probe the trajectory of a work's emergence, Goethe held that the art observer had to ascertain the way in which particular techniques conducive to the development of certain forms while restrictive of others, were passed down from master to pupil. What is more, despite a long tradition of borrowing of formal motifs, a painter's thematic choices were typically linked to his patron's demands, such that ecclesiastic authorities tended to commission devotional paintings and altar pieces, whereas an enlightened nobleman might favor depictions of pagan, mythological scenes. Indeed, context was key insofar as there was substantial regional variations in artistic form even within works of the Italian Renaissance. For instance, the Venetian painters, sensitive to light in virtue of working in a radiant, sunlit climate, produced luminous tableaux revealing extraordinary color schemes. Meanwhile, the Florentines, with their emphasis on draughtmanship and their pronounced turn towards anatomical expertise produced paintings dramatically reinterpreting the human body. Goethe was thus hostile to the idea of context as mere factual background divorced from concerns of artistic form. Moreover, he was convinced of the need to discipline aesthetic judgment by taking into account perceptual evidence of the generative conditions determining an artwork's acquisition of sensible form.

Goethe's cultivation of aesthetic judgment was further owed to his adoption of a concrete methodology guiding his observations of art's historical evolution that importantly drew on procedures he employed in his scientific investigations of nature. In Italy, he effectively began to conceive art history in paralled with natural history: "Nun ist mir...Baukunst und Bildhauerkunst

[202]HA XI,455.Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Dez

und Mahlerey wie Minerologie Botanick und Zoologie."[203]He explained to Charlotte von Stein how he endeavored to treat artworks in as meticulous and systematic fashion as he handled natural organisms: "Du kennst meine alte Manier wie ich die Natur behandle, so behandl' ich Rom und schon steigt mir's entgegen, ich fahre immer fort zu sehn und von Grund aus zu studiren."[204] In a later letter addressed to Herder, he likewise claimed that by drawing on the skills he used to investigate nature, he could make great strides without attaining the prodigious erudition of the art historian:

> Die Fähigkeit ähnliche Verhältnisse zu entdecken, wenn sie auch noch soweit auseinander liegen, und die Genesen der Dinge aufzuspüren hilft mir auch hier außerordentlich, und wenn ich Zeit hätte alle Kunstwercke mir recht zu vergegenwärtigen und sie alsdann miteinander zu vergleichen, wollte ich ohne große Gelehrsamkeit der Geschichte der Kunst manchen Vorteil bringen.[205]

Rather than see art history as a discipline involving scholarly learning where facts were amassed and interpreted, Goethe favored a methodological approach of identifying resemblances among related works to probe trajectories of form transformation over time. Goethe thereby deployed a genetic method that would enable him to see family resemblances between the work of different artists. This was particularly relevant to the domain of painting where the more he became acquainted with the great masters, the more he discovered lesser known, intimately related ones.

> An diesem Himmel treten wieder neue Gestirne hervor, die ich nicht berechnen kann und die mich irremachen: die Carracci, Guido, Dominichin, in einer spätern glücklichern Kunstzeit entsprungen; sie aber wahrhaft zu genießen, gehört Wissen und Urteil, welches mir abgeht und nur nach und nach erworben werden kann.[206]

Goethe insisted that probing the underlying kinships that linked minor artists with their more renowned predecessors held the key to situating historical developments impacting form. While he initially took himself to be exclusively familiar with the high Renaissance artists, upon

[203]WA IV, 8, 108. Italienische Reise, 29. Dez 1786
[204]WA IV, 8, 65. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 24 Nov 1786
[205]WA IV, 8, 107.Brief an Herder, 29 Dez 1786
[206]HA XI, 104. Italienische Reise, Bologna, 19 Okt 1786

acquiring expertise in their techniques and methods, second and third generation ones began to shine through the firmament to reveal how they belonged to the heavenly constellations:

> Dann die Gallerie des Pall. Gherhardini, wo sehr schöne Sachen von Orbetto sind. In der Entfernung lernt man wenige Meister, offt die nur dem Nahmen nach, kennen; wenn man nun diesem Sternenhimmel näher tritt und nun die von der zweyten und dritten Gröse auch zu flimmern anfangen und ieder auch ein Stern ist, dann wird die Welt weit und die Kunst reich.[207]

In acquiring a grasp of artistic inheritance, Goethe even suggested that the Germanic painter Albrecht Dürer would have benefitted from greater exposure to the early Italian masters: "Das historische Interesse wird besonders rege, wenn man die Werke der ältern Meister betrachtet. Francesco Francia ist ein gar respektabler Künstler, Peter von Perugia ein so braver Mann, daß man sagen möchte, eine ehrliche deutsche Haut. Hätte doch das Glück Albrecht Dürern tiefer nach Italien geführt."[208]Through his interrogation of historical lineages Goethe thus obtained an acute sense for the similarity and difference characterizing Italian Renaissance painting, allowing him to see likenesses to situate works within a network of overlapping family affinities.

In conjunction with his historical approach to painting, Goethe's understanding of Roman statuary also developed from out of a genetic mode of viewing. Conceding that he was untutored in the observation of ancient statuary, Goethe initially attempted to derive instruction from the methods he had employed to discriminate the forms of classical architecture: "Viele bedeutende Büsten ersetzen mich in die alten herrlichen Zeiten. Nur fühle ich leider, wie weit ich in diesen Kenntnissen zurück bin, doch es wird vorwärts gehen, wenigstens weiβ ich den Weg. Palladio hat mir ihn auch dazu und zu aller Kunst und Leben geöffnet."[209]If the preponderance of Italian statuary were Roman copies of lost Greek originals, Goethe, inspired by Palladio's method of innovatively resurrecting ancient precursors, came to see them as inventive imitations; the

[207]WA III, 1, 204. Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, 17 September 1786
[208]HA XI, 102. Italienische Reise, Bologna, 18 Okt 1786
[209]HA XI, 87. Italienische Reise 8 Okt 1786

product of a creative dialectic that utilized ancient models while integrating new influences to achieve a higher synthesis. In thus applying Palladio's methods to the observation of sculpture, Goethe was persuaded that classical statuary could be seen in terms of a web of interrelated forms comparable to the overlapping affiliations which characterized Renaissance painting. He thus attempted historically to situate the Giustiniani Minerva, a Roman copy of a Greek sculpture of Pallas Athena that had conspicuously gone unmentioned by Winckelmann in his history of art:

> Im Pallaste Giustiniani steht eine Minerva die meine ganze Verehrung hat. Wickelmann gedenckt ihrer kaum, wenigstens nicht an der rechten Stelle und ich fühle mich nicht würdig genug über sie etwas zu sagen.....Wollen meine Freunde ein näheres Wort hören; so lesen sie was Winckelmann vom hohen Styl der Grichen sagt. Leider führt er dort diese Minerva nicht an. Wenn ich aber nicht irre so ist sie von jenem hohen strengen Styl da er in den schönen übergeht, die Knospe indem sie sich öffnet und eben eine Minerva deren Charackter eben dieser Übergang, so wohl ansteht![210]

Classifying the Giustiniani Minerva as a transition figure bridging the passage from the austere classical to an emergent beautiful style, Goethe concluded that the ability to situate sculptural works in a nexus of stylistic kinships could only be the result of meticulous historical appraisal.

In order to achieve a form of viewing that made affinities in painting and in sculpture discernable, Goethe employed comparative techniques reminiscent of those he utilized in his observation of natural organisms. Citing the advice of one of his acquaintances, Johann Friedrich Reiffenstein, himself a connoisseur of classical art, Goethe initially exercised a strategy of viewing artworks from lesser to ascending gradations of visual discrimination to appreciate a hierarchy of artistic virtuosity:

> ...man müßte sich nämlich nicht gleich unmittelbar an das Beste wenden, sondern erst bei den Carraccis anfangen, und zwar in der Farnesischen Galerie, dann zum Raffael übergehen und zuletzt den Apoll von Belvedere so oft zeichnen, bis man ihn auswendig kenne, da denn nicht viel Weiteres zu wünschen und zu hoffen sein würde.[211]

If Reiffenstein suggested that the beholder was incapable of estimating the merits of a great work

[210]WA IV, 8, 130. Brief an dem Weimarer Freundeskreis 13 Jan 1787
[211]HA XI, 408. Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht September

without preparatory efforts, Goethe pursued a hierarchy of viewing, noting for instance the difficulty of reverting to Raphael's frescoes after having witnessed Michelangelo's ceiling frescoes in the Sistine Chapel:

> Wir gingen von da auf die Logen Raffaels, und kaum darf ich sagen, dass man diese nicht ansehen durfte. Das Auge war von jenen großen Formen und der herrlichen Vollendung aller Teile so ausgeweitet und verwöhnt, dass man die geistreichen Spielereien der Arabesken nicht ansehen mochte, und die biblischen Geschichten, so schön sie sind, hielten auf jene nicht Stich. Diese Werke nun öfter *gegeneinander zu sehen*, mit mehr Muße und ohne Vorurteil zu vergleichen, muss eine große Freude gewähren; denn anfangs ist doch alle Teilnahme nur einseitig.[212]

In order to compare the works of the two masters without prejudice, Goethe acknowledged the necessity of repeatedly viewing them in juxtaposition, effectuating modes of comparative apprehension like those employed in his natural scientific investigations: "Glücklicherweise hab ich auch eine Combination der Kunst mit meiner Vorstellungs Art der Natur gefunden und so werden mir beyde doppelt lieb."[213]He concluded that in Italy, shared origins were conducive to a search for immanent connections: "Wie mir's in der Naturgeschichte erging, geht es auch hier, denn an diesen Ort knüpft sich die ganze Geschichte der Welt an."[214]

Goethe exploited the entire field of visual perception to devise aesthetic exercises that established new contexts of comparison capable of eliciting essential affinities between artworks. He thus took to experimenting with various relational configurations designed to activate capacities for visual association. Indeed if Baumgarten had invoked the need to cultivate a capacity for identifying resemblances among dissimilar things and detecting differences among similar things (§ 32), encouraged by the success of his natural scientific methods revealing the essential kinships uniting plant life, Goethe engaged in aesthetic exercises that aimed to bring artworks into constellations that brought out their relatedness. Just as the ordering and

[212]HA XI, 144-145. Italienische Reise, Rom 2 Dez 1786
[213]WA IV, 8, 267. Brief an Knebel, Frascati 3 Okt 1787
[214]HA XI, 146. Italienische Reise, 3. Dez. 1786

arrangement of plants as a continuous succession of forms to facilitate a comprehensive overview had served to disclose systematic resemblance, Goethe advocated a parallel process conducive to the ascertainment of unity across artworks. He thus took to organizing and aligning related artworks in ways that would permit him to distinguish the similarities uniting and the differences separating them. In the context of viewing sculpture, for instance, he began by purchasing replicas of statuary, amassing copies of varying quality, in the knowledge that they were indispensable learning aids:

> Jene bald gefertigten Abgüsse brachten in Erinnerung, daß in der großen Dehnischen Pastensammlung, wovon die Abdrücke im ganzen und teilweise verkäuflich waren,...so wählte ich aus gedachter Sammlung die vorzüglichsten und bestellte solche bei den Inhabern. Solche Abdrücke sind der größte Schatz und ein Fundament, das der in seinen Mitteln beschränkte Liebhaber zu künftigem großen mannigfaltigen Vorteil bei sich niederlegen kann.[215]

The activity of acquiring different reproductions was a necessary though insufficient condition for schooling visual powers, whereby everything depended on the efficacious arrangement of works displaying surface similarities. Cognizant of the extent to which modes of exhibition affected the viewer's reception of works, Goethe took the Mannheim gallery's layout of statuary as a point of reference: "die herrlichsten Statuen des Alterthums nicht allein an den Wänden gereiht, sondern innerhalb der glanzen Fläche *durcheinander aufgestellt*."[216] Arraying sculpture in a series to place similar artworks side-by-side aided the viewer to survey forms and gain perspective on their relatedness. Goethe thus recounted the process of placing plaster casts in a perspicuous continuum in his living quarters in Rome:

> Diese neue Wohnung gab nun Gelegenheit, eine Anzahl von Gipsabgüssen, die sich nach und nach um uns gesammelt hatten, *in freundlicher Ordnung* und gutem Licht aufzustellen, und man genoss jetzt erst eines höchst würdigen Besitzes....Den ersten Platz bei uns behauptete Juno Ludovisi....Noch einige kleinere Junonen *standen zur Vergleichung neben ihr*....[217]

By methodically aligning various representations of the Roman goddess, Juno, the viewer came

[215]HA XI, 403. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht September
[216]HA IX, 500. Dichtung und Wahrheit, dritter Teil, Elftes Buch
[217]HA XI, 544. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, April 1788 Bericht

to grasp the essential form that united them. Goethe thus attempted to establish conditions conducive to obtaining a synoptic overview of related artworks. By displaying affiliated works in contiguous configurations, the observer's attention was directed in specific ways, whereby astute positioning led the eye to draw important visual inferences. In fact, as in the case of ordering plant parts, once the practitioner achieved a certain facility for arrangement, Goethe claimed that the artworks began to fall into place automatically, coming to delimit themselves on their own: "schon fängt das Gesehene *an sich zu ordnen* und das unendlich scheinende schließt sich in Gränzen."[218] By casting his glance forwards and backwards along a perspicuous arrangement of artworks, Goethe derived insight on the fundamental relatedness of their forms. He accordingly underscored the importance of aesthetic exercises involving the compilation of artworks to disclose a nexus of stylistic kinships:

> Das wichtigste, woran ich nun mein Auge und meinen Geist übe, sind die Style der verschiednen Völcker des Alterthums und die Epochen dieser Style in sich,...Mit Hülfe der Künstler Augen und *eigner Combinations Gabe*, suche ich so viel als möglich manches zu finden und zu suppliren,...[219]

If he had systematically aligned plant parts to visually survey a perspicuous continuum that made accessible their inner identity, in the domain of art, the visual traversal of a series of well ordered statues made visible the fundamental equivalence uniting their different instantiations. Indeed, Goethe underscored the importance not only of establishing an overview of related objects but of achieving an elevated visual intuition that permit the observer to perceive affiliations. The ordering process constituively depended upon the observer's ultimate intuition of a higher idea or an archetypal form underlying related artworks: "...so ist auch ein Überblick, ein Seitenblick über und auf verwandte Gegenstände höchst nützlich, vorausgesetzt, dass der Künstler fähig ist, sich

[218]WA IV, 8, 124. Brief an Philipp Seidel, 13. Jan.1787
[219]WA IV, 8, 136. Brief an Carl August 13-20 Jan 1787

zu Ideen zu erheben, und die nahe Verwandtschaft entfernt scheinender Dinge zu fassen."[220] Goethe thus concluded of the virtues of cultivating a historical mode of visual apprehension: "Hundertfältig steigen die Geister der Geschichte aus dem Grabe und zeigen mir ihre wahre Gestalt."[221]

Achieving a Classical Regard

Building on the internalization of a trajectory of progressive transformations, Goethe saw the culmination of these exercises in the achievement of what he termed a classical regard that ascertained artistic forms that endured through the passage of history. In his famous invocation of "die Gegenwart des klassischen Bodens," Goethe had invoked the importance of intuiting a universal form that escaped the succession of time, noting "Ich nenne dies die sinnlich-geistige Überzeugung, daß hier das Große *war, ist und sein wird*."[222] Appealing to the threefold temporal modalities of past, present and future, he suggested that the classical amounted to the observer's apprehension of the tripartite nexus of time encapsulated in an intuitable abiding form. Later elaborating this idea in his 1812 essay *'Der Tanzerin Grab*,' Goethe offered an interpretation of a Cumaean sepulchre relief depicting the triadic structure of a dancer's past, present and future memorialized in stone for all eternity. He claimed that her past was depicted in the full bloom of youth, her present was captured in her condemnation to Tartarus and her future held the promise of restitution to life, whereby the eternal form of her dancing figure persisted throughout her changing fate.[223] Inspired by such a simultaneous perception of past, present and future, Goethe concluded that a classical regard essentially amounted to achieving a suprahistorical perspective capable of identifying artistic forms persisting through time that recurred in ever-enhanced, concrete determinations.

[220]BA 19, 180. Einleitung in die Propyläen
[221]WA III, 1, 309.Tagebuch der italienischen Reise 19. Okt. 1786.
[222]HA XI, 455. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Dezember
[223]WA XIV, 144. Der Tänzerin Grabe 1812

Hence in an important variation on his historical mode of observing Italy's cultural patrimony, Goethe effectively conceived aesthetic exercises in metamorphic viewing of artworks. In so doing, he realized Baumgarten's imperative of separating and binding disparate moments in the imagination (§ 31) by training himself to merge successive states of an art object modified through time in order to catch sight of an essential form that persisted through its past, present and future configurations. Tracing the transmission of artistic techniques in painting or sculpture, Goethe brought together the work of artists that on the surface appeared far removed and unrelated, but on closer scrutiny began to reveal fundamental linkeages. He then proceeded to arrange and rearrange them, bringing them into revealing combinations until they began to align themselves in ways that expressed their deeper affinities. Repeatedly traversing the well ordered series, eventually revealed a universal form that persisted through the transformational dynamic. The culmination of exercises in arranging artworks was thereby an intensification of vision whereby all possible representations of artistic form were exhibited in a single, enhanced image. Indeed, upon attaining a comprehensive overview of artworks to see the true affiliations between them, Goethe came to intuit an ordinarily imperceptible, universal form against which the respective works could be measured. Refusing to see artworks in isolation, he effectively practiced a metamorphic mode of viewing that brought artworks into constellations revealing their degree of convergence towards a universal standard of exemplarity that served to ground aesthetic taste. Such an intuition of form ultimately underwrote the goal of aesthetic exercise, namely the judging what was beautiful despite the absence of a rule.[224]

Goethe also attempted to exercise a metamorphic mode of viewing in the context of architectural works, where it proved impossible to order and arrange them. Much as with his

[224]Trop, 63.

metamorphic observations of plant development, in which vegetal growth was tracked to distinguish continuities of form disclosing structural features that remained constant through change, in exercising metamorphic seeing to examine architecture Goethe sought to discern a prototypical 'Bauform' that persisted through an evolving succession of structural innovations. He effectively saw buildings as metamorphosing through time, wherein different features emerged as variations on quintessential classical forms, to which all structures were, to a greater or lesser degree, indebted. Goethe thus pointed to classical ruins as the embodiment of an archetypal standard of regularity and order that consistently reappeared in later architectural forms:

> Hier brachte der Zufall nichts hervor, er zerstörte nur; alles auf den Füßen Stehende ist herrlich, alles Zertrümmerte ist ehrwürdig, die Unform der Ruinen deutet auf *uralte Regelmäßigkeit, welche sich in neuen großen Formen der Kirchen und Paläste wieder hervortrat.*[225]

A metamorphic mode of observing architecture essentially brought to relief the concantenations of form reflecting a historical dialectic of continuity and change. Through acquiring familiarity with the way in which canonical building elements were passed down through generations, Goethe learned to distinguish essential forms that prevailed through successive epochs, progressively acquiring a sense for how the past metamorphosed into the architectural present.

The culmination of metamorphic viewing was thus a classical regard capable of retrieving an immutable, architectonic 'Gestalt' that perservered through contingent fluctuations of artistic style. Noting the fact that artists were loathe to abandon originary architectural structures, Goethe perceived the tenacity of primordial forms despite changing necessities: "Mir fiel eine frühere Bemerkung hier wieder in die Gedanken, daß sich der Mensch, im Gange der alles verändernden Zeit, so schwer los macht von dem, was eine Sache zuerst gewesen, wenn ihre

[225]HA XI, 403. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht September

Bestimmung in der Folge sich auch verändert."[226] He noted that Christian churches adhered to the Basilica form despite not always being conducive to religious services, academic institutions retained the appearances of monasteries that could suffocate free thinking, and Italian courtrooms were so lofty and expansive that one felt that judgments were being pronounced in a marketplace under free skies.[227] Goethe thus conscientiously tracked historical successions of architectural modifications in order to identify a prototypical form resistant to otherwise accruing practical formation. He thereby came to recognize that such an abiding form served both as an eternal model that persevered in recurrent manifestations and a normative benchmark to be eclipsed by posterity. In particular, the work of two Italian masters, Palladio and Michelangelo, shed light on this phenomenon. Goethe suggested that Palladio, favoring the tempel over the basilica form, rehabilitated it, modifying and applying his inventive latitude to bring it to a new level:

> Palladio war durchaus von der Existenz der Alten durchdrungen...Er war unzufrieden...daß man bei christlichen Kirchen nach der Form der alten Basiliken zu bauen fortfahre, er suchte deshalb seine heiligen Gebäude der alten Tempelform zu nähern; daher entstanden gewisse Unschicklichkeiten, die mir bei Il Redentore glücklich beseitigt, bei St. Giorgio aber zu auffallend erscheinen.[228]

But if Palladio had not always succeeded in his efforts to renew the temple form, Michelangelo's conception of St. Peter's Cathedral, boldly reappropriating the basilica form, ultimately surpassed even the most exemplary of ancient temples. Despite their indisputable differences, both artists adhered to ancient forms, reappropriating them to inaugurate a new style that in some sense exceeded the classical canon. Goethe accordingly took adherents of neoclassicissm to be artists possessing a classical regard, who animated by the conviction of the timelessness of classical forms, developed a capacity to transform and adapt eternal models, to introduce landmark variations that ultimately set a new precedent. The classical regard was not, however, the sole

[226]HA XI, 108. Italienische Reise, Bologna 19 Okt 1786
[227]HA XI, 109. Italienische Reise, Bologna, 19 Okt 1786
[228]HA XI, 72. Italienische Reise, 3 Okt 1786

prerogative of the artist. The meticulous art observer could also attain such a universal perspective by diligently surveying the rise and fall of architectural forms, exercising a metamorphic mode of viewing to come to discern the protoypical forms that endured through the historical variations on architectural styles.

Exercises in Ahistorical viewing: the importance of natural context

While the traveler to Italy was obliged to develop historical and metamorphic modes of observation internalizing the change undergone by artworks over time, excessive exposure to the fluctuations of artistic form, in part reflecting the apogees and nadirs of the Roman civilisation, made him susceptible to an overly historical perspective. During his visit to Sicily, Goethe thus complained of a local guide, whose recurrent historical references marred his apprehension of Palermo's natural landscapes:

> das Gefühl eines belebenden Friedens...welches mir der ungeschickte Führer durch seine Gelehrsamkeit verkümmerte umständlich erzählend, wie Hannibal hier vormals eine Schlacht geliefert und was für ungeheure Kriegsthaten an dieser Stelle geschehen. Man solle wenigsten die Einbildungskraft nicht mit solchem Nachgetümmel aus ihrem friedlichen Traume aufschrecken...ich konnte ihm freilich nicht deutlich machen, wie mir bei einer solchen Vermischung des Vergangenen und des Gegenwärtigen zu Muth sei.[229]

Though persuaded that grasping Italy's artistic forms rested in large part on recuperating their historical past, Goethe cautioned against a commingling of ages that served to detract from the living present. An important antidote to an exaggerated sense of historicity was his exercise of a natural regard that consisted in being mindful of the immediate geological landscape within which an artifact was embedded:

> Mit dem, was man klassischen Boden nennt, hat es eine andere Bewandtnis.Wenn man hier nicht phantastisch verfährt, sondern die Gegend real nimmt, wie sie da liegt, so ist sie doch immer der entscheidende Schauplatz, der die größten Taten bedingt, und so habe ich immer bisher den *geologischen und landschaftlichen Blick* benutzt, um Einbildungskraft und Empfindung zu unterdrücken und mir ein freies, klares Anschauen der Lokalität zu erhalten. Da schließt sich

[229]HA XI, 232. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Palermo, 4. April 1787

denn auf eine wundersame Weise die Geschichte lebendig an...[230]

The main difficulty with a historical mode of observation was that buildings and monuments implicitly came to be seen as the backdrop of triumphal processions, the scene of a momentous battle or the object of plunder and ruin that unduly excited the emotions. Indeed, the constant alternations between grandeur and destruction marking the fate of Italian city states, were visible in its cultural patrimony, encouraging flights of the observer's imagination. Goethe claimed that such 'architektonische Phantasie,' had to be constrained by the sobering objectivity of a natural regard that sought to apprehend architectural structures and artifacts as naked objects situated in their purely physical environment. As one commentator remarks of Goethe's observational strategy, "Not content merely to stand on the hallowed ground of classical antiquity, he employs the real sense of topography and field observation to counterbalance the imperiousness of the imagination."[231]Goethe thus took to exercising an austere mode of art observation intended to offset a historically informed one, systematically locating artworks within an indigenous geological-landscape complex. He recounts how after experiencing a sense of overwhelming historical decay in Paestum, Sicilian ruins, framed by rugged cliffs and engulfing seas that transmitted the vitality of their natural landscapes afforded him a sense of liberation. Seen through the robust realism of a natural regard, cultural sites were brought down to earth, allowing the viewer to appreciate their living proximity.

Goethe's practice of ahistorical aesthetic exercises cultivating a natural regard thereby incorporated an important therapeutic dimension. While in Syracuse, Goethe recounted how he counteracted the bleak and derelict state of a Syracusan tempel by attending to surrounding vestiges of life that animated its overall impression: "Der Tempel des Äsculap, von dem

[230]HA XI, 121. Italienische Reise, Terni, 27 Okt 1786

[231]Roger Paulin "Goethe's and Stolberg's Italien Journeys and the Romantic Ideology of Art" in *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction: studies on Fiction, Literary Traditions, Scholarly Discovery and Observations in Travel Writing*, ed by Z. von Martels and E. J. Brill (New York: Leiden, 1994) 212.

schönsten Johannisbrotbaum beschattet und in ein kleines feldwirtschaftliches Haus beinahe eingemauert, bietet ein freundliches Bild."[232]In developing a natural regard, he thus attended to the ways in which nature embraced deteriorating architectural forms to reinvigorate them with life. Goethe effectively deployed a mode of seeing much like the Italienate landscape painter, who banishing architectural eyesores from his visual horizon, embellished deteriorating ruins with greenery to create a bucolic, enlivened effect. Wilhelm Tischbein, with whom Goethe trained in the arts during his Italian journey, employed just such a naturalizing strategy:

> Die weitläufigsten, von der Baukunst erorberten Räume sollten wieder als ebener Boden dem Pflanzenleben gewidmet werden...Schlinge- und Hängepflanzen senken sich in die halbverschütteten finstern Räume; Früchte des Granatbaumes, Kürbisranken erheitern, schmücken die Einöde...Einem solchen gefühlvollen Anschauen war Tischbein mehr als andere hingegeben; *überall fand er Lebendiges zu dem Abgeschiedenen gepaart*.[233]

Years after his Italian journey, in the verses he penned to accompany Tischbein's *Idyllen* illustrations, Goethe poetically rendered the effect of a naturalizing regard that served to neutralize and obscure impressions of decay and degeneration, enveloping artifacts with living vegetation: "Würdige Prachtgebaude stürzen, Mauer fällt, Gewölbe bleiben, Dass nach tausendjähr'gem Treiben Tor und Pfeiler sich verkürzen. Dann beginnt das Leben wieder, Boden mischt sich neuen Saaten, Rank' auf Ranke senkt sich nieder; Der Natur ist's wohlgeraten."[234] Transposing structures that had lost their former glory into nature's bosom to embed them amid organic life, furnished an important counterpoint to what on occasion proved a fanciful historical regard resting on the imagination's projective powers. Goethe concluded:

> Und so wird man zwischen Natur- und Völkerereignissen hin und wider getrieben. Man wünscht zu denken und fühlt sich dazu zu ungeschickt. Indessen lebt der Lebendige lustig fort, woran wir es denn auch nicht fehlen ließen. Gebildete Personen, der Welt und ihrem Wesen angehörend, aber auch, durch ernstes Geschick gewarnt, zu Betrachtungen aufgelegt.[235]

The casual observer, accustomed to Italy's oscillations between nature and history, was

[232]HA XI, 275. Italienische Reise, Girgenti, 25. April 1787
[233]SW 31, 153. Noten zu einigen Gedichten Wilhelm Tischbein's Idyllen
[234]BA 1, 568. Wilhelm Tischbeins Idyllen
[235]HA XI, 187. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 1. März, 1787

invariably impervious to the implications of organic versus man-made influences on the local topography. But engaging in aesthetic exercises cultivating historical and natural regards, Goethe was driven to reflection on the different conditions influencing the changing forms of Italy's indigenous artifacts.

Exercises in seeing in light and in darkness

Goethe adopted a final, context-specific polar mode of observation in Italy in which he sought to assimilate local atmospheric conditions of visibility into his apprehension of art objects. He did this by exploring the almost trivial and yet often ignored distinction between observing artifacts under conditions of daylight and observing them in darkness. Attending to the character of atmospheric lighting was of particular importance given Italy was a land in which artworks including monuments, tombs, and statuary were frequently on display under free skies, observable at all hours under vastly differing conditions.

If Goethe would eventually underscore the fundamental dependency of vision on light, suggesting that the assimilation of its properties shaped the eye's very character ("Das Auge hat sein Dasein dem Licht zu danken. Aus gleichgültigen tierischen Hülfsorganen ruft sich das Licht ein Organ hervor, das seinesgleichen werde),"[236] once he set foot in the Mediterranean latitudes, he quickly realized that the ability to see light in different environments could not be taken for granted, such that foreign conditions of visibility demanded qualitative modifications in the observer's mode of seeing. He essentially saw his vision put to the test under a new experience of lighting: "Die Sache ist, daβ ich wieder Interesse an der Welt nehme, meinen Beobachtungsgeist *versuche und prufe...ob und wie mein Auge licht, rein und hell ist*."[237] Indeed, Goethe was uneqivocal in his conviction that light and darkness were the fundamental components of vision

[236]HA XIII, 323. Entwurf einer Farbenlehre
[237]WA III, 1, 174. Tagebuch der Italiänischen Reise, 11 Sept 1786

enabling the very apprehension of form: "Das Auge sieht keine Gestalten, es sieht nur was sich durch Hell und Dunkel oder durch Farben unterscheidet"[238] The more he penetrated the southern latitudes, the more he was persuaded that human vision was constitutively formed by habitual conditions of visibility. Struck by the radiance of Venice's sunshine, where even shadows were so luminous that they radiated light, he concluded: "Es ist offenbar, dass sich das Auge nach den Gegenständen bildet, die es von Jugend auf erblickt, und so muss der venezianische Maler alles klarer und heiterer sehn als andere Menschen."[239] The native Italian, routinely observing objects under the abundant, ambient light of his environment, could apprehend the sunlit appearance of its objects because his eye had adapted to them, emanating a source of light commensurate to the light they reflected. The northerner's eyesight, in contrast, lacking a filter against the sun's direct rays, was blinded by Italy's naked daylight, so that far from enjoy unimpeded lucidity, he took pains to counteract the glare of intense, unscreened lighting. Goethe thus sought to adapt his eyesight to new atmospheric conditions, experimenting with light to determine its impact on his reception of artworks.

Awakened to the modulation of light from sunrise to sunset, Goethe initially attended to the ways in which different architectural styles exploited atmospheric lighting. Indeed, a neoclassical building's auspicious distribution of natural light was all the more conspicuous when confronted with medieval churches, furnished with interiors more or less visible depending on the quantity of daylight admitted. Given that renowned paintings were frequently on display in structures obstructing the passage of light, Goethe was forced to attend to the hour most favorable to illuminating his visits. Conversely, Italy's abundance of statuary donning the facades of buildings, its numerous outdoor monuments, fountains and tombstones meant that intense

[238]LA I 3, 436. *Paralipomenon zur Farbenlehre*
[239]HA XI, 86. Italienische Reise, Venedig 8 Okt, 1786

illumination often served to detract from their proper apprehension. Blinded by the naked daylight of cloudless firmaments, Goethe had to learn to counteract the glare of intense lighting. Italy's art objects thus proved both under and over exposed to natural lighting, forcing the observer to exercise his ingenuity to achieve optimal viewing conditions.

Goethe made the passage from clarity to obscurity an important consideration in his development of aesthetic exercises, whereby he took to viewing artistic monuments under contrasting lighting conditions. One important species of exercises involved beholding Italian cityscapes at sunset, whereby Goethe sought to occupy an elevation in order to obtain a panoramic view of the sun's radiant descent upon an array of ancient monuments. He thus recounted his haste to mount the Roman amphitheatre in Verona so as to gain a resplendent view from ahigh at sunset: "Ich ging auf der Kante des amphitheatralischen Kraters bei Sonnenuntergang."[240] Later, he repeated the same exercise in the Sicilian city of Taormina, which situated atop a coastal promontory, offered him an aerial perspective from which to view the sky ablaze before darkness progressively descended upon the city: "Unendlich schön war es zu beobachten, wie diese in allen Punkten bedeutende Gegend nach und nach in Finsternis versank."[241] In Rome as well, Goethe lost no opportunity to view the city from above by sunset: "Nach der Villa Patrizzi, um die Sonne untergehen zu sehen."[242] Indeed, no matter where he found himself, Goethe insisted that viewing architectural structures through 'der Abendglanz der Sonne' added a whole new dimension to his apprehension of them: "Die unvergleichliche Aussicht bei Sonnenuntergang aus den Zimmern des Senators nach dem Coliseo zu mit allem dem, was sich von den andern Seiten anschließt, verlieh freilich unserm Künstlerblick das

[240]HA XI, 42. Italienische Reise, Verona, 16 Sept.1786
[241]HA XI, 296. Italienische Reise, 7 Mai 1787
[242]HA XI, 370. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom 24 Juli 1787

herrlichste Schauspiel."[243]The remarkable constellation of ancient monuments constituting the skyline of most Italian cities invited the viewer to admire them from ahigh through the sun's resplendent spectrum of colour. Indeed, Rome in particular offered a wealth of colossal ancient structures amenable to such viewing: "bestieg ich abends die Trajanische Säule, um des unschätzbaren Anblicks zu genießen. Von dort oben herab, *bei untergehender Sonne*, nimmt sich das Kolosseum ganz herrlich aus, das Kapitol ganz nahe, der Palatin dahinter, die Stadt, die sich anschließt."[244]Viewing monuments from towering altitudes while the sun descended upon the horizon served to envelop structures in diverse atmospheric tones and hues, the luster and radiance of which accentuated their contours so that they assumed unparalleled clarity. Goethe explained elsewhere, "Gestern fuhr ich vor Sonnenuntergang nach Acqua acetosa; es ist wirklich zum Närrischwerden, wenn man die Klarheit, die Mannichfaltigkeit, duftige Durchsichtigkeit und himmlische Färbung der Landschaft, besonders der Fernen ansieht."[245] The play of light ensuing from the way in which the sun cast its rays on monuments as it sinks below one's field of vision not only served to accentuate their form, it brought to bear the importance of chromatic effects. The evening light's colorful reflection ('farbiger Abglanz') saturating cityscapes replete with colossal classical monuments, lent them a unique aura. Goethe thus spoke of the magical spell cast by "die glühende Farbe mit ihren schattig-blauen Gegensätzen."[246] Aesthetic exercises in mounting elevations to observe architecture through the prismatic effects of sunsets furnished an important context through which to contemplate artistic form.

Exercises probing Italy's natural lighting also significantly influenced Goethe's conception of color. Goethe discovered the ways in which color was dependent on the

[243]HAXI, 521. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Februar
[244]HA XI, 370. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 23 Juli 1787
[245]HAXI, 383. Italienische Reise, 18 Aug 1787
[246]HA XI, 521. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Februar 1788

phenomenon of light and varied significantly according to locality. Investigating how Italy's different atmospheric conditions filtered light to produce variable chromatic effects, he noted that if the vaporous atmosphere of Palermo yielded diaphanous bluish tones, the clarity of the Roman firmament served to elicit vibrant contrasts of warm and cold tones. With time, Goethe came to possess a more subtle and refined palate of colors, the likes of which he claimed, the northerner, accustomed to the crude distinction between the monotone and the multicolored, had no conception. He maintained of the spectrum of color inhering in the Mediterranean latitudes: "*Es ist ein Glanz und zugleich eine Harmonie, eine Abstufung im Ganzen*, wovon man nordwärts gar keinen Begriff hat. Bei euch ist alles entweder hart oder trüb, bunt oder eintönig."[247] Goethe eventually became sufficiently adept in discrimating color that he could discern the chromatic effects of seasonal variations in lighting: "sie (ist) bei heitern Tagen, besonders des Herbstes, so farbig, dass sie in jeder Nachbildung bunt scheinen muss."[248] By thus attending to each locale's unique distribution of light and its effect on color, Goethe derived further insight on the nature of artistic form in Italy.

The ability to apprehend chromatic distinctions through attunement to natural atmospheric conditions in turn had concrete implications for grasping the aesthetics of Italian art. If Goethe had long admired Claude Lorraine's luminous idiom distinguished by classical landscapes with harmonious tones enveloped in spaces suffused with a vaporous, unreal light, he noted that the Italian masters were unparalleled in their deployment of color, masterfully eliciting its natural affinities: "Veroneses große Kunst: nämlich eine Harmonie des Eindrucks zu erzeugen, obwohl nur mit abwechselnden Farben und nicht in einem einheitlichen Ton

[247]HAXI, 433. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 24 Nov 1787
[248]HAXI, 432. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom 24 Nov 1787

gemalt."[249] The harmony of Veronese's compositions arose through his ability to exploit a complementarity of hues to achieve seamless chromatic gradations that avoided abrupt contrasts. Likewise praising Guercino's skillful determinations of color, Goethe noted that the salient feature of his tableaux lay in the transitions from brown-red terracota shades that harmonized with blue tones.[250] Goethe maintained that the harmony of colors arose from a trained human eye,[251] whereby "...sie ruht auf einer inneren Wirkung und Gegen wirkung des Organs, nach welchem eine gewisse Farbe die andere fordert, und man kann ebensogut sagen, wenn das Auge eine Farbe sieht, so fordert es die harmonische..."[252] In his Propyläen essay, Goethe thus concluded that through 'fortdauernde Übung' the artist gained a sense of what essentially amounted to the laws of polarity governing colors:

> er fühlte die lebhaften Gegensätze, durch deren Vereinigung die Harmonie der Farben entsteht, er bezeichnete gewisse Eigenschaften derselben durch annähernde Empfindungen, er hatte warme und kalte Farben, Farben, die eine Nähe, andere, die eine Ferne ausdrücken, und was dergleichen Bezeichnungen mehr sind, durch welche er diese Phänomene den allgemeinsten Naturgesetzen auf seine Weise näher brachte. Vielleicht bestätigt sich die Vermutung, daß die farbigen Naturwirkungen... auf einem Wechselverhältnis, einer Polarität... beruhen.[253]

A sensibility for chromatic distinctions informed by the natural laws of polarity, partially arose from experimentation with the very process of producing color. Indeed, if Italy's atmospheric conditions proved particularly amenable to grasping the art of bringing forth the range of hues employable in painting, Goethe acquired specific know-how in the art of generating colors through his initiation into watercolor techniques by his painter friend, Christoph Heinrich Kniep:

> Übrigens hat er mir...das Mechanische der Wasserfarbenmalerei (Aquarell), die man in Italien jetzt sehr hochgetrieben hat, aufgeschrieben: versteht sich den Gebrauch gewisser Farben, um gewisse Töne hervorzubringen, an denen man sich, ohne das Geheimnis zu wissen, zu Tode mischen würde. Ich hatte wohl in Rom manches davon erfahren, aber niemals im

[249]Otto Stelzer, *Goethe und die bildende Kunst* (Braunschweig: Vieweg-Verlag, 1949) 24.
[250]Steltzer, 25.
[251]Frank Fehrenbach, "Das lebendige Ganze, das zu allen unsern geistigen und sinnlichen Kräften spricht. Goethe und das Zeichnen," *Goethe und die Verzeitlichung der Natur,* ed. Peter Matussek (München: C. H. Beck, 1998) 132.
[252]WA I 45,294. Zur Farbenlehre
[253]BA 19, 181. Propyläen

Zusammenhange. Die Künstler haben es in einem Lande studiert wie Italien, wie dieses ist.[254]

From the activity of combining primary colors to fabricate a range of secondary and tertiary hues, Goethe developed a concrete understanding of the logic of chromatics. But whatever the practical mechanics of creating tints, shades, and tones to vary the value and intensity of colors, he ultimately insisted that the Italian artist's subtle discernment of color was owed to his judicious discrimination of atmospheric lighting. Indeed, the task of reproducing Italian landscapes was no simple undertaking for the non-native artist, who typically lacked the ability to select the right hues and bring complementary tones together. If he neglected to sufficiently attend to the distinct character of Mediterranean ambient light, he ran the risk of producing canvases either bathed in a livid light muting the color spectrum or replete with strident hues and discordant tones. Goethe thus maintained that the very source of color lay in the reciprocal relationship between the external environment's natural luminosity and the schooled eye of the observer. But not stopping at his efforts to internalize the relationship of light to color to appreciate the chromatic idiom of the Renaissance masters, Goethe further refined his sense for ambient conditions through the practice of aesthetic exercises designed to probe art objects in darkness.

While nocturnal conditions would seem patently unfavorable to art observation, once he had exhausted the potential of Italy's luminous daylight, Goethe engaged in various aesthetic exercises practicable exclusively during the night hours. His attention drawn by the powers of moonlight, he discovered how its play of light and shadow made the outlines of colossal monuments determinately manifest, whereby superfluous details withdrew into obscurity to bring into relief distinct forms:

Von der Schönheit, im vollen Mondschein Rom zu durchgehen, hat man, ohne es gesehen

[254]HA XI, 230. Italienische Reise, Palermo, 3 April 1787

> zu haben, keinen Begriff. Alles Einzelne wird von den grossen Massen des Lichts und Schattens verschlungen, und nur die grösten, allgemeinsten Bilder stellen sich dem Auge dar...So muss man das Pantheon, das Kapitol beleuchtet sehn, den Vorhof der Peterskirche und andere große Straßen und Plätze.[255]

The spectacle of shadows cast by the columns and arches of classical structures like the Pantheon and the Coliseum served to accentuate the symmetry and harmony of their essential forms. Invoking the virtues of such nocturnal strolls, Goethe arguably paved the way for the popularization of moonlit visits paying tribute to ancient ruins and monuments:[256]

> so wird man begreifen, wie sich Geist und Aug' entzücken müssen, wenn man unter jeder Beleuchtung diese vielfachen horizontalen und tausend vertikalen Linien unterbrochen und geschmückt wie eine stumme Musik mit den Augen auffaßt, und wie alles, was klein und beschränkt in uns ist, nicht ohne Schmerz erregt und ausgetrieben wird. Besonders ist die Fülle der Mondscheinbilder über alle Begriffe, wo das einzeln Unterhaltende, vielleicht störend zu Nennende durchaus zurücktritt und nur die großen Massen von Licht und Schatten ungeheuer anmutige, symmetrisch harmonische Riesenkörper dem Auge entgegentragen."[257]

Goethe also suggested that observation by moonlight had an invaluable therapeutic effect. With all but the shimmering contours of colossal structures shrouded in absolute darkness, their solitary grandeur served to expulse petty thoughts from the soul and enlarge the spirit. The effects of a landscape transfigured by moonlight in turn inspired attempts to capture in images the visual impressions it conveyed: "Abends werden die Villen im Mondschein besucht, und sogar im Dunkeln die frappantesten Motive nachgezeichnet."[258] Goethe concluded that in Italy, the sun and the moon exercised a unique function: "Und so haben Sonne und Mond, eben wie der Menschengeist, hier ein ganz anderes Geschäft als anderer Orten, hier, wo ihrem Blick ungeheure und doch gebildete Massen entgegenstehen."[259] Indeed, while the fundamental forms of ancient architecture could be enjoyed through the sun's vibrant prismatic illumination, nocturnal contemplation of Roman edifices facilitated meditations of the soul and excited the

[255]HA XI, 167. Italienische Reise, 2. Februar 1787
[256]Nicola Moorby "The Coliseum, Rome by Moonlight1819 by Joseph Mallord William Turner," catalogue entry, Oct. 2009, in David Blkayney Brown (ed.), J.M.W. Turner: Sketchbooks. Drawings and Watercolours, Tate Research Publication, Dec 2012, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-the-colosseum-rome-by-moonlight-r1132462,accessed 05 March 2017.
[257]HA XI, 407. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht September
[258]HA XI, 399. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Frascati, 28 September 1787
[259]HA XI, 168. Italienische Reise, Rom 2 Feb 1787

mind's eye to enliven artistic powers of reproduction.

But if the viewer could only periodically benefit from the evocative effects of the moon on architecture, Goethe discovered a means of harnessing artificial light to permit regular observations of monuments in darkness. A text inserted in his *Second Roman Sojourn* authored by the Swiss art historian, Heinrich Meyer, recommended the adoption of torchlight viewing. Indeed, Meyer maintained that torchlight was particularly revealing with respect to sculpture, because it served to isolate a statue by cordoning it off from its surroundings, while enhancing visual focalization and depth perception to enable the observer to apprehend a self contained, artistic whole. Meyer also pointed to torchlight's capacity to disclose the shadows a statue cast, accentuating the visual effects of drapery to reveal how it at once concealed and disclosed the contours of the human frame. Superior sculpture was not necessarily nude and unadorned, but clothed in garments in such a way that made visible the form of the human body beneath it. Finally, where a sculpture suffered from display in a constraining niche or alcove, the light a torch emitted served to illuminate its obscured features. Goethe thus experimented with torchlight, taking advantage of the fact that it was mobile and manipulable and could be targetted to premit light to converge upon specific aspects of an artwork.

No sooner than he had become accustomed to the use of torchlight Goethe discovered another source of artificial lighting capable of disclosing the essential forms of art. Illuminating facades through brilliant explosions emitting a spectrum of colour, fireworks provided a sensational backdrop for the observation of classical monuments. The sudden release of intense, colored light occasioned a singular image of grandiose, fugitive forms that came into view through a shower of stars flying off against the night sky in contrary directions:

> gestern haben wir die Erleuchtung der Kuppel und das Feuerwerk vom Kastell gesehn. Die

> Erleuchtung ist ein Anblick wie ein ungeheures Märchen, man traut seinen Augen nicht. Da ich neuerdings nur die Sachen und nicht wie sonst bei und mit den Sachen sehe, was nicht da ist, so müssen mir so große Schauspiele kommen, wenn ich mich freuen soll. ...Die schöne Form der Kolonnade, der Kirche und besonders der Kuppel erst in einem feurigen Umrisse und, wenn die Stunde vorbei ist, in einer glühenden Masse zu sehn, ist einzig und herrlich. Wenn man bedenkt, daß das ungeheure Gebäude in diesem Augenblick nur zum Gerüste dient, so wird man wohl begreifen, daß etwas Ähnliches in der Welt nicht sein kann."[260]

Goethe underscored the novelty of viewing architectural forms outlined in a firey glowing mass that momentarily illuminated them only to dissipate into the darkness. The breath-taking fleeting image, though instantaneous, became enshrined in his memory, whereby he reveled in the effects produced by such extraordinary viewing conditions.

But while Goethe marshaled a diverse array of viewing methods designed to elicit contrasting atmospheric conditions on various artforms, the real spiritual effects of Goethe's exercises in observation by sunset and moonlight ensued from the view from above upon which they depended. Indeed, one of the most important spiritual exercises in antiquity involved seeking out a view from ahigh to look down upon events from an elevated perspective. Such a bird's-eye view, taking in the whole of a landscape, effectively served to engender a flight of the soul, raising one above earthly preoccupations and conveying one's ultimate insignificance and the triviality of daily life.[261] Goethe was a faithful practitioner of exercises cultivating a view from above in Italy. He conscientiously sought out elevations, both natural and man-made, scaling promontories, hills, amphitheaters, towers and church belfries to gain a perspective from ahigh. Upon his arrival in Cento, he thus remarked, "Ich bestieg nach meiner Gewohnheit sogleich den Turm."[262]In Bologna he likewise announced: "Ich bestieg den Turm und ergötzte mich an der freien Luft. Die Aussicht ist herrlich!"[263]Describing the panoramic view from above obtained from the Aldobrandini Villa, he noted of its construction: "Es läβt sich denken, daβ man

[260]HA XI, 352. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 30 Juni 1787
[261]Hadot, 239.
[262]HA XI, 101. Italienische Reise, Cento, 17 Okt. 1786
[263]HA XI, 10. Italienische Reise, Bologna, 18 Okt 1786

das Schloβ dergestalt angelegt hat, die Herrlichkeit der Hügel und des flachen Landes mit einem Blick übersehen zu können."[264] At the very conclusion of his Italian sojourn, Goethe mounted the Capitoline hill, surveying in a glance the colossol monuments including the arch of Septimius Severus and the Coloseum, his soul transported to a heightened state while overlooking the city:

> Alles Massenhafte macht einen eignen Eindruck zugleich als erhaben und faßlich, und in solchen Umgängen zog ich gleichsam ein unübersehbares Summa Summarum meines ganzen Aufenthaltes. Dieses, in aufgeregter Seele tief und groß empfunden, erregte eine Stimmung, die ich heroisch-elegisch nennen darf, woraus sich in poetischer Form eine Elegie zusammenbilden wollte.[265]

Lamenting his approaching departure from Rome, he could not help but recite Ovid's *Tristia,* stylizing himself an exile forced to part with Rome's classical heritage. Notwithstanding, the exercise of looking down upon classical ruins from above percipitated a spiritual reorientation that ultimately compelled him to effectuate a dramatic change in his way of life upon his return to Germany. Indeed, it is no wonder that Goethe would repeatedly stage conclusive moments of his fictional protagonists, whether Faust or Wilhelm Meister, atop mountainous elevations. Viewing the miniscule world beneath them they attained a greater perspective inspiring them to renounce past errors and embrace a radically new way of life.[266]

IV. The Intensification of Aesthetic Exercises through Productive Seeing

Baumgarten and Aesthetic Judgment

Dubbing his aesthetic exercises, 'exercises in the beautiful,' for Baumgarten the purpose of aesthetics lay not only in analyzing the operations of sensuous cognition facilitating an artwork's apprehension, but in making possible judgments of beauty. The transformation of perceptual faculties through exercise was thus invested with an implicit teleology of equipping the practitioner to overcome arbitrary tastes. In deeming an artwork beautiful, the recipient of art

[264]HA XI, 403. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht September 1787
[265]FA 15.1, 596. Das römischer Karneval
[266]Matthew Sharpe, "To not forget:: Pierre Hadot's last book on Goethe" *Parrhesia: a journal of critical philosophy* 15.22 (2015):111.

exercised his judgment: "wenn ich schöne Schriften lese, schöne Gemälde sehe und dabei überzeugend gedenke: das ist schön, das gefällt, so *übe ich mich* schon."[267] The caveat being that despite the fact that judgments of beauty involved a reflective act interrogating reasons for claiming that the art object possessed or lacked beauty, the beholder was not always able to provide a justification for such assessments: "Er wird zwar nicht immer deutlich wissen, warum eine Sache vollkommen ist."[268]Baumgarten concluded that the reason for such indeterminacy lay in the special character of aesthetic judgments. In contradistinction to exercises of reason governed by the rules of logic constraining judgment, aesthetic judgments did not apply determinative rules. Nor did they set out to eliminate sensuous adulterations to purify cognition. Rather, aesthetic judgment exploited perceptual indeterminacies, reconfigured sensuous impurities and reoriented sensible excessses in order to produce a global outcome promoting the harmony of the perceptual faculties.[269] For Baumgarten then, aesthetic judgment was bound up with the larger economy of the judger's cognitive powers to redirect his sensuous activity in specifically aesthetic as opposed to intellectual ways.

According to Baumgarten, the judgment of beauty ultimately consisted in the observer's intuition of an artwork's perfection as a harmonious unity-in-variety. In stipulating that unity-in-variety be a necessary feature of something beautiful, Baumgarten deemed beauty, in part, objective. As Mary Gregor insists, "the key text of the *Aesthetica* stresses the notion of consensus phaenomenon, a, unity-in-multiplicity of sensible qualities that makes the representation coherent within itself and with the other representations that comprise the work of art."[270] The apprehension of an artistic structure exhibiting the perfection of unity-in-variety depended upon

[267]Trop, 66.
[268]Trop, 66.
[269]Trop, 66.
[270]Mary Gregor, "Baumgarten's Aesthetica" *The Review of Metaphysics* 37. 2 (1983): 370.

well-functioning perceptual faculties furnished with the capacity to bind multiple elements into an organized coherent whole.[271] Gabriel Trop thus maintains that for Baumgarten: "the most critical operation of aesthetic production and reception, consists in training the human mind... to generate order from the multiplicity of appearances."[272] Conversely, in making beauty an intuition derived from sensible perception, Baumgarten importantly insisted that beauty was a subjective achievement. Indeed, the sensuous richness that constituted the beautiful work's unity-in-variety had to be intuited, whereby intuition captured the phenomenal quality of beauty that eluded cognitive determination. As Frederick Beiser notes: "As a direct awareness of a particular, intuition has an extensive clarity and liveliness that cannot be fully elaborated or explained by concepts."[273]Baumgarten thus deemed judgments of beauty non-discursive or occuring without the application of determinate rules and intuitive or phenomenally given. Apprehending beauty as perfection amounted to possessing the capacity to organize a plurality of dispersed sensible appearances into an integral whole to intuit the artwork's harmoniou coherence.

Like Baumgarten, Goethe repudiated the idea of an aesthetics stipulating that the objectivity of judgments of taste arise through conceptual determination. Instead, he adhered to exercises in art production that molded and modified perceptual faculties to ground aesthetic objectivity in the intuition of an artwork's universal form. Goethe suggested that by absolving a rigorous trajectory of exercises synthesizing an array of polarities, he could achieve a higher, enhanced apprehension of artistic form that transcended the limitations of his finite powers of perception to disclose a work's universality. To this end, the activities of reconciling subjective and objective, harmonizing form and content, comprehending the relationship between part to whole and collapsing the distinction between artist and representational object, served to perfect

[271]Trop, 60.
[272]Trop, 60-61.
[273]Beiser, 146.

various sensuously mediated cognitive abilities. Their mastery ultimately enabled the practitioner to intuit a prototypical image of artistic form encompassing empirical instantiations of a given species of art that served as the touchstone for aesthetic judgments.

Goethe's conception of art reception further converged with Baumgartenian aesthetics by identifying the ability to connect multiple elements into an organized whole as the enabling condition for the apprehension of beauty.[274]Goethe insisted that the subject of aesthetic exercise acquire the ability to unite dispersed, intermingled and unorganized sensuous properties into a coherent artistic totality. The artist's central task thus lay in producing an artistic whole that integrally embraced its constituent parts, avoiding the assemblage of a composite entity bearing the mere semblance of unity. Likewise, the beholder of art had to synthesize an artwork's disparate elements to apprehend it as an integral, structured whole. Indeed, Goethe insisted that the mode of apprehension suited to artworks was an intuitive one in which the beholder perceived the artwork's sensuous multiplicity through a prior, all-embracing whole. Judgments of taste thus arose from exercises tutoring various sensuous-cognitive dispositions and intensifying their performance in order to grasp artworks as complex, inviolable wholes, disclosing an intuition of their ideal, universal form.[275]But only by means of effectuating a transition from the mere reception to the actual production of artworks to achieve a higher synthesis of polarities, could the practitioner draw nearer to the apprehension of the artwork's universal form.

Aesthetic exercises in productive seeing

Having exhausted polar exercises in apprehending artistic form, Goethe turned to their synthesis through the practice of a productive mode of observation. If polar exercises in seeing

[274]Trop, 60.
[275]Trop, 63.

had involved the exhaustive exploration of the contrary aspects of artworks, Goethe sought to bring the mutually fructifying tension of opposites to a higher unity through aesthetic exercises in productive seeing. Aptly characterized by one commentator as premised on the "empfangend-gestaltenden Doppelwesen des Sehens,"[276] Goethe suggested that apprehending the form of objects required the observer to move beyond the mere receptive uptake of what was given in perception to actively structure what he saw. He thereby envisioned the cultivation of such a "schöpferischen Blick" by way of a form-generative 'Nachbildung,' where observation became concretized through the labor of the hand's drawing and modeling: "Mein Auge bildet sich unglaublich, und *meine Hand soll nicht ganz zurückbleiben*."[277] Goethe was persuaded that perceiving the form of the artwork was inextricably bound up with the experience of reproducing it: "Erstaunend schwer ist es sehen zu lernen *ohne selbst Hand anzulegen*."[278] Indeed, engaging in a mechanical process of repeatedly reappropriating what one saw was a necessary prerequisite for the recognition of a beautiful work: "Was schön, groß, ehrwürdig gehalten wird, will ich mit eignen Augen sehn und erkennen. *Ohne Nachahmung ist dies nicht möglich*."[279]Hence aesthetic exercises not only entailed training the eye through exercising various modes of observation, they importantly depended on schooling the hand to tangibly reproduce the object of observation. In the course of reproducing what he saw, Goethe became increasingly aware that the artist, concretely realizing his perspective on the world, occupied a privilege position in matters of seeing: "Dabei findet man denn wohl den Künstler beneidenswert, der durch Nachbildung und Nachahmung auf alle Weise jenen großen Intentionen sich mehr nähert, sie besser begreift als der bloß Beschauende und Denkende."[280] Productive seeing thus marked an important transition in

[276]Frank Fehrenback, "Goethe und das Zeichen" in ed. Peter Matussek: Goethe und die Verzeitlichung der Natur (München: C.H. Beck 1998) 133.
[277]HA XI, 353. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, Ende Juni 1787
[278]WA IV, 8, 156. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, Rom, 1 Feb1787
[279]HA XI, 364. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 5 Juli 1787
[280]HA XI, 170. Italienische Reise, 16. Februar 1787

Goethe's regimen of aesthetic exercise, compelling him to move from a receptive distillation of artistic form to its formative production.

Synthesizing Subjective & Objective

Exercises in productive seeing commenced with an attempt to synthesize the practitioner's subjective and objective perspectives, putting to the test his powers of observation. Goethe insisted that no observer could objectively judge what he was incapable of materially reproducing: "so fühlt man zuletzt, daß *man nichts richtig beurteilt, als was man selbst hervorbringen kann*."[281]He thus conscientiously set out to replicate what he saw through painting, drawing and modeling. As with his visual exercises in observation, repetition was of the essence, where any given observed object had to be reproduced countless times over: "Ich mag nun von gar nichts mehr wissen, *als etwas hervorzubringen und meinen Sinn recht zu üben*."[282] But unlike the case of aesthetic exercises in the reception of artworks, productive seeing generated an actual representation, revealing discrepancies between an observer's perceptual and material representations of the world. Goethe recognized that there was often a significant divergence between what he took himself to visually apprehend and what he was capable of representing: "Es ist ganz eigen, dass *man deutlich sehen und wissen kann, was gut und besser ist; will man sich es aber zueignen, so schwindet es gleichsam unter den Händen*, und wir greifen nicht nach dem Rechten, sondern nach dem, was wir zu fassen gewohnt sind."[283]He insisted that only practice could rectify this predicament: "*Nur durch geregelte Übung könnte man vorwärts kommen.*"[284] Given the difficulty of bringing what he saw to artistic embodiment, aesthetic exercises repeatedly reproducing the observed object furnished a

[281]HA XI, 409. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, Bericht Sept 1787
[282]HA XI, 397. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 15. September 1787
[283]HA XI, 172. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 17 Feb 1787
[284]HA XI, 125. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 17 Feb 1787

benchmark against which Goethe could evaluate the adequacy of his perception by making apparent the extent to which habitual, subjective ways of seeing held sway over his powers of observation. Indeed, the images he produced served to challenge what he took himself to be seeing by patently revealing discrepancies. At the same time, they corroborated the progress he made by providing evidence of incremental convergence towards the object of repesentation. Materially concretized productive seeing thus facilitated the development of an internal standard of objectivity, constitutively shaping Goethe's powers of visual discrimination and with it, his aesthetic judgment.

Exercises in productive seeing essentially revolved around the practitioner's attempt to reconcile subjective and objective dimensions of vision. Prior to his apprenticeship in the arts in Italy, having yet to assimilate the objectual bearings that ensued from the protracted exercise of 'gegenständliches Sehen,' subjectivity dominated Goethe's practice of the visual arts. Indeed, the ambiguity of his early conception of art's objective and subjective facets is characteristically rendered by his fictional persona, Werther. Werther emphatically articulated his recurrent inability to capture his impressions of nature in drawing: "Ach könntest du das wieder ausdrücken, könntest du dem Papier 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."[285] For Werther, the artwork foremost mirrored the soul which indirectly reflected the world of divine nature. Art was not exhausted in simple imitation or the faithful transmission of the external world to paper, but was importantly mediated by the artist's subjective take on reality. Werther's difficulty lay in adequately capturing the image of nature impressed upon his soul. He struggled in vain to express his subjectivity in a way that breathed life into his representations of the

[285]HA VI, 8. Die Leiden des jungen Werther 10 Mai 1771

empirical world.

The problem of mimetic representation or the creation of works corresponding to the objective world was one Goethe wrestled with throughout the first decade of his tenure in Weimar. In 1777, he announced of the persisting difficulties he met with in drawing: "In meinem Diarium steht so oft: ich habe gezeichnet, und es will sich immer nichts finden, was ich gezeichnet habe..."[286]Goethe construed his artistic limitations in terms of a failure to manifest his subjective intentions as objective, figural form. Indeed, by 1782, he concluded that the problem could only be resolved through the exercise of mechanical reproduction: "jetzo seh' ich täglich mehr wie *eine anhaltende mechanische Übung endlich uns das geistige auszudrucken fähig macht*, und wo jene nicht ist, bleibt es eine hohle Begierde dieses im Flug schiesen zu wollen."[287]But it was not until his sojourn in Italy that Goethe put this intuition into concrete practice to initiate a fundamental reorientation. Despite prioritizing the technical logistics of drawing, the difficulty of abandoning his particularistic perspective to convey nature's truth persisted: "Es kostet mich Aufpaßens biß ich meine kleinliche deutsche Art abschaffe. Ich sehe lang was gut und beßer ist; aber *das Rechte in der Natur zu finden und nachzuahmen ist schweer, schweer*."[288] Moved by a newfound urgency to suppress his subjectivity in order to render the objective character of things, Goethe produced some eight hundred and fifty drawings during the two-year span of his travels, immersing himself in a rigorous regimen of 'gegenständliches Zeichnen und Malen.'[289]

Goethe's increasing preference for objective representation drew on his exposure to Italy's wealth of Greco-Roman artworks, the salient feature of which he took to be the transmission of

[286]WA IV, 3,177. Brief and Charlotte von Stein, 13 bis 16 September 1777
[287]WA IV, 5, 302. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 9 April 1782
[288]WA IV, 8, 179. Brief an Charlotte von Stein rom 7.-10. Februar 1787
[289]Wolfgang Hecht. *Goethe als Zeichner* (Leipzig: VEB E. A. Seemann Buch-und Kunstverlag 1982) 21.

objective representational content. Goethe noted the ancients' emphasis on the determination of an object's pure form that proved neither crude and reductionist, nor nebulous and impalpable: "Besonders fühle ich hier in Rom, wie interessanter denn doch die Reinheit der Form und ihre Bestimmtheit, vor jener marckigen Roheit und schwebenden Geistigkeit ist und bleibt."[290] Making the observer feel as though he were in the object's immediate presence, the ancient artist conveyed the object's unadorned nature, adding nothing gratuitous. Indeed, the exclusive transmission of the object's simple existence stood in diametric opposition to the techniques informing modern art that played on the beholder's subjective affects. Goethe underscored the gap separating the methods employed by the ancients and the moderns:

> *Sie stellten die Existenz dar, wir gewöhnlich den Effekt*; sie schilderten das Fürchterliche, wir schildern fürchterlich; sie das Angenehme, wir angenehm usw. Daher kommt alles Übertriebene, alles Manierierte, alle falsche Grazie, aller Schwulst. Denn wenn man den Effekt und auf den Effekt arbeitet, so glaubt man ihn nicht fühlbar genug machen zu können.[291]

While ancient artists sought to capture the essence of things, transmitting their objective existence, the moderns fashioned works seeking to call forth the beholder's reaction. Goethe rejected the attempt to eclipse nature by appealing to subjectivity, espousing the ancient conception of surpassing nature exclusively by means of producing according to its objective laws. Techniques that aimed to seduce the imagination and elicit pathos were artificial and detracted from the artwork's essence. The antidote to techniques that curried to viewer affects, was the self-contained character of ancient art rendering objectivity through impassive gods like the Apollo of Belvedere or the detached heroism of a Laocoon: "Diese *edlen Gestalten* waren eine Art von heimlichen Gegengift, wenn das Schwache, Falsche, Manierte über mich zu gewinnen drohte."[292]Hermetically closed off from their reception, ancient artworks preserved

[290]WA IV, 8, 304. Brief an Carl August, 7./8. Dezember 1787
[291]HA XI, 322. Italienische Reise, An Herder Neapel, 17 Mai 1787
[292]HA XI, 343. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt Bericht April 1788

their absolute autonomy to instantiate the pure presence of the represented object.

Commending the austere objectivity of the ancients whose methods invested the artwork's authority in the object's simple presence, Goethe was ultimately led to adopt a poetic style valorizing the object, famously dubbed by Schiller, 'naive objectivity'. Indeed, at the onset of his Italian journey, Goethe conceded that he was inundated with images that he lacked the ability to convey with words, such that all attempt to adequately capture in poetic verse the Mediterranean landscapes he encountered, had all but proven futile: "*Wenn ich Worte schreiben will*, so stehen mir immer Bilder vor Augen des fruchtbaren Landes, des freien Meeres, der duftigen Inseln, des rauchenden Berges, und *mir fehlen die Organe*, das alles darzustellen."[293] Engaging in the material process of drawing and painting would soon remedy the predicament of sensuous images resisting poetic articulation:"Daβ ich zeichne und die Kunst studiere, hilft dem Dichtungsvermögen auf..."[294] Only through the practice of aesthetic exercises in reproductive seeing, helping him to internalize a newfound objectivity and develop an organ of intuitive vision, were the poetic implications forthcoming: "Die Gegenständlichkeit meiner Poesie bin ich denn doch jener groβen Aufmerksamkeit und *Übung des Auges* schuldig geworden..."[295] But Goethe's achievement of poetic Gegendständlichkeit was less a result of promoting the ascendency of the objective over the subjective, than the achievement of a universal perspective that synthesized the art object's objective and subjective facets.

Reconciling Form & Content

The reproductive seeing Goethe exercised in artistic production further implied a higher synthesis of the artwork's form and content. This relation was especially pertinent to Goethe's attempts to artistically render the human figure, where he sought to combine the natural realism

[293]HA XI, 208. Italienische Reise Neapel 17. März 1787
[294]HA XI, 445. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 21. Dezember 1787
[295]MA 19, 140. Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens Eckermann 20 April 1825

acquired from his anatomical training with the artistic idealism derived from his studies of antique statuary. Producing numerous sketches and drawings of personages, Goethe was preoccupied with the representation of the human form. [296] He considered a mastery of the relation between inner and outer elements of the human figure the foundation of drawing and modeling: "Nun hat mich zuletzt das *A und O aller uns bekannten Dinge, die menschliche Figur*, angefaßt... Ich habe alle meine physiognomischen Kunststückchen, die ich aus Pik auf den Propheten in den Winkel geworfen, wieder hervorgesucht, und sie kommen mir gut zu passe."[297]If Goethe's interest in physical appearances had been initially kindled by the Swiss physiognomist, Lavater, in Italy Goethe increasingly gravitated toward the architecture of the body. [298]It comes as little surprise then that a Roman representation of human musculature, evincing a masterful synthesis of the body's inner infrastructure and external contours, immediately drew his attention: "In dem großen Lazarett San Spirito hat man den Künstlern zulieb einen sehr schönen Muskelkörper dergestalt bereitet, daβ die Schönheit desselben in Verwunderung setzt. Er könnte wirklich für einen geschundenen Halbgott, für einen Marsyas gelten."[299] That the ancients could render a network of muscles beautiful enough to evoke a demigod was testament to their integral conception of the human body. Goethe's practice of productive seeing thus importantly involved acquiring the capacity to produce a beautiful, exteriorization of inner, corporeal elements, making ideal form inform material form.[300] He related his attempt to portray the human figure in such a way that surface features were a genuine manifestation of deep structures:

[296]Petra Maisak, "Der Zeichner Goethe oder "Die practische Liebhaberey in den Kunsten"" in *Goethe und die Kunst* ed. Sabine Schulze. (Ostfidern: Hatje, 1994) 1199.
[297]HA XI, 385. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 23 August 1787
[298]Evelyne K. Moore, "Goethe and Lavater: A Specular Friendship" in *The Enlightened Eye: Goethe and Visual Culture* ed. Evelyne K Moore and Patricia Anne Simpson (Amsterdam : Brill Academic Publishers. 2007) 165.
[299]HA XI, 162. Italienische Reise, 20. Januar 1787
[300]Marc Redfield, *Phantom formations: aesthetic ideology and the Bildungsroman*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996) 130.

> Ich begab mich in die Schule, lernte den Kopf mit seinen Theilen zeichnen und nun fing ich erst an die Antiken zu verstehen... stieg ich vom Angesicht aufs Schlüsselbein, verbreitete mich auf die Brust und so weiter, *alles von innen heraus*, den Knochen Bau, die Muskeln wohl studirt und überlegt, dann die Antiken Formen betrachtet, mit der Natur verglichen und das Karackteristische sich wohl einprägt. Meine sorgfältige, ehemalige Studien der Osteologie und der Körper überhaupt, sind mir sehr zu statten gekommen und ich habe gestern die Hand als den letzten Theil der mir übrig blieb, absolviert.[301]

Drawing on his anatomical studies of bone structure and musculature to determine how inner corporeal elements were externally manifest, Goethe proceeded from within outwards, to bring the body's infrastructure into relief, whereby the contours of classical statuary served as a touchstone for an ideal manifestation. But while conscientiously mediating the empirical with the ideal, Goethe accorded priority to the skeletal frame, claiming, as Lavater had, that human flesh ultimately assumed forms predetermined by it: "Man kann es schon bemerkt haben, daß ich das Knochensystem für die Grundzeichnung des Menschen...und alles Fleisch beinah nur für das Kolorit dieser Zeichnung halte."[302] In a later poem entitled *Typus*, Goethe similarly suggested that content was always already form, such that what lay in depths of the body's bone structure was inextricably bound up with its surface manifestation and this in turn had implications for its artistic portrayal:

> Es ist nichts in der Haut, was nicht im Knochen ist.
> Vor schlechtem Gebilde jedem graut,
> Das ein Augenschmerz ihm ist.
> Was freut denn jeden? Blühen zu sehn,
> das von innen schon gut gestaltet.
> Außen mag's in Glätte, mag in Farben gehn:
> Es ist ihm schon vorangewaltet.[303]

Suggesting that depictions that failed to bring inner constituents to embodiment were nothing but an eyesore, in his endeavor to depict the human body through aesthetic exercises in reproductive seeing, Goethe was mindful of the reciprocal relations of internal to external, taking pains to

[301]WA IV, 8, 329. Brief an Carl August 25.Januar 1788
[302]J. C. Lavater, Physiognomische Fragmente, zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntniss und Menschenliebe, 2, (Leipzig: Winterthur, Weidmanns Erben und Reich, Steiner 1775-1778) 143.
[303]BA 1, 567.Typus

fashion human forms to endow adequate form to a well conceived infrastructure.

The main impetus underlying Goethe's conviction of the necessity of grasping a higher synthesis between the body's inner and outer elements was its importance in bringing artistic representations to life. Here again, Goethe took his cue from the ancients, maintaining, "So pflegt man auch nach Anleitung der Alten das Skelett nicht als eine künstlich zusammengereihte Knochenmasse zu studieren, vielmehr zugleich mit den Bändern, wodurch es schon *Leben und Bewegung erhält*."[304] Frequently portraying the exploits and deeds of mythical gods and heros, the ancients were able convincingly to represent bodily configurations of maximal exertion. They understood how to depict the body in movement in lieu of their command over the order and placement of bones and a grasp of how they hang together as a whole. Indeed, their anatomical knowledge even extended to the connection of bones and muscle to connective ligaments and tendons that controlled the extension and contraction of the appendages. Absent such expertise, a Hercules in combat risked becoming artificial and contorted, while a majestic Athena failed to convey the appearance of dignified repose. Goethe elaborated on this insight in his account of the Laocoon sculpture, demonstrating the way in which the artist's depiction of corporeal movement originated in a snakebite that provoked the body's ensuing contraction and flight. The artist masterfully evinced the bite's determination of the directionality of bodily movement, portraying the shoulders pressed downwards and the breast protruding upwards, with the head declining towards the original source of stimulus. Animating depictions of human movement was thus intimately related to the artist's grasp of the mechanics governing the body, in turn influencing the way in which the human frame was exteriorized. In the introduction of his *Propyläen,* a journal devoted to elaborating the fundamental insights of classical aesthetics, Goethe thus

[304]HA XI, 162. Italienische Reise, 20. Januar 1787

underscored the necessity of probing the connections of inner parts that brought surface phenomena to life:

> Die menschliche Gestalt kann nicht bloß durch das Beschauen ihrer Oberfläche begriffen werden, man muß ihr Inneres entblößen, ihre Teile sondern, die Verbindungen derselben bemerken, die Verschiedenheiten kennen, sich von Wirkung und Gegenwirkung unterrichten, das Verborgene, Ruhende, das Fundament der Erscheinung sich einprägen, wenn man dasjenige wirklich schauen und nachahmen will, was sich als ein schönes, ungetrenntes Ganze in lebendigen Wellen vor unseren Augen bewegt."[305]

Adhering to the belief that the articulation of life occured in dynamic representations of activity, Goethe endeavored to produce 'von innen heraus' to effectuate a higher synthesis externalizing the body's inner infrastructure to animate representations of human movement.

The Logic of Part & Whole

Beyond serving to ensure objectivity and disclosing the artistic relation between form and content, exercises in productive seeing were indispensable to Goethe's cultivation of a wholistic mode of visual apprehension. While endowed with a certain facility for seeing wholeness in his examination of nature and organic life, the scope of certain Italian artworks meant that the ability to grasp artistic wholeness was not necessarily a given. Wholeness thus initially eluded Goethe in the observation of Raphael's renowned frescoes, whereby he had to survey the works multiple times in progressive fashion in order to apprehend their overarching unity:

> Die Logen von Raffael und die großen Gemälde der »Schule von Athen« etc. hab' ich nur erst einmal gesehen, und da ist's, als wenn man den Homer aus einer zum Teil verloschenen, beschädigten Handschrift heraus studieren sollte. Das Vergnügen des ersten Eindrucks ist unvollkommen, *nur wenn man nach und nach alles recht durchgesehn und studiert hat, wird der Genuß ganz.*[306]

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But while the scale and detail of artforms like ceiling frescos complicated the immediate apprehension of wholeness, the real challenge lay in the production of artworks exhibiting wholeness. Goethe sought to discover a mode of art production that yielded works as totalities

[305]BA 19, 179. Einleitung in die Propyläen
[306]HA XI, 132. Italienische Reise, 7 Nov 1786

integrally embracing their requisite parts. Once again, he envisaged such an artistic approach roughly equivalent to the investigative procedures he deployed in the natural sciences in which he adopted a synthetic perspective to apprehend living entities as prior, organic wholes. If the natural observer strove for an all-embracing perception of nature's entirety, thinking wholeness in its immediacy to apprehend organisms as inviolable pregiven unities, the artist, in seeking to imitate and reproduce nature had to dispose over a similar synoptic perspective. The practitioner of productive seeing thus strove to cultivate an intuitive grasp of the fundamental way organic parts fit into a prior natural whole. The difficulting being that the relationship which brought parts into a unified whole, though founded within the individual parts, was not ordinarily perceptible. The artist thus strove to deploy the observational mode of the natural investigator, reproducing the objects of his observation through drawing to develop an acute sense for the logic of part to whole:

> Wie gut bildet ein Kenner der Naturgeschichte, der zugleich Zeichner ist, die Gegenstände nach, indem er das Wichtige und Bedeutende der Teile, woraus der Charakter des Ganzen entspringt, einsieht und den Nachdruck darauf legt. So wie nun eine genauere Kenntnis der einzelnen Teile menschlicher Gestalt, die er zuletzt wieder als ein Ganzes betrachten muβ, den Künstler äuβerst fördert...[307]

The creation of an artistic whole meant accentuating salient parts to intimate the interconnective nexus of the remaining ones. Indeed, despite Goethe's facility for identifying nature's organic wholes, translating his wholistic mode of apprehension into an artwork that seamlessly incorporated constituent elements as part of a preexisting unity, posed a formidable challenge. In order to bring an artistic whole to consummation, the artist had to both capture the manifold relations that mimetically reflected a natural whole and impose relations of coherence internal to the work itself to ground its comprehensive unity and ensure its completion onto itself.[308]The artist's task thereby exceeded the natural investigator's vision in that he not only reproduced the

[307]BA 19, 179. Einleitung Propylaen
[308]Karl P. Mortiz, *Über die B ildende Nachahmung des Schönen*. (Braunschweig: Schulbuchandlung, 1788) 34.

relations of the whole of nature, he had to fashion a genuine artistic whole. Six years prior to his artistic apprenticeship in Italy, Goethe claimed that he was accustomed to bring forth details from out of an antecedent pictorial whole:

> Es fängt an besser zu gehen, und ich komme mehr in die Bestimmtheit und in das lebhaftere Gefühl des Bildes. Das Detail wird sich nach und nach heraus machen. Auch hier seh' ich, dass ich mir vergebne Mühe geben, vom Detail ins Ganze zu lernen; ich habe immer nur mich *aus dem Ganzen ins Detail herausarbeiten und entwickeln können...*

But notwithstanding his purported ability to draw in a way that derived details from the whole, upon arrival in Rome, the acquisition of a wholistic mode of production acquired a new urgency.

Goethe made recourse to various techniques in order to better grasp how to impose constituent elements from out of a prior whole. He initially took to observing the way in which man-made natural unities such as garden landscapes were created through making disparate elements accord with an antecedent unifying idea. Describing the artistry evinced by an Italian landscape garden in which each detail was entwined in a prior unity, he noted:

> ...so standen zu Frascati, in dem Aldrobandinischen Garten, *zu einer Einheit versammelt,* die verschiedenartigsten Bäume, ein Wanderziel allen Künstlern und Kunstfreunden. In der mitte hob sich die Zypresse hoch empor, links strebte die immergrüne Eiche zur Breite wie zur Höhe und bildete, indem sie zugleich jenen schlanken Baum hie und da mit zierlichen Ästen umfaßte, eine reine Lichtseite. Rechts in freier Luft zeigten sich der Pinien horizontale Schirmgipfel und die Schattenseite war mit leichterem Gesträuche abgeschlossen, sodann nahmen weiter hervor die breiten gezackten Blätter eines Feigenbaums noch einiges Licht auf, und *das Ganze* rundete sich befriedigend.[309]

Once he had attained a sense of the relation of part to whole employed by the landscape architect, Goethe moved to determine how the landscape painter conceived each component of his work as part of an all-inclusive whole to impose a higher unity onto his canvas. In so doing, he increasingly realized that artworks were far from a combination of lines and figures the sum of which invariably yielded an artistic unity. Indeed, the skilled artist had to avoid employing

[309]SW 35, 185. Wilhelm Tischbeins Idyllen

techniques that aggregated parts to merely conjure up the impression of totality.[310]Dismissing such piecemeal methods exhibited in the works of medieval mosaicists, Goethe concluded: "Dergleichen Behandlung erschien mir immer als eine Art von Mosaik, wo man einen fertigen Stift neben den andern setzt, um aus tausend Einzelnheiten endlich den Schein eines Bildes hervorzubringen."[311] The exemplary work of art never arose through the deployment of a cumulative method, but was constitutively governed by a higher synthesis that imposed a whole integrally comprehending its interlocking parts. Upon viewing Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine chapel, Goethe thus marveled at a sweeping gaze that positioned figures in a higher unity so that each was inextricably related to the others. Moreover, Michelangelo wielded bold strokes to lay down the contours of his figures as indivisible wholes that bore no trace of an additive assemblage of bodyparts.[312]Despite his ability to identify artistic wholes, Goethe nonetheless struggled to fashion determinative wholes that avoided successively fusing together parts in a semblance of unity. Laboring to appropriate an integrative technique through an intense regimen of sketching, he remarked of the attendant difficulties: "Aus vielen Skizzen endlich *ein Ganzes hervorzubringen gelingt selbst den Besten nicht immer*."[313] By compelling him to repeatedly constitute a genuine artistic whole to which every part was constitutively linked, exercises in productive seeing eventually enabled Goethe to produce paintings like his 'Die Villa Medici, von der Spanischen Treppe her gesehen' or 'Der Kapitolplatz in Rom' that brought to bear a whole in which all parts merged in an overriding nexus bearing no isolated or superfluous details.[314]

Goethe cultivated his apprehension of artistic wholes not only through producing

[310]Stelzer,73.
[311]HA XIII, 159. Morphologie Der Verfasser teilt die Geschichte seiner botanischen Studien mit
[312]HA XI, 204. Italienische Reise, Neapel, den 13. März 1787, Goethe recognized the same ability in his friend Tischbein, who could delineate the contours of life-sized figures in a single stroke: "Tischbein hat nämlich die große Gabe, Götter- und Heldengestalten in Lebensgröße und drüber mit der Feder zu umreißen. Er schraffiert wenig hinein und legt mit einem breiten Pinsel den Schatten tüchtig an, so daß der Kopf rund und erhaben dasteht.
[313]HA XII, 481. Maximen und Reflexionen
[314]Hecht, 22.

canvases manifesting a painterly unity, but from his engagment with the techniques informing the production of statuary. Here, beholding antique torsos had served heuristic purposes, helping him to acquire a sense of the body's constitutive unity through extrapolating absent limbs from a corporeal center to reconstruct their missing appendages. Goethe subsequently related how observing the creation of a plaster cast allowed him to literally see the emergence of an artistic whole: "was für eine Freude bringt es, zu einem Gipsgiesser hinein zu treten, wo man die herrlichen Glieder der Statuen einzeln aus der Form hervorgehen sieht und dadurch ganz neue Ansichten der Gestalten gewinnt!"[315] Presenting a prior whole from which parts integrally arose, the production of a plaster cast offered a concrete glimpse of what it meant to fashion an indissoluble, artistic totality. Meanwhile, Goethe's former training in comparative anatomy further aided him in developing a synthetic approach to the human figure. He insisted that having systematically engaged in the activity of identifying similarity and difference across related organisms, he was well equipped to see things wholistically:

> ...es läuft darauf hinaus, daß mich nun mein hartnäckig Studium der Natur, meine Sorgfalt, mit der ich in der komparierenden Anatomie zu Werke gegangen bin, nunmehr in den Stand setzen, in der Natur und den Antiken manches *im ganzen* zu sehen, was den Künstlern im einzelnen aufzusuchen schwer wird, und das sie, wenn sie es endlich erlangen, nur für sich besitzen und andern nicht mitteilen können...[316]

The practitioner of anatomy exercised a form of visual discrimination resting on a synoptic overview that enabled him to pick out homologous parts to identify overarching structural likeness. Such a global perspective proved instrumental in achieving a sense of artistic wholism.

Goethe further explored the synthetic logic governing the production of artistic wholes through a hands-on practice of aesthetic exercises in modeling. By engaging in the process of molding plastic material to build up form and give shape to amorphous matter, he immediately

[315]HA XI, 150. Italienische Reise, 25 Dezember 1786
[316]MA 15, 469. Italienische Reise, Rom, 23 August 1787

recognized that no additive process could render the human form in its full-fledged integrity. The modeler had to begin with an overriding sense for a figural whole, establishing a central axis around which each individual part converged, to bring about the symmetry and proportion that grounded its unity. After repeat attempts to realize such a synthetic process, Goethe eventually exclaimed, "Meine größte Freude ist, daß mein Auge sich an sichern Formen bildet und sich an Gestalt und Verhältnis leicht gewöhnt und dabei *mein alt Gefühl für Haltung und Ganzes recht lebhaft wiederkehrt*."[317] Through his practice of materially concretized reproductive seeing, Goethe increasingly realized that artistic form was an indivisible totality that contained its unity within it, whereby endowing the human body its integrity depended on exercising a higher synthetic perspective. But the enhanced apprehension needed to consummate the artwork as an integral whole had to finally be combined with productive seeing's power to establish a sense of union with the observed object.

The merging of Artist & Artwork

Upon obtaining a palpable sense for the wholism underpinning the artwork, the practitioner of productive seeing endeavored to achieve unity between subject and object. Such a union was the product both of his relation to the mimetic object of representation and the object that resulted from his own artistic creation. Goethe initially insisted that the quality of his sketching depended on establishing an intimate communion with the represented object. Goethe articulated the importance of this premise well before his journey, already in 1776: "Ich hab' viel gekrizzelt seit ich hier bin,.. Es bleibt ewig wahr: Sich zu beschräncken, Einen Gegenstand, wenige Gegenstände, recht bedürfen, so auch recht lieben, an ihnen hängen, sie auf alle Seiten wenden, mit ihnen vereinigt werden, das macht den Dichter den Künstler – den Menschen –."[318]

[317]HA XI, 370. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Juli Korrespondenz 22 Juli 1787
[318]WA IV, 3, 88. Brief an Charlotte von Stein 22 Juli 1776

The task of the artist was not one of transmitting a once removed image of the object of representation, but of articulating a spiritual union that both reflected and transformed it. Indeed, just as Goethe had resisted the idea of a separation between observing subject and observed object in his natural scientific investigations, in the realm of artistic production, he envisaged a similar rapproachment between representing subject and represented object. But unlike in the practice of natural observation, art reproduced the mimetic object to generate an entirely new object. Hence the artistic process not only depended upon the intimate connection between artist and object of representation, it established a visceral bond between artist and emergent art object. By forcing the practitioner to tangibly recreate what he observed, aesthetic exercises in productive viewing led him to grasp the object as the product of his own formative powers. Goethe thus claimed that through undergoing a process of extensive modeling that began with the representation of a foot and culminated in a bust of Hercules, he came to see artistic form as a productive extension of himself.[319] Indeed, whether it be through the palpable strokes in painting that approximated the contours of the observed object or by way of a malleable process of modeling in three dimensions to form, texture and carve out something resembling the object of observation, the artist, in a way merged with the mimetic object. After producing hundreds of drawings in Italy, Goethe thus claimed that his vision no longer separated from the object depicted. At the same time, he experienced material unity with the representational object that arose as the product of his own handiwork. Goethe thus concluded that a work of art transmitting a living sense of vitality could only arise through a productive amalgamation between subject and object: "ohne unmittelbare Vereinigung von Objekt und Subjekt kein lebendiges Kunstwerk

[319]MA 15, 469. Zweiten römischer Aufenthalt Rom 23 August 1787 "Ein Herkuleskopf ist angefangen; wenn dieser glückt, wollen wir weitergehen."

zustandekommen kann."[320]The exercise of productive seeing ultimately involved a higher synthesis or intensification of subject and object whereby, at times the former seemed to merge with the latter, whereas at others, the latter became incorporated into the former.

Perhaps the most vivid expression of Goethe's sense of collapsing the barrier between artist and art object is captured in one of two poems he authored during his Italy journey, *'Amor als Landshaftsmaler.*' The poem commences by rendering the presence of a painter blankly sitting before a landscape shrouded in midst suggesting an empty canvas. A boy appears and discovers a downcast painter who has lost all desire to produce artistic form. He then guides him through an incremental process of art-making, generating, before his very eyes, an exemplary landscape painting. The sun furnishes a lightsource permitting the whole of the landscape to progressively dawn on the canvas, its brilliant rays disclosing a panoramic view of lush vegetation encircling a glistening river. When flowers are added to engender color and a clear sky breathes life into the atmosphere, the painter declares himself reborn. In a final stroke, the portrayal of a young girl representing the acme of human form consummates the landscape. The finished painting then literally comes to life with movement, with the wind rustling through the trees and the river in agitation, until the girl approaches the painter to set foot on the ground of reality, collapsing the boundary between artwork and beholder. The painter, far from remaining a dumbstruck spectator, embraces the enlivened artwork, his newborn artistic inspiration issuing in an apostrophe to the reader: do you think I sat steadfast, rock-like and immobile? Goethe essentially narrates the exercise of generating an exemplary landscape painting, whereby the artwork literally comes to life to become part of the surrounding environment. Through deploying the poetic technique of ekphrasis, he rehearses a genetic process of artistic schooling that draws the observer into the very

[320]WA IV, 49, 81. Brief an Schultz, 18 Sept 1831

ambit of the artwork, extinguishing the distinction between painter, object of representation and painted work. *Amor als Landschaftsmaler* thereby not only poetically articulates the artistic method Goethe espoused in Italy, it calls attention to the spiritual nature of his apprenticeship in the arts; one involving a radical self-transformation or rebirth of vision through the achievement of an animated and intensified intuition of artistic form.

Heightening through Exercises in Productive Seeing

The ultimate stages of Goethean exercises in productive seeing led to the practitioner's identification of rules informing artistic practice. Indeed, if the discovery of a universal principle embracing the unity of organic specimens was the key to unlocking Goethe's exercises in natural scientific observation and if art production presupposed and built upon knowledge of nature, then it is not surprising that Goethe should have sought to identify an artistic principle analogous to that which governed nature. Eventually hitting upon a principle remarkably reminiscent of his prototypical plant, he maintained that its salient function lay in guiding the practitioner through the bewildering intricacies of human form: "Die menschliche Gestalt tritt in alle ihre Rechte und das übrige fällt mir wie Lumpen vom Leibe. *Ich habe ein Prinzip gefunden*, das mich *wie ein Ariadnischer Faden durch die Labyrinthe der Menschen Bildung durchführen wird*."[321]Once he discovered a principle guaranteeing the integrity of the human form across its manifold manifestations, Goethe subjected it to a probing process of repeat application:

> Ich habe einen Herkuleskopf angefangen, worüber sie sich alle verwundern, weil sie dencken ich hab ihn durch einen Zufall so getroffen, ich hab ihn aber *nach meinem Grundsatz* gemacht und wenn ich Zeit und Fleiß habe diesen Grundsatz zu entwickeln und mich mechanisch zu üben; kann ich andre eben so machen.[322]

In exercising his fundamental priciple, he sought to confirm his intuitions concerning the existence of uniform rules engendering heterogeneous human forms:

[321]WA IV, 8, 254. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 25 August 1787
[322]WA IV, 8, 254. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 25 August 1787

> Nun hab' ich ein Köpfchen nach Gips gezeichnet, um zu sehen, ob mein Prinzipium Stich hält. Ich finde, es paßt vollkommen und erleichtert erstaunend das Machen. Man wollte nicht glauben, daß ich's gemacht habe, und doch ist es noch nichts. Ich sehe nun wohl, wie weit sich's mit Applikation bringen ließe.[323]

Goethe deployed his artistic principle again and again, deriving insight on the production of artistic form:"Meine Kunststudien gehen sehr vorwärts, *mein Prinzip paßt überall* und schließt mir alles auf. Alles, was Künstler nur einzeln mühsam zusammensuchen müssen, liegt nun zusammen offen und frei vor mir."[324]Invoking the same metaphor of a key guaranteeing the unity of individual organic forms that had characterized the archetypal plant in his natural scientific investigations, Goethe claimed that like nature's creation, artistic production was guided by a universal generative process:

> Mein Prinzip, die Kunstwerke zu erklären und das auf einmal aufzuschließen, woran Künstler und Kenner sich schon seit der Wiederherstellung der Kunst zersuchen und zerstudieren, find' ich *bei jeder Anwendung richtiger*. Eigentlich ist's auch ein Kolumbisches Ei. Ohne zu sagen, daß ich einen solchen *Kapitalschlüssel* besitze, sprech' ich nun die Teile zweckmäßig mit den Künstlern durch und sehe, wie weit sie gekommen sind, was sie haben und wo es widerstößt.[325]

If Goethe had designated the Urpflanze as a model encapsulating a law from which the natural investigator could derive infinite instantiations of plants characterized by an inner truth and necessity, he spoke in strikingly similar terms of discovering the artistic touchstone from which to generate manifold individuations of a given species of artworks.[326]

But beyond the identification of a principle governing the practiced apprehension of art, Goethe's conception of a higher synthesis of polarities further engendered a higher, intensified perspective. Indeed, the intimate acquaintance with the observed object needed to reconcile oppositions involved raising his visual perspective to a higher generality. Goethe insisted that

[323]HA XI, 397. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 15 September 1787
[324]HA XI, 392. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 1 September 1787
[325]HA XI, 394. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 6 September 1787
[326]HA XI, 323. Italienische Reise, Neapel, 17 Mai, 1787 "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, das 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."

drawing, above and beyond mere observation, aided in achieving such a general perspective: "Indeßen ist mir das armseelige Bißgen Zeichnen unschätzbar, es erleichtert mir jede Vorstellung von sinnlichen Dingen und das Gemüth wird schneller *zum allgemeinen erhoben*, wenn man die Gegenstände genauer und schärfer betrachtet."[327] In the collaborative effort between eye and hand, wherein each adapted to the exigencies of the other, polar modes of seeing were synthesized to attain a heightened attunement to artistic form. Goethe thus characterized the motivations driving his artistic apprenticeship in Italy in terms of obtaining an intensified perspective: "...mein eigentlicher Trieb war, *durch Nachbildung* von Natur- und Kunstgegenstände *Hand und Augen möglichst zu steigern*..."[328]By amplifying the powers of the eye and hand into decisive, co-ordinated productivity, he perfected exercises in productive seeing, endeavoring to create artworks instantiating a higher, universal form by skillfully uniting individual parts into a greater totality.

By force of habitually reproducing what he saw to unify contrary elements and bring them together in an interlocking artistic whole, Goethe ultimately succeeded in disclosing the universal idea that lay at its foundation. In his attempt at landscape painting, for instance, Goethe set out to reconcile opposing creative tendencies, intensifying and bringing them to a new level. Oscillating between the natural realism of Dutch landscapes and the archaic idealism of Italienate landscapes (i.e. Lorraine, Poussin) in the course of sketching and painting the Italian countryside, Goethe synthesized the two extremes until he began to intuit the Idea of the genre of the landscape painting. Indeed, he would later describe this artistic negotiation as a dialectical reconciliation between simple imitation and a particular 'manner' of seeing that issued in a higher, elevated style. He thus noted of his aim of combining faithful imitation with his

[327]WA IV, 8,180. Brief an Charlotte von Stein, 7.-10. Febr. 1787
[328]HA XI, 407. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, September Bericht

imaginative latitude to achieve an elevated style: "...mein Hauptzweck ist, Landschaft zu zeichnen und meine Einbildungskraft zu bereichern und meinen Styl zu erweitern, zu reinigen, zu vergrößern..."[329]In a similar vein, in lieu of sustained modeling that alternated between the realism of human anatomy and the ideal proportions of Greco-Roman statuary, Goethe announced his achievement of a heightened state of visual apprehension that permitted him to discern the quintessential form encompassing all possible plastic forms of the human figure: "Hatte ich doch Proportion, Anatomie, Regelmäβigkeit der Bewegung mir einigermaβen zu verdeutlichen gesucht, hier aber fiel mir nur zu sehr auf, daβ *die Form zuletzt alles einschlieβe*, der Glieder Zweckmäβigkeit, Verhältnis, Charakter und Schönheit."[330] The final stage of Goethean aesthetic exercises thus consisted in the practitioner's intuition of the form of all artistic forms. Such an enhanced perspective transcended the purview of dialectical visual exercises that moved between empirical benchmark and ideal norm, ascending to new heights to inspire an intensified aperçu of universal form.

The original intent and purpose of Goethe's apprenticeship in the figurative arts had been none other than to develop an aptitude to judge art based on acquiring an intuition of its fundamental forms. Goethe unequivocally maintained that he had begun his apprenticeship with the aim of intuitively grasping the essence of art: "In der Kunst muβ ich es so weit bringen, daβ alles *anschauende Kenntnis* werde, nichts Tradition und Name bleibe..."[331]In so doing, he effectively developed an aesthetic know-how of judging art based on the first-hand sensuous grasp of a work that permit him to evaluate it without drawing on a canon of aesthetic doctrine or making recourse to established authority. Indeed, he began by ordering and arranging artworks in a perspicuous series and repeatedly surveying them until he discerned the universal image of

[329]WA IV, 8, 251. Brief an Karl Ludwig von Knebel, 18 Aug 1787
[330]HA XI, 542. Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt, April Korrespondenz Rom, 11. April
[331]MA 15, 471. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 28 August 1787

form uniting them. He further engaged in repeat attempts to mediate a host of polarities to bring to concrete manifestation a synthetic overview of a given artwork. Finally, through diverse exercises in producing artworks Goethe endeavored to connect particulars with an eye to the universal, grasping each component of a work as part of an all-inclusive whole to consummate a sensuous form informed by a higher unity. By the time he reached the conclusion of his apprenticeship, he could announce that he had acquired an intuition of the essential forms of artworks: "Der Glanz der größten Kunstwerke blendet mich nicht mehr, ich wandle nun *im Anschauen*, in der wahren unterscheidenden Erkenntnis."[332] The crowning achievement of aesthetic exercises in reproductive seeing was a state of discernment issuing in an epiphany of form, in which the practitioner apprehended the invisible but intuitable 'Idea' of form governing the artwork, which he endeavored to materialise in his own creations.

The Aesthetic form of life: the Happy Aesthete

Baumgarten envisaged the ultimate outcome of the practice of aesthetic exercises as lying in the development of a particular type of individual he denominated the 'happy aesthete.' The defining feature of this lifeform lay in the drive to cultivate and perfect sensuous cognition. Convinced of the perfectibility of human sensuous faculties, the aesthete saw exercise as a categorical necessity, perpetually seeking to modify his senses through the practice of observing and producing artworks. The need to improve perceptual cognition through exercise became an ingrained way of life that constitutively defined his identity. Moreover, despite the interminable self-laboring implicit in the drive towards perfection, the achievement of refined faculties and enhanced aesthetic judgment elicited a deep sense of self-satisfaction and felicity. Indeed, happiness was not only a function of enhanced powers of sensuous cognition but of artistic

[332]MA 15, 530. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 25 Dez 1787

engagement fostering a state of equilibrium with the world at large.[333] Baumgartenian aesthetic exercises thus served to develop a healthy form of perception in which the aesthete thrived on organizing the sensuous plentitude of complexity residing in reality to achieve harmony with it.

Throughout his Italian journey, Goethe conceived exercises in the observation and production of art, not as a transient preoccupation but as an ongoing task that defined his very way of life and identity. He made no secret of his conviction that overcoming dilettantism to achieve genuine artistic expertise was an undertaking demanding the consecration of a life-time of practice: "Die Künstler belehren mich gerne, denn ich fasse geschwind. Nun ist aber das Gefaßte nicht gleich geleistet [...] dazu *gehört die Übung eines Lebens*."[334]It is little wonder that renditions of the ancient dictum 'vita brevis ars longa' figure as a persisting motif of Goethe's Italian apprenticeship, whereby the more he immersed himself in aesthetic exercise, the more his artistic horizons broadened to demand limitless practice: "O wie weit und lang ist die Kunst, und wie unendlich wird die Welt, wenn man sich nur einmal recht ans Endliche halten mag."[335]Elsewhere, Goethe similarly remarked that the further he enlarged his perspective on art, the more distant became the prospect of perfection: "Die Vollendung liegt nur zu weit, wenn man weit sieht."[336]

Notwithstanding his view of the interminable character of artistic training, Goethe made impressive strides in the classification, judgment and production of art, that yielded inestimable therapeutic consequences. Through the efforts he expended to classify art historically, he succeeded in generating order in a world comprised of a bewildering heterogeneity of artworks dating from centuries past that had initially eclipsed the bounds of his estimation: "Unerachtet

[333]Trop, 72
[334]HA XI, 172. Italienische Reise, 17 Februar 1787
[335]HA XI, 398. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 22 September 1787
[336]HA XI, 399. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Frascati 28 September 1787

der Verwirrung, in der ich mich befinde, fühle ich doch schon, daß Übung, Bekanntschaft und Neigung mir schon in diesen Irrgärten zu Hülfe kommen."[337]Likewise, the practice of aesthetic exercises unmistakably served to develop and hone his aesthetic judgment: "*ich fühle, daß sich mein Geschmack reinigt*, nach dem Maße, wie meine Seele mehr Gegenstände faßt."[338]Goethe had admonished travelers whose judgments on art depended upon received opinion and who, neglecting intimate, first-hand acquaintance with art objects, were content to rely on established credentials. Having similarly cautioned against the undue influence of the affects in the appraisal of art objects, he developed his tastes through adhering to their pure presence. Finally, in appropriating the power to reconcile a host of polarities informing artistic form to unite sensuous multiplicities into genuine artistic wholes, Goethe markedly improved his ability to produce art. Indeed, if the requirements of drawing, painting and sculpting had seemed endless, with no amount of repetitive reproduction proving sufficient to obtain the desired perfection, exercise was not without consequence: "Kein Tag vergeht, daß ich nicht in Kenntnis und Ausübung der Kunst zunehme."[339]In fact, there were moments during his training, when Goethe reaped the fruits of his tireless efforts: "Wie schön ist es, zu säen, damit geerntet werde!"[340]And if the artworks he produced may not have always met his exacting standards, the customs and habits of the artist became all too familiar, while the nature of the artwork became increasingly intelligible: "Denn es legt sich nun auseinander, und die Kunst wird mir wie eine zweite Natur."[341]But perhaps most importantly, Goethe's progressive mastery of an artistic craft bore inestimable curative and rejuvenating effects: "Mir geht es immer an Leib und Seele gut, und fast kann ich hoffen, radikaliter kuriert zu werden; alles geht mir leicht von der Hand, und manchmal

[337]HA XI, 106. Italienische Reise, Bologna, 19 Okt 1786
[338]HA XI, 399. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Frascati 28 September 1787
[339]HA XI, 381. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 11 August 1787
[340]HA XI, 387. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 28 August 1787
[341]HA XI, 382. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 11 August 1787

kommt ein Hauch der Jugendzeit, mich anzuwehen."[342]By partaking in a regimen of aesthetic exercises in observing and producing artworks, Goethe came to approximate Baumgarten's 'happy aesthete,' affirming the incomparable felicity and spiritual effects he derived from absolving a practice of aesthetic exercise equipping him to appraise artworks in harmony with the world at large: "Mir wenigstens ist es, als wenn ich die Dinge dieser Welt nie so richtig geschätzt hätte als hier. Ich freue mich der gesegneten Folgen auf mein ganzes Leben."[343]

Conclusion

Goethe's journey to Italy was an unmistakably formative and hence spiritual enterprise. Exercising a mode of journeying that placed a premium on self transformation, what Goethe took away from his travels was not knowledge pertaining to art objects communicable as fact, but knowledge of art that could be applied as practical know-how. Indeed, in a dramatic reversal of the received wisdom on knowledge acquisition, Goethe rejected the idea of redressing factual deficits by way of superficial inspection of prestigious works that made no demands on the viewer to cultivate the perceptual discrimination needed to independently evaluate them. Convinced that accustomed ways of seeing were fundamentally inadequate to the discovery of a foreign reality, while aware that the intellect could adulterate observation, he was singularly preoccupied with how to go about seeing unfamiliar art objects, setting out to acquire new visual capacities adapted to them. Indeed, Goethe's faith in the powers of tutored perception led him categorically to reject the mode of proprietary art consumption prevailing among his compatriots: "Der nordische Reisende glaubt, er komme nach Rom, *um ein Supplement seines Daseins zu finden, auszufüllen, was ihm fehlt*; allein er wird erst nach und nach mit großer

[342]HA XI, 393. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 6 September 1787
[343]HA XI, 134. Italienische Reise, 10 Nov 1786

Unbehaglichkeit gewahr, *daß er ganz den Sinn ändern und von vorn anfangen müsse*."[344] Goethe thereby encouraged a purposive embodiment of artistic knowledge that involved the cultivation of new perceptual capacities obtained through a self-transformative practice of art observation.

As in the case of Goethe's practice of exercises in natural investigation, aesthetic exercises in art observation involved an important therapeutic element. Indeed, one of the principle rationales for Goethe's journey to Italy was the need to overcome the privation of aesthetic desire through first-hand observations of artworks: "Auf dieser Reise, hoff ich, will ich mein Gemüt über die schönen Künste beruhigen, ihr heilig Bild mir recht in die Seele prägen und zum stillen Genuβ bewahren..."[345] Pursuing a therapy of presence, Goethe immersed himself in art in Italy, setting out to rectify his exclusively vicarious contact with artworks through authentic encounters with originals. Embracing the specifically physical meaning of presence, he pursued embodied modes of apprehension and palpable modes of engagement valorizing the enlivening properties that ensued from apprehending the work's immediate existence. Indeed, Goethe was only able to placate his deep-seated yearning in virtue of assimilating the physical presence of artworks: "Denn da ich ganz mir selbst wiedergegeben bin; so kann mein Gemüth, das die gröβten Gegenstände der Kunst und Natur fast zwey Jahre auf sich würcken lieβ, nun wieder von innen heraus würcken, sich weiter kennen lernen und ausbilden."[346] The therapeutic effects of intimate acquaintance with artworks, ultimately proved indispensable to his rehabilitation as a poet.

The realization of Goethe's therapeutic objectives in Italy further took the form of a selective mode of art interpretation in which works possessing morbid representational content or building exteriors suggesting death and decay were systematically construed in life-affirming

[344]HA XI, 430. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Okt 1787
[345]WA III,1, 265. Tagebuch der italienischen Reise, 5. Okt 1786
[346]GB 2, 96. Brief an Jacobi, 21 Juli 1788

terms. An important aspect of this effort lay in Goethe's endeavor to demonstrate that despite the obligation to artistically render Christian themes that frequently alluded to the fatality of man's existence, part of the exemplarity of Renaissance art lay in its categorical allegiance to life. Subject to depictions of man's unshakeable will to overcome life's trials, while spared of revolting intimations of suffering that led him to abdicate this life in hopes of a transcendent existence, the beholder of Renaissance artwork acquired a healthy resilience against defeatism and superstition. So thoroughgoing was Goethe's attempt to banish artistic eyesores alienating the art observer from existence, that when unable to identify a work's explicitly life espousing motifs, he deliberately gave their spiritual themes prosaic meanings, while indicating the way in which the techniques and materials employed by the artist transmitted a sense of living vitality. By interpreting sacred art in terms of its espousal of mundane preoccupations and everyday virtues, Goethe embraced a classical outlook; one he claimed was characterized by a healthy, robust and joyful attitude towards man's everyday existence.

But if therapeutics was only one component of his spiritual apprenticeship in the arts, Goethe diligently undertook the practice of a series of exercises in observing and producing artworks, that exhibiting features of Alexander Baumgarten's 'ästhetische Übungen,' fundamentally transformed his relation to art. Absolving exercises exploring various polarities informing artworks, Goethe was awakened to the contextual factors influencing their acquisition of sensuous form and the breadth of conditions impacting the observer's apprehension of them. He began his regimen of polar viewing by interrogating subjective and objective facets of perception to cultivate a 'gegenständliches Sehen' in which he strove to curtail his affects to approximate the objects of his observation. This was followed by exercises with a view to the fragmentary and dilapidated condition of Italy's artistic patrimony, that tested his ability to

apprehend artworks in their empirical states severed from idealized preconceptions. Conversely, Goethe took to perceiving reality through a store of ideal artworks residing in memory, engaging in visual exercises exploring the interface between the real and the ideal to probe the way in which the artwork outstripped the empirical. Finally, through the systematic practice of historical and ahistorical modes of perception, Goethe traced the trajectory of form changes undergone by Italy's ancient patrimony, ascertaining the evolution of classical models through a host of innovative retrievals. In line with his attempt in the natural sciences to track an organism's growth trajectory in order to intuit an archetypal form persisting through change, he engaged in metamorphic modes of art observation that helped him to discern the prototypical artistic form that underlay the structural diversity comprising a given artistic genre. The scope and breadth of exercises in polar viewing thus not only brought to the fore the diverse conditions impacting the development of artistic form, it highlighted the need for an active, malleable observer determined to access the complex, heterogeneous nature of artworks.

The final phase of Goethean aesthetic exercise, involving productive seeing or the concrete production of artworks, was premised on constructively synthesizing oppositions. Goethe's practice of such synthetic modes of art production permit him to achieve a wholistic intuition of artistic form. The image of a universal form encompassing related artworks in turn served to ground his aesthetic judgment, aiding him to autonomously discern the best that art had to offer: "Wenn es eine Freude ist, das Gute zu genießen, so ist es eine größere, das Bessere zu empfinden, und in der Kunst ist das Beste gut genug."[347]But if Goethe acquired the expertise needed to estimate superior instantiations of artistic form, he also ascertained his own inadequacy in the figurative arts, realizing that his talents lay in a poetic rather than painterly

[347]HA XI, 189. Italienische Reise, Neapel, den 3. März 1787

articulation of the world he perceived. Notwithstanding, in the course of practicing aesthetic exercises, he had made impressive inroads in the art of seeing: "Jeden Tag geht mir ein neues Licht auf, und es scheint, als wenn ich weingstens würde sehen lernen."[348] Although renouncing his aspirations to become a painter, he drew consolation from the fact that he had acquired a new relationship to seeing: "Ich weiß recht gut, wo und was ich noch nicht sehe, und fühle wohl, daß ich immer zunehme, und was zu thun wäre, um weiter zu sehen."[349]Goethe's inability to achieve classical fullness and perfection in the figural arts did not prevent him from acquiring a new visual organ capable of intuiting their underlying universal forms. He concluded in retrospect: "Nachdem ich den vergeblichen Aufwand eines dilettantischen Strebens nachbildender Kunst eingesehen hatte, wollte ich mir zuletzt noch *ein reines Anschauen* des höchsten was uns davon übrig ist verschaffen."[350] Goethe thus terminated his training in spiritual exercises in art observation on a decisively optimistic note, embracing the consequences of his newfound aptitude to intuit the fundamental nature of aesthetic form: "Vielleicht fände ich jetzt, *da mein Auge geübter ist*, auch nordwärts mehr Schönheiten."[351] Indeed, his intuitive discernment would aid him in rediscovering his German homeland to inaugurate a new creative phase of 'gegenständliche Poesie.'

[348]HA XI, 414. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Castel Gandolfo, 12 Okt 1787
[349]HA XI, 518. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Rom, 22 Februar 1788
[350]WA IV, 15, 4. Brief an Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 2. Jan 1800
[351] HA XI, 433 Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt 24 Nov 1787

Concluding remarks on Goethe's ancient art of living in lieu of the notion of Bildung

To become a work of art is the object of living
--Oscar Wilde

Notwithstanding his novel contribution to spiritual exercise in which he devised noteworthy natural scientific and aesthetic variants, Goethe's quest for change in Italy was not one fulfilled exclusively through developing new modes of perception deployable in the arts and sciences. Indeed, the central premise of spiritual exercise, as a process of self-reform and shaping one's identity in accordance with a higher ideal, furnishes an interpretive framework for understanding his contribution to the eighteenth century notion of Bildung. Explanations of Goethe's Bildung's conception have, in many respects, foundered on the shoals of overreliance on insights derived from his novels, where much of the discussion has centered around the genre of the Bildungsroman. The organizing principles of this artform ostensibly turn on mediating protracted evolutionary change and spontaneous self-creation, whereby commentators are divided about a construal of human development in terms of an organic metaphor of a seed that is formed through the polar interaction between genetic endowment and environmental constraints. Further insight on Goethe's view of self-formation have typically arisen from parsing the *Lehrbrief* of his novel *Wilhelm Meister* as well as the various testimonies of its fictional characters, who are taken to be the porte parole for diverse ideologies on the task of self-formation, wherein prevailing norms prioritizing book learning are rejected and the necessity of linking individual development with engagement with the social world is emphasized.[1] Nevertheless, such analyses based primarily on the Bildungsroman have in many ways militated

[1]See Helmut Ammerlahn, *Imagination und Wahrheit: Goethe's Künstler-Bildungsroman "Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre" Struktur, Symbolik, Poetologie*. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2003).

against scrutiny of Goethe's own self-constituting practices, which themselves furnish a much more illuminating, less obscure understanding of his agenda on self-fashioning.

A systematic interrogation of the practical methodologies Goethe employed in the arts and sciences construed as mediums for self-formation rather than as domains of epistemic inquiry, sheds particularly important light on his Bildung's philosophy. Indeed, the idea of Goethean practices of natural investigation and art reception as retrievals of ancient exercises in critical work or laboring on the self (askesis), brings to light several overlooked dimensions of the Bildung's problematic. To begin with, it draws attention to the formlessness that attends the experience of failing to labor on and fashion the self. Goethe recognized that man's default condition was one of a lack of form that had to be constantly rectified. He thus understood form as something to be accomplished and not something given. Goethe further insisted that the idea of intentionally striving to give oneself form was fundamentally misguided because self-formation was something that occured mediately by way of exercising oneself within once removed activities such as the arts and sciences. Here, natural investigation and art reception were ideal mediums for self-fashioning, because, involving the study of forms and form acquisition, they not only promoted the acquisition of scientific expertise or artistic skills, but a basic understanding of the very process of form-giving. Indeed, if an organic entity perpetually adapted its form to changing conditions and art underwent continuous modification in lieu of historical influences, Goethe realized that man, too, had to incessantly adapt his form to life's ever changing circumstances, where what was ultimately at stake was the cultivation of an ethos of self form-giving and not the attainment of some ultimate form. Finally, Goethe's conception of self-shaping through exercise embedded in concrete practices furnishes a discernable set of procedures and a specific know-how constitutive of the task of self-fashioning. Indeed, the key

notion of repetitive exercise involving constant, interminable striving premised on eliminating failings, rectifying shortcomings and assimilating new aptitudes to transform one's fundamental perspective on the world, offers invaluable guidance. Moreover, Bildung conceived as work on the self that serves to mold an ethos of self-reform ultimately avoids the Bildungsroman's inescapably teleological character in which the protagonist's self-searching journey reaches resolution only insofar as he adopts a profession or a calling. Against the idea of an apprenticeship to life that terminates in finding a vocation, where the need to define oneself through a definitive lifeplan appears inescapable, Bildung conceived as continuous self-improvement through exercise is fundamentally open-ended, emphasizing the reality of the self as an uncompletable work-in-progress.

In probing Italy's natural and artistic patrimony, Goethe not only fundamentally modified perceptual faculties to grasp the nature of organic and artistic forms, he drew on the insights he derived from natural scientific and artistic practices to shape his own selfhood. This is consistent with an ancient tradition of spiritual exercises enjoining the practitioner to internalize prescriptive truths in order to develop an ethos aimed at reorienting his mode of existence. Goethe's journey in Italy must therefore be understood in light of the self's attempt to combat what Georg Simmel called the self's 'anarchic formlessness,' by meeting the difficulty of endowing oneself a form. Within this context, Goethe was persuaded that man was unable to generate form sui generis and that the guidance required for self-fashioning was immanent to reality. He thus turned outwards in search of orientation, discovering a world replete with objects given in discrete forms that could be productively assimilated through active self form-giving. Goethe's rebirth was accordingly premised on overcoming the pervasive human tendency to lapse into formlessness by deriving insight on the nature of an array of forms comprising Italy's

natural and artistic landscape. In and through examining malleable natural organic entities and timeless classical artworks, he progressively became aware of the way in which various objects acquired, altered or preserved their fundamental forms. Apprising himself of the factors conditioning their formation, he sought to obtain a model that could orient his own process of self-fashioning. For instance, in tracing patterns of formation and reformation characterizing the malleable nature of organic forms over time, he recognized that he was himself susceptible to external forces of change that necessitated periodically rebuilding his edifice to give it new form. Goethe explained, "...ja täglich begegnen uns Umstände, wo die Bildungskraft unserer Natur zu neuen Restaurations-und Produktionsgeschäften aufgefordert wird."[2] In the alternating progressions towards and regressions away from form, one repeatedly reverted to a condition of formlessness, where crystallizations of form were always only provisional, quickly becoming obsolete and demanding re-formation. Moreover, life periodically dealt blows to one's personhood that required reconstructive efforts to recuperate one's foundations: "Ich muβte mehrmals meine Existenz aus ethischem Schutt und Trümmern wieder herstellen."[3] And when not assailed by destructive influences necessitating self-restoration and repair, Goethe realized that one tended to resist assimilating the meaningful events of life, neglecting to give contours to one's constantly evolving nature. The need to engage in regular remodeling to continuously refashion himself thus assumed increasing importance in the course of his life-altering journey: "Das uns irgend Großes, Schönes, Bedeutendes begegnet...muss sich...in unser Inneres verweben, mit ihm eins werden, ein neues besseres Ich in uns erzeugen und so ewig bildend in uns fortleben und schaffen."[4] But if Goethe recognized the need to incorporate the present in novel, unprecedented ways, the force of habit often stood in the way of dispensing with obsolete

[2]WA IV, 28, 112. Brief an J. F. Rochlitz 1. Juni 1817
[3]WA IV, 28, 112. Brief an J. F. Rochlitz 1. Juni 1817
[4] GG 8, 310. Brief an F. v. Müller, 4. Nov 1823

facets of his identity. Moreover, through his inspection of Italy's spectrum of artistic forms, shaped by successive historical forces influencing the incremental evolution of styles, he knew that while he had to leave behind what he had outgrown in order to incorporate the formative influences of the present, he also had to avoid foreign annexations antithetical to retaining his authentic identity. In applying the wisdom derived from probing organic and artistic processes of formation to shape and reshape his selfhood during his Italian journey, Goethe thus sought to preserve his inviolable fundament while adopting new forms that approximated his changing nature; he fashioned himself in the image of a painter, while ultimately ascertaining his enduring form as a poet.

Within the context of his spiritual understanding of Bildung as the cultivation of an ethos of self-fashioning mediated through systematic exercise in the concrete practices of the arts and sciences, Goethe employed two persisting metaphors of Bildung during his Italian Journey that furnish principles guiding the task of self-fashioning. The first indicated the directionality in which self-formation materialized, the second suggested the necessary endpoint. Indeed, Goethe initially intimated that if the direction of organic development proceeded from inside outwards, self-shaping similarly arose from within to externally manifest itself in the perceptible world. He noted of his preferred neoclassical architect "...so sag' ich vom Palladio: er ist ein recht innerlich und *von innen heraus* grosser Mensch gewesen."[5] Consistent with his repudiation of deriving self knowledge by retreating inwards away from the external world, self-fashioning too was a question of man's projecting himself outwards. Goethe thus remarked of his painter friend Tischbein: "Ich kann Tischbein nicht genug loben wie original er sich *aus sich selbst heraus gebildet hat*."[6] In the course of his journey, the expression eventually became self-referential,

[5]WA III, 1, 212-213. Tagebuch der italienischen Reise, Vincenza, 19. September 1786
[6]WA IV, 8, 108. Brief an Johann Gottfried Herder, Rom 29 und 30 Dezember 1786

whereby Goethe envisaged assimilating the deliverances of the world to subsequently bring them to embodiment: "so gar viel auf mich gleichsam eindringt dessen ich mich nicht erwehren kann daß meine Existenz wie ein Schneeball wächst, und manchmal ists als wenn mein Kopf es nicht fassen noch ertragen könnte, und doch *entwickelt sich alles von innen heraus,* und ich kann nicht leben ohne das."[7]The resources required to externalize oneself in exemplary fashion ultimately originated in the world, whereby Italy provided ideal materials. Goethe remarked of his vision of a process of absorbing external influences to selectively incorporate them: "...ich finde mich immer mehr in mich zurück und lerne unterscheiden, was mir eigen und was mir fremd ist. Ich bin fliessig und *nehme von allen Seiten ein und wachse von innen heraus*."[8]He thereby established an important Bildung's precept in which inputs from the world had to be discriminately assimilated prior to giving them formative expression. Elsewhere, he suggested that the incorporation of worldly raw materials required a certain mindfulness capable of selecting the right elements to allow them to bring their influence to bear before endowing them external form: "Das allgemein Menschliche entwickelt sich aus jedem edlen Gemüt, das mit Ruhe auf sich wirken läβt und aus sich selbst heraus wirkt."[9] The foundation of Goethean Bildung thus lay in selective internalization of elements in the world subsequently brought to outward manifestation. Indeed, Goethe's last word on this Bildung's dynamic serves as a cautionary against exhortations, that neglecting to engage in the labor of bringing resources found in the world to adequate expression, simply admonished others to fashion themselves: "Welch ein Unterschied ist nicht zwischen einem Menschen, der sich von innen aus auferbauen, und einem, der auf die Welt wirken und sie zum Hausgebrauch belehren will!"[10]

Goethe provided further instruction as to character of Bildung during his Italian journey

[7]WA III, 1, 238. Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise, Padua, 27 Sept 1786
[8]HA XI, 350. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Korrespondenz Rom, 8. Juni 1787
[9]SW 36, 76. Brief an Schultz 9 August 1823
[10]HA XI, 206. Italienische Reise, Caserta, 15 März 1786

by indicating the aspired after result, which lay none other than in the achievement of wholeness. Wholeness was thereby not only a crucial feature of his mode of perceiving organic entities and artworks, it represented the outcome of man's own endeavor to endow himself form. Indeed, Goethe repeatedly invoked the necessity of achieving 'Ganzheit' in Italy, maintaining that the principle end of self-shaping exercises was to attain integral completeness that in turn guaranteed happiness: "Übrigens habe ich glückliche Menschen kennen lernen, die es nur sind *weil sie ganz sind*, auch der Geringste wenn er ganz ist kann glücklich und in seiner Art vollkommen seyn, das will und muß ich nun auch erlangen..."[11]For Goethe, attaining wholeness implied fashioning a cohesive and thoroughgoing form which was more than the mere sum of his various skills and attributes. This effectively amounted to giving himself contours in such a way that made the capacities constitutive of whom he was graspable exclusively from an understanding of them as an indissoluble whole. Goethe thereby conceived his identity as encompassing not only his poetic and literary talents but comprising knowledge of the fine arts constitutive of his aesthetic nature. He thus endeavored to give formative expression to the foundations he laid in the arts during his apprenticeship in Italy: "Es sey nun und werde wie es wolle; so hab ich das Vergnügen genossen und einen guten Grund gelegt...da doch einmal Kunst und Nachbildung eine der entschiedensten Eigenschaften meiner Natur sind; so bin ich wenigstens *ganzer geworden* als ich war..."[12] Goethean wholeness implied giving form to determinative facets of one's identity in order to achieve an integral, unified form that made one a whole unto oneself.

The self's wholeness, was for Goethe, also closely associated with the premise of self-completion, by which he understood bringing desires and strivings into harmonious accord with deeds and actions. Invoking an analogy between organic and human completion that

[11]WA VI, 8, 230-231. Brief an Charlotte von Stein 8. Juni 1787
[12]WA IV, 8, 327. Brief an Charlotte von Stein Rom 19 Januar 1788

underwrote his idea of wholeness, Goethe insisted: "Die Botaniker haben eine Pflanzenabteilung, die sie Incompletae nennen; man kann eben auch sagen, daß es inkomplette, unvollständige Menschen gibt. Es sind diejenigen, deren Sehnsucht und Streben mit ihrem Tun und Leisten nicht proportioniert ist."[13] The necessity of making one's yearnings and aspirations commensurate with one's doings thus proved a recurrent theme in Goethe's works. In order to achieve an equilibrium, one had to avoid going to extremes and overreaching oneself, imposing the measure required to preserve one's intrinsic assets: "Der geringste Mensch kann komplett sein, wenn er sich innerhalb der Grenzen seiner Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten bewegt; aber selbst schöne Vorzüge werden verdunkelt, aufgehoben und vernichtet, wenn jenes unerläßlich geforderte Ebenmaß abgeht."[14] Wholeness as completion thus implied exercising appropriate moderation to avoid excess in order to achieve a fitting correspondence between desires and longings and the actions undertaken to actualize them.

But Goethe not only indicated the method, direction and outcome of self-formation in the *Italian Journey*, he repeatedly addressed a key normative comittment of humanism, that underlay the entire eighteenth century conception of Bildung. If Bildung ostensibly arose as a response to a crisis of culture, in which society's ideals were perceived as having undergone ideological deformation, their recuperation had to be a humanizing endeavor. To this end, Goethe dismissed prevailing pretensions to being well educated as determinative of a humanistic ethos, making recourse to the wisdom imparted by Italy's "Klassischer Boden" as the sole repository for a cultural legacy that could be rehabilitated to renew the values of his times. Rather than countenance the derivation of ancient mores from the study of classical authors, he espoused training in the classical fine arts, insisting on a palpable recreation of material form as well as a

[13]BA 18, 549. Maximen und Reflexionen
[14]BA 18, 549. Maximen und Reflexionen

disinterested contemplation of artworks. By enjoining the exercise of concrete techniques in art production, Goethe conceived humanism's ethical work on the self in close analogy with the work of the artist, whereby he was persuaded that exposure to the classical tastes proved crucial to fostering a humanistic worldview in which man sought to transcend himself through the development of his creative powers. Indeed, the artwork of classical antiquity and its neoclassical derivatives were exceptionally conducive to the promotion of a normative standard of human flourishing capable of inspiring man to endow himself with exemplary form. Goethe thus repeatedly emphasized that the intuition of form that ensued from exhaustive observations of ancient artworks put him in touch with his humanity, impressing upon him what it meant to be human: "Ich für meine Person bin in dem Falle, dass mich das Anschauen des Alterthums in jedem seiner Reste in den Zustand versetzt, worin ich fühle ein Mensch zu seyn."[15] In his *Maximen und Reflexionen*, he similiarly elaborated on the humanizing effects of observing the relics of ancient civilizations: "Wenn wir uns dem Altertum gegenüberstellen und es ernstlich in der Absicht anschauen, uns daran zu bilden, so gewinnen wir die Empfindung, als ob wir erst eigentlich zu Menschen würden."[16] Simply intuiting the remains of antiquity transported Goethe into a state of humanness. But if the idea of attaining a sense of one's humanity through exposure to an ancient cultural patrimony may not be self-evident, Goethe's subsequent remarks in his *Italian journey* provide ample indication of how it functioned to promote an ethos of self-betterment raised to a moral value.

During the course his exploration of art in Italy, Goethe initially probed the relation between nature and art as the centerpiece of his notion of humanism. Here, he was particularly taken by what he took to be "das non plus ultra alles menschlichen Wissens und Tuns...", namely

[15]WA IV, 43, 147. Brief an Zelter, 6. Nov.1827
[16]BA 18, 580. Maximen und Reflexionen

classical 'Menschengestalt.'[17] Indeed, he claimed that his humanity was awakened through observations of ancient statuary revealing undraped human form that disclosed man in his originary, natural condition. Moreover, the ancients were able to capture mankind's pure, naked form in all its diverse spectrum of natural variety: "Umgeben von antiken Statuen, empfindet man sich in einem bewegten Naturleben, man wird *die Mannigfaltigkeit der Menschengestaltung* gewahr *und durchaus auf den Menschen in seinem reinsten Zustände zurckügeführt*, *wodurch denn der Beschauer selbst lebendig und rein menschlich wird*."[18] Surrounded by an array of antique sculptures resembling and yet clearly differentiated from each other, Goethe was reminded of the abundance of organic specimens, each distinct despite appearing virtually identical that comprised nature's infinite variety. Nature's boundless capacity to create organic diversity was effectively reproduced in the ancient sculptor's ability to produce infinite variations on the human figure, whereby his combinatorial powers revealed that his artistic method was in some measure coextensive with nature's form-giving processes. Goethe thus concluded in his *Propyläen* essay that knowledge of organic nature was indispensable to comprehending the highest object of art, namely the construction of human form: "Der Mensch ist der höchste, ja der eigentliche Gegenstand bildender Kunst; um ihn zu verstehen, um sich aus dem Labyrinthe seines Baues herauszuwickeln, ist eine allgemeine Kenntnis der organischen Natur unerläßlich."[19]

The diversity of form shared by nature and art ultimately suggested to Goethe that the natural creator and the human artist deployed an analogous mode of production governed by the same laws. Articulating this conclusive finding during his travels in Italy, he maintained: "Diese hohen Kunstwerke sind zugleich als die höchsten Naturwerke von Menschen nach wahren und

[17]HA XI, 477. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 10. Jan 1788
[18]HA XI, 544. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht April 1788
[19]BA, 19, 178. Propyläen

natürlichen Gesetzen hervorgebracht worden. Alles willkürliche, Eingebildete fällt da zusammen; da ist die Notwendigkeit, da ist Gott."[20] Nature's eternally formative powers, governed by inexorable laws, was evinced in the artworks of the ancients, who, rearticulating the lawful necessity manifest by organic forms, created works exhibiting harmonious, enclosed forms that admitted nothing superfluous and bore no trace of the arbitrary. Goethe designated the ancient artist's ability to reproduce such laws, godly; moreover, it was not just the ancients, but their classical successors, who exhibited methods that bore the impress of nature's divine production. Goethe thus remarked of the Rennaisance painter Titian's work in Venice: "Es sind Genien, welche sich *mit Attributen der Götter schleppen* freilich so schön, dass es allen Begriff übersteigt."[21] Of Palladio, he similarly noted, "und so sag' ich vom Palladio...Es ist wirklich *etwas Göttliches in seinen Anlagen*..."[22] Indeed, Goethe unambiguously maintained that artists like Raffael and Palladio were practitioners of divine creation insofar as their art was governed by nature's necessary laws: "Es war an ihnen nicht ein Haarbreit willkührliches, nur dass sie die Gränzen und Gesetze ihrer Kunst im Höchsten Grade kannten und mit leichtigkeit sich darinn bewegten, sie ausübten."[23]In fact, were it not for artists who exercised complete mastery over the laws and limits ordained by nature, natural laws would forever remained concealed: "Das Schöne ist eine Manifestation geheimer Naturgesetze, die uns ohne dessen Erscheinung ewig wären verborgen geblieben."[24]The very function of artistic activity therefore entailed bringing nature's laws to visibility: Goethe insisted that in manifesting nature's eternal laws as beautiful form, classical art was the product of the divine productive powers affirming the creative agency underwriting man's humanistic mode of form-giving.

[20]HA XI, 394. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 6 Sept 1788
[21]HA XI, 88. Italienische Reise, Verona, 16 Sept 1786
[22]HA XI, 52. Italienische Reise, Vincenza, 19 Sept 1786
[23]WA III, 1, 308. Tagebuch der italienischen Reise, 19 Sept 1786
[24]BA 18, 501. Maximen und Reflexionen

Ancient and neoclassical artists not only struck Goethe as possessing a divine faculty of artistic production that articulated their creative freedom through mastery of nature's laws and limits, their artistic products exhibited an exemplarity and perfection that surpassed nature's very creative powers. Indeed, classical representations of the human figure in particular exceeded nature's formative designs to an unparalleled degree. Goethe accordingly set about to determine "wie jene unvergleichlichen Künstler verfuhren, um *aus der menschlichen Gestalt den Kreis göttlicher Bildung zu entwickeln*, welcher vollkommen abgeschlossen ist und worin kein Hauptcharakter, so wenig als die Übergange und Vermittlungen fehlen."[25]Once again, he suspected that the ancient artist initially proceeded in ways comparable with nature: "Ich habe eine Vermuthung, daß sie nach eben den Gesetzen verfuhren, nach welchen die Natur verfährt..."[26]In apprehending the consummate forms of ancient representations of the human body, Goethe was persuaded that they had arisen in conformity with modes of production articulating nature's laws. "Meine Kenntniß der natürlichen Dinge hilft mir sehr fort. Es ist unsäglich wie die Alten der Natur, und mit welchem großen Sinn sie ihr gefolgt sind."[27]But the ancients did not stop at merely replicating natural laws to produce realistic human figures evincing fidelity to nature, they strove to eclipse nature's productive powers, imposing artistic laws to create an idealized 'second nature' through a form of spiritual deification. Indeed, while in nature, a form's consummation was a contingent matter, where no provision was made for its full realization, in the domain of art, the artist could eliminate contingency to bring nature's endowment to its utmost perfection. Here, Goethe conceived the artist's aptitude to perfect nature a function of his spiritual elevation: "Wer etwas Großes machen will, *muß seine Bildung so gesteigert haben*, daß er gleich den Griechen imstande sei, die geringere reale Natur zu der Höhe

[25]HA XI 166-167. Italienische Reise, 28 Januar 1787
[26]HA XI 167. Italienische Reise, Rom 28. Jan 1787
[27]WA IV, 8, 310. Brief an Knebel, 21 Dez 1787

seines Geistes heranzuheben und dasjenige wirklich zu machen, was in natürlichen Erscheinungen aus innerer Schwäche oder äußerem Hindernis, nur Intention geblieben ist."[28]Indeed, if the task of the artist was not one of depicting the human figure as it was found in nature, but to bring to bear its ideal manifestation, he had to spiritually raise his productive faculties of mimicking nature through artistic laws capable of producing ideal instantiations: "Die Naturschönheit ist den Gesetzen der Notwendigkeit unterworfen, die Kunstschönheit *den Gesetzen des höchst gebildeten menschlichen Geistes*."[29] Bildung for Goethe thus implied deploying natural laws to rearticulate them as higher, man-made artistic laws that approximated the divine.

The culmination of Goethe's conception of humanistic Bildung thus ultimately amounted to cultivating himself sufficiently to appreciate works of art that reflected man's divine creative powers. Indeed, from the very beginning of his journey, antique human forms figured prominently in his reflections on culture. He conceded that, initially blinded by Greco-Roman representations of human form, he literally had to acquire the capacity to behold them: "Die Menschengestalt zog nunmehr meine Blicke auf sich und wie ich vorher, gleichsam wie von dem Glanz der Sonne, meine Augen von ihr weggewendet, so konnte ich nun mit Entzücken sie betrachten und auf ihr verweilen."[30] Here, learning to apprehend perfected human form implied learning to depict it and Goethe expended prodigious efforts to achieve this through drawing: "Vorige Woche zeichnete man die Menschen *wie sie Gott erschaffen hat*,..."[31] In the same way, the ability to discern the exemplarity of antique statuary began through engaging in the activity of sculpting. He continues: "und diese Woche will man sie ganz in Stahl und Eisen kleiden."[32]

[28]GG 6, 353. Gespräche mit Johann Peter Eckermann
[29]FA, I, 18, 477. Maximen und Reflexionen
[30]GB 2, 79. Brief An Karl August, 25. Jan 1788
[31]WA IV, 8, 353. Brief an Angelika Kauffmann, Rom 1788
[32]WA IV, 8, 353. Brief an Angelika Kauffmann, Rom 1788

Elsewhere Goethe insisted that the efforts he expended on the fundamentals of modelling served to develop his ability to adequately apprehend human form: "Nun hat mich zuletzt das A und O aller uns bekannten Dinge, die menschliche Figur, angefaßt..."[33] After systematic engagement with the plastic arts, he was able to fully appreciate the virtuosity of consummate human form: "Jetzt seh' ich, jetzt genieß' ich erst das Höchste, was uns vom Altertum übrigblieb: die Statuen."[34] Goethe thus concluded that the genuine appreciation of an antique work rested on establishing a correspondence between the apprehender and apprehended art object: "Ein vollkommenes Kunstwerk will durch einen Geist, der harmonisch gebildet ist, aufgefasst sein, und dieser findet das Fürtreffliche, das in sich Vollendete auch seiner Natur gemäß."[35]Through productive efforts to reproduce human specimens to bring them to ideal manifestation, the spiritually cultivated beholder sufficiently developed his tastes to appreciate human perfection instantiated in the best works of art. Goethe's notion of humanism was thus animated by the idea that the practice of the classical fine arts furnished invaluable training, furnishing the practitioner with the image of a standard of human exemplarity.

Productively assimilating the norms of classical art ultimately taught one to see the divine and the human as one. Works depicting the deification of mankind were edifying for the spiritually schooled beholder, apprising him of an enhanced image of what it meant to be human. Goethe thus underscored, time and again throughout his journey, his encounters with artistic depictions of "die Wundergestalt eines Gottmenschen."[36] In Venice he remarked of a colossal, nude of Marcus Agrippa, "diese heroische Darstellung" macht "den reinen Menschen Göttern ähnlich."[37]Similarly, he recounted how his first glimpse of the Apollo Belvedere eclipsed

[33]HA XI, 385. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 23 Aug 1787
[34]HA XI, 476. Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt, 10 Januar 1788
[35]HA XII, 72. Über Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit der Kunstwerke. Ein Gespräche.
[36]HA XI, 450. Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt, Bericht Dezember
[37]HA XI, 88. Italienische Reise, Venedig 8.Okt.1786

anything imaginable in nature, transporting him beyond the confines of empirical reality. Finally, upon observing the figures donning the Sistine chapel, Goethe remarked that Michelangelo proferred such a monumental vision of man that the noblest human specimen found in nature paled in comparison.[38] The deification of the human in antique and neoclassical art thus provided Goethe with an image of perfection that came to define his humanistic conception of Bildung; one resting on the apprehension of a higher vision of what it meant to be human that encouraged man to ennoble himself by shaping himself in god's image.

The observation of classical forms exalting what it meant to be human was fundamentally self-formative in that it called attention to the passage from nature to culture marking the form-giving process, and in so doing, awakened man to his own possibilities of self-formation. In observing the productive nexus of nature transfigured by art, the spiritual beholder was led to recognize that while he had been endowed a physical form, it was incumbent upon him to fashion himself a cultural one. Indeed, although the ability to create form was part and parcel of what it meant to be human, man's power to recreate himself in exemplary fashion resulted from the cultivation of a higher, spiritual ethos. Here, once again, it was none other than the ancients' artistic deification of human forms that compelled the beholder to marshal his own formative capacities to endeavor to engage in exemplary form-giving acculturating his natural identity. The Bildung's import that underpins this humanistic vision is perhaps best articulated by the philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche:

> Und gerade diese Gesinnung sollte in einem jungen Menschen gepflanzt und angebaut werden, daß er sich selbst gleichsam als ein mißlungenes Werk der Natur versteht, aber zugleich als ein Zeugnis der größten und wunderbarsten Absichten dieser Künstlerin: es geriet ihr schlecht, soll er sich sagen; aber ich will ihre große Absicht dadurch ehren, daß ich ihr zu Diensten bin, damit es ihr einmal besser gelinge.[39]

[38]HA XI, 144. Italienische Reise, 2. Dez 1786
[39] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer als Erzieher," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke in drei Bänden*. ed. Karl Schlechta (München: Hanser, 1954) 327.

Nietzsche suggests that only in regarding himself an unsatisfactory work of nature did man gain the resolve to surpass his natural form. Classical art thereby set man the task of converting himself to culture through achieving a higher self. In bearing witness to the classical artist's exemplary forms of man as a divine being, man was compelled to expand the further reaches of himself to endow himself with enhanced contours. Indeed, the resolution to surpass oneself through self-formative efforts born of discontent with empirically given form, amounted, for Goethe, to Bildung's humanistic import or what Nietzsche designates in the following passage as man's conversion to culture:

> Mit diesem Vorhaben stellt er sich in den Kreis der *Kultur*, denn sie ist das Kind der Selbsterkenntnis jedes einzelnen und des Ungenügens an sich. Jeder, der sich zu ihr bekennt, spricht damit aus: »ich sehe etwas Höheres und Menschlicheres über mir, als ich selber bin; helft mir alle, es zu erreichen, wie ich jedem helfen will, der Gleiches erkennt und am gleichen leidet: damit endlich wieder der Mensch entstehe, welcher sich voll und unendlich fühlt im Erkennen und Lieben, im Schauen und Können, und mit aller seiner Ganzheit an und in der Natur hängt, als Richter und Wertmesser der Dinge.[40]

By offering a divine image of self-transcendence, classical art elicited a sense of man's self-inadequacy. For the artistic deification of the human furnished a higher vision of what it meant to be human, exercising an important civilizing function of compelling the beholder to realize the whole of his potential. In Goethe's own words, it called upon man to realize the quintessentially human capacity for self-enhancement through productive activity that constituted the foundations of his very happiness: "Je früher ein Mensch gewahr wird dass es ein Handwerk und eine Kunst gibt, die ihm zur geregelten Steigerung seiner natürlichen Anlagen verhelfen, desto glücklicher ist er; was er auch von außen empfange schadet seiner eingebornen Individualität nichts."[41]Goethe thus stressed the exercise of self-formative capacities as the key to human emancipation and fulfillment, whereby humanism was at bottom a matter of fabricating the human in ways that liberated one's highest potentiality.

[40]Nietzsche, 327.
[41]HA IV, 480. Brief an W. v. Humboldt, 17. März 1832

Classical figures incarnating the image of human perfection ultimately made manifest the dignity of mankind and thereby elicited reverence for a higher form of self-actualization. Indeed, the palpable creations of antiquity, in all their ideal reality, set the standard for self-formation. Goethe repeatedly maintained that antique and neoclassical representations of the human form brought to visibility man's very dignity: "Der Hauptzweck aller Plastik, welches Wortes wir uns künftighin zu Ehren der Griechen bedienen, ist daβ die Würde des Menschen innerhalb der menschlichen Gestalt."[42] The apprehension of human dignity elevated and inspired the beholder, enjoining him to exceed his current condition to achieve a more consummate form: "In solcher Gegenwart wird man mehr, als man ist; man fühlt, das Würdigste, womit man beschäftigen sollte, sei die menschliche Gestalt, die man hier in aller mannigfaltigen Herrlichkeit gewahr wird."[43] Goethe would later argue that the ability to revere something higher than the self served to liberate formative possibilities of the self: "Nicht das macht frei, dass wir nichts über uns anerkennen wollen, sondern (…) dass wir etwas verehren, das über uns ist. Denn indem wir es verehren, heben wir uns zu ihm hinauf und legen durch unsere Anerkennung an den Tag, dass wir selber das Höhere in uns tragen und wert sind seinesgleichen zu sein."[44] The object of reverence was a call to transform the self to be true to one's humanity by seeking a higher attainable self; it did not suffice to simply revere the objects of culture, one's own culture had to be mobilized to effectuate self change. Indeed, as Ilse Graham maintains: The quest for the god-like inner man who transcends humanity by re-creating it...was...the ultimate propelling force which drove Goethe."[45] Years after his Italian journey, Goethe articulated these very ideas in his essay on Winkelmann:

Dagegen tritt nun die Kunst ein, denn indem der Mensch auf den Gipfel der Natur gestellt

[42]WA I, 49, 58. Verein der Deutschen Bildhauer.
[43]HA XI, 541. Italienische Reise, Rom 11 April 1787
[44]GG 6, 27. Gespräch mit Eckermann, 18. Januar 1827
[45]Ilse Graham, *Portrait of the Artist*. (Berlin: W. de Gruyter. 1977) 139

> ist, so sieht er sich wieder als eine ganze Natur an, die in sich abermals einen Gipfel hervorzubringen hat. Dazu steigert er sich, indem er sich mit allen Vollkommenheiten und Tugenden durchdringt, Wahl, Ordnung, Harmonie und Bedeutung aufruft und sich endlich bis zur Produktion des Kunstwerkes erhebt, das neben seinen übrigen Taten und Werken einen glänzenden Platz einnimmt. Ist es einmal hervorgebracht...so nimmt es alles Herrliche, Verehrungs- und Liebenswürdige in sich auf und erhebt, indem es die menschliche Gestalt beseelt, den Menschen über sich selbst, schließt seinen Lebens- und Tatenkreis ab und vergöttert ihn für die Gegenwart, in der das Vergangene und Künftige begriffen ist..."[46]

Goethe's art of living was thus premised on the pursuit of life governed by a quintessentially classical intuition of human exemplarity inspiring man to strive towards self-betterment and perfection. Goethe intimated that a heightening of artistic aptitudes had invaluable spiritual effects, encouraging humanistic self-ennoblement by way of vindicating the infinite potential of the present through self-immortalizing form-giving.

Within the context of his humanistic vision, Goethe proved faithful, in fundamental respects, to the general idea of ancient philosophy as an art of living or mode of existence involving the exercise of self-fashioning practices. Construing life as the raw material to be shaped by essential rules of conduct, he systematically performed spiritual exercises designed to alter his behavior in ways that constitutively transformed his 'Weltanschauung,' bringing it into close correspondence with ancient perspectives on how to best lead one's life. Given this framework of analysis, this work has examined the ways in which two ancient precepts in particular, were influential within Goethe's repertoire of spiritual exercises. Goethe conscientiously embraced the enjoinment to be mindful of the present and faithfully adhered to the need to adopt a universal, cosmic perspective on the world, making them foundational tenets underpinning his way of living. Both precepts were in turn embedded in a therapeutic context involving a philosophical diagnostic of human suffering, a clinical investigation of affective reactions and the pursuit of an ideal norm of health, where Goethe obtained appropriate cures for

[46]BA 19, 486. Winckelmann

his ailments through the practice of spiritual exercises comprising an ancient art of living.[47]

Adopting a specific attitude towards time, Goethe was convinced of the importance of being attentive to lived circumstances that were his own making. This implied living time's successive progression in such a way that past and future were never allowed to become a source of debilitating passions. Persuaded that time's passage had to be experienced without permitting regret, disappointment or nostalgia for yesterday to gain a foothold over the present, he likewise made sure that anxiety, apprehension or anticipation for tomorrow were not allowed to overshadow his immediate occupations. Indeed, a degree of forgetfulness of the past and insouciance regarding the future were indispensable to preserving a healthy allegiance to the immediate present. Finally, Goethe's approach to time harkened back to the specifically Greek temporal notion of 'Kairos,' connoting the propitious moment or time ready to be seized.[48] Goethe believed that in grasping the opportune instant, he could bring possibilities latent within it to fruitful realization.[49] He thus set great store by the cultivation of a sense of timeliness whereby the quintessential expression of his art of living involved constant consecration to productive activity aiming to vindicate the present.

Goethe's art of living further importantly involved acknowledging man's place in the universe through the labor of apprehending its lawful ways. Adhering to cosmic naturalist assumptions, he held to the idea of a universal natural order of interrelated, mutually dependent organic entities, within which he endeavored to bring his behavior into alignment with their governing laws and processes. In so doing, he practiced a form of self-universalization in relation to norms that transcended human particularity, adopting a mode of apprehending reality in its universality and molding his conduct in ways that affirmed his sense of belonging to the cosmic

[47]Christian Iftode."Foucault's idea of philosophy as 'Care of the Self:' Critical assessment and conflicting meaphilosophical views."*Procedi-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 71 (2013) 80.
[48]Melissa Shew, "The Kairos of Philosophy," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 27: 1 (2013) 48.
[49]Hadot, 221.

whole. Experiencing life in the integrative play of the imagination and in the receptive intuition of its symbolic wholeness, he strove to intuit the unity of all living things despite their empirical differences.[50] Wholly given over to the intuition of the oneness comprehending related plants and the similarities uniting affiliated organisms, Goethe exhibited an attitude of unconditional receptivity to the universal interdependencies inherent in nature, inscribing man's place within the collective whole of such mutually binding connections.

Goethe's specific view about physical matters in turn bore on his conception of human freedom and ethical ends. Interpreting events by reference to the essential idea of Nature itself, while recognizing the falsity of viewing the universe as operating in ways antithetical to man's ends, he strove to accept occurrences in the world as intrinsically rational. In thus embracing nature's fundamental indifference to human concerns, he adapted his reactions to the greater, overriding structure of its rationality as whole. This meant that rather than allow himself to haphazardly respond to environmental triggers leading him in directions that potentially conflicted with reality, he sought to conform his behavior to its necessities. On the one hand, Goethe conscientiously cultivated detachment from worldly disturbances, endeavoring to correct errors of judgment leading him to believe he was the victim of adversity that served only to provoke self-destructive passions. At the same time, he strove to avoid erring about his desires through altering his beliefs to eliminate superfluous wants and achieve autonomy from the material conditions of life. Accepting the rational essence of the universe was therefore intimately bound up with the therapeutic goal of extricating the soul from injurious passions and empty desires to escape external dependencies and attain freedom and inner peace. Georg Simmel accordingly noted of Goethe's cultivation of self mastery in conformity with the ways of the world: "Dass man ihn so von dem frei glaubt, was man gern die überflüssigen Schmerzen

[50]Frederic Will, "Goethe's Aesthetics: The Work of Art and the Work of Nature," *Philosophical Quarterly*, 6: 22 (Jan 1956): 60.

nennt - weil sie freilich für die Lebenszwecke der meisten Menschen nicht notwendig sind, - das ist wohl das wesentliche Ingrediens der Bewunderung...denen die »Lebenskunst« Goethes begegnet."[51]By employing a therapeutics of adhering to a rational worldview to cultivate self-possession and freedom from disturbance, Goethe sought to systematically inure himself of unnecessary hardship, adopting a constructive mentality to sustain his vitality for life.

Goethe's formation of himself through the practice of spiritual exercise resuscitating ancient norms and perspectives was in turn inextricably related to the task of attaining self-knowledge. Faithful to the anti-theorizing attitude of the ancients, he prioritized practice over theory, resisting the idea of self-knowledge obtained through abstract reflection and mental self-introspection, while insisting that self-illumination occurred exclusively as a result of engaging in an array of worldly practices in a mindful, systematic fashion. Goethe effectively recognized that in subjecting himself to critical procedures involving the rigorous scrutiny of belief and disciplined management of desires, he went some way to attaining self-understanding. Moreover, beyond the self-insight derived from dissecting his affective responses, he discovered that in developing a command of observing natural organisms or honing his judgment in the reception of artworks by scrupulously subordinating his subjectivity to apprehend their objectivity, he became intimately acquainted with his habitual reactions and inclinations, the conscious acknowledgment of which yielded self-knowledge.

But while exhibiting a remarkable fidelity to an ancient worldview and its norms, Goethe's spiritual practice was also indisputably modern, assuming unknown, innovative forms. Convinced that natural organisms and works of art were prime bearers of exercise value, Goethe embedded spiritual practice in the natural scientific and artistic domains. Indeed, he held the

[51]Georg Simmel, " Bemerkung über Goethe," *Der Morgen. Wochenschrift für deutsche Kultur*, 13 ed Werner Sombart and others (Berlin: Marquart 1907) 394.

unique view that the activities of natural inquiry and art reception were dependent upon the practitioner's constitutive reform of his modes of perceptual observation, where identifying the fundamental forms of organisms and artworks required a substantive transformation of sensuous cognitive faculties, without which it was impossible to identify their respective processes of form acquisition. Within this context, Goethean natural scientific and aesthetic spiritual exercises assumed a distinctly dialectical character, harnessing the natural laws of polarity and intensification to effectuate a higher synthesis of them. Indeed, Goethe developed visual exercises in 'gegenständliches Sehen' premised on fundamentally modifying the form and function of his perceptual faculties to achieve an intuition of the archetypal forms of observed objects. The practice of spiritual exercises comprehending polarity and heightening that culminated in an intuition of natural and artistic form constituted a central pillar of his art of living.

This work has ultimately striven to illustrate that the methods by which Goethe labored to create something out of his own life to endow it enhanced form was ancient in its humanistic vision of an ideal of self-flourishing. Through his pursuit of a self-fashioning project guided by ancient ideals and its ethos of self-transcendence, classical norms, far from an anachronistic source of inspiration, importantly guided a fundamental conversion in how Goethe lived his life. Whether it be askesis or a stress on exercise fostering the development of diverse aptitudes, a therapeutic regimen making him alert for disturbances and desirous of achieving perfect mastery over himself, a cosmic awareness of the human situation as belonging to a universe enjoining adherence to its necessary laws, or a productive ethos in which the he regarded himself as a work to be accomplished, ancient precepts underlay Goethe's art of existence. Through his innovative retrieval of a classical model of self-reform and self-constitution, Goethe proved himself a

veritable practitioner of an ancient art of living.

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