GOETHE AND THE HISTORY OF IDEAS
BY WALTER A. KAUFMANN

Goethe's 200th birthday seems a fit occasion for a reflection on his place in the history of ideas. Since his characteristic greatness was not primarily a function of his ideas, I shall begin by venturing a general suggestion about the human factor in the history of ideas and the way in which men make history. Then these considerations will be applied to Goethe as the setting for a few unorthodox perspectives which may be found fruitful: in particular, I shall seek to show briefly both how Goethe influenced the subsequent course of German history down to the Nazis, especially through his Faust, and how he revolutionized the form of the history of ideas. Throughout, the argument will be concerned with over-all structure rather than philological detail, and therefore left unencumbered by polemical references to the Goethe literature.

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Students of the history of ideas are often preoccupied exclusively with the tracing of connections between ideas. This approach seems too narrow and does not allow for the proper appreciation of some of the most influential men. Among these is Goethe. He may remind us of what an age in awe of the achievements of the sciences, of a Copernicus, Darwin, or Einstein, is prone to forget: that men who make history without crowns and swords do not always do so by virtue of their theories.

Perhaps ideas as such are not the stuff of which history is made. They are hardly ever new and can usually be traced back to a previous thinker, often an obscure or minor figure—and if not, that generally proves only our ignorance. Goethe expressed this thought in the Mephistophelian epigram:

Wer kann was Dummes, wer was Kluges denken,
Das nicht die Vorwelt schon gedacht?1

Elsewhere, Goethe voiced the same insight in his own, characteristically more positive manner: "All that is clever has already been

1 Faust II, Act II, Scene 1: "Who can think anything stupid, who can think anything clever, that the past has not thought before?"
thought; one must only try to think it once more." There is
novelty in selection and composition which need not be sterile,
superficial, or eclectic: the new *Gestalt* may involve a radical re­
valuation of the several components. It may be, as it were, of
one piece—not patchwork but the symbolic reflection of the vision
and experience of a man.

The nature of novelty is, however, best revealed by the human
being himself—most clearly by those men whose historical influ­
ence was greatest. Originality is the hallmark of character—
and of the life in which character manifests itself. Ideas are uni­
versals which are revealed in time: not as propositions proclaimed
by a godhead, but through experiences which, to be understood,
require the formulation of ideas. In this sense, ideas are never
primary: they are reflections of experience and grounded in it.
And few experiences are as profound, fascinating, and disturbing
as that of a great man.

Much of history, therefore, and especially of the history of
ideas, consists in the untiring efforts of posterity to recapture by
sheer force of thought some "*individuum ineffabile*". In this
sense, history has its clue, at least in part, in the biographies of
great men. And it is in this light that Goethe’s place in the his­
tory of ideas must be considered. A brief reference to other men
with whom he is at one in this respect will help to place him and
accentuate the framework in which we should envisage his unique
contributions.

Three eminent examples from antiquity will suffice to make the
point. First, there is Socrates, the greatest of the Greeks—and
we should certainly not agree with Montaigne that “to be the
first man in Greece is to be an easy first in the world.” It may
seem that Socrates was effective largely through his method which
exerted so profound an influence on Plato. Yet this method was
adapted from that of Zeno, the Eleatic, and later versions of the
dialectic have gone back to Plato or even Zeno more often than to
Socrates. In this respect Socrates is but a link in a long chain.
It is even worse when we consider his ideas: we do not know what
they were, and the *Apology* suggests strongly that he made a point

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2 *Maximen und Reflexionen I.*

3 Goethe, letter to Lavater, September 9, 1780.

4 *Essays*, transl. Trechmann, Book II, Chapter 36.
not of offering new ideas but of questioning old ones. What, then, of his influence? The *Apology*, together with the *Crito*, the conclusion of the *Phaedo*, and Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposion*, leaves no doubt that it was, more than anything, Socrates' personality which possessed the matchless mind of Plato and was reflected in his dialogues and, not a whit less, in all subsequent Greek and Hellenistic philosophy: Aristotelian and Cyrenaic no less than Epicurean and Stoic. The image of the proud and ironically disdainful sage who found in self-sufficient reflection a happiness and freedom far surpassing that of any plutocrat or despot—this truly original embodiment of human dignity captivated all the later thinkers of antiquity, became their ethical ideal, and led to a new conception of man. Socrates' fearlessly questioning iconoclasm and unhesitating decision to die rather than cease speaking out freely have had an equal impact on the modern mind. The character and bearing of this man have influenced the whole course of the history of philosophy more than has any idea or even any system.

Caesar, the greatest of the Romans, offers a strikingly similar picture. His name has entered the languages of the world, and his personality has revolutionized not only political theory but, far more, man's conception of himself and of his potentialities. Caesar did not develop a new form of government: there had been very similar administrations before, and those of the later Caesars, Kaiser, and Tsars were different from his in many ways. What the honorable Brutus could not kill was not an idea but, paradoxically, a life—and the personality which stood revealed in it.

Our last and most obvious example is Jesus. Recent apologists have sought to credit him with some new notion. Having lost their faith in the Trinity, they felt it incumbent on themselves to establish Jesus' greatness on the foundation of a novel insight; and whatever conception they fastened on, they have often defended with as much zeal and disregard for impartial scholarship as any dogmatist. While there is room for doubt whether Jesus had any new idea which could not be found in earlier Jewish or Hellenistic writers, not to speak of Taoists and Buddhists, it seems

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4a The historic impact of the Incarnation falls outside the scope of the present essay.
plain that his character and life have made history even more than Socrates’ or Caesar’s. Subsequent thought and events, scarcely less than Western painting, can be viewed to a considerable extent as a ceaseless attempt to assimilate a character which has so far defied almost every effort.

There is no need for multiplying examples by proceeding, say, to Lincoln or Napoleon. The most influential men have made history neither by armed might nor by theories. If this view should seem to be prompted by some current vogue of anti-intellectualism, one may recall that Hegel, certainly neither an irrationalist nor one to deprecate philosophy, especially his own, arrived at much the same conclusion. Philosophy, he contended, is reflection and must necessarily look back rather than forward. Philosophic ideas, instead of making history, elicit its meaning only \textit{ex post facto}, even as night descends and an era draws to a close:

When philosophy paints its grey on grey, a form of life has become old, and with grey on grey it cannot be rejuvenated, only comprehended. The owl of Minerva begins its flight only as the twilight sets in.\textsuperscript{5}

Ironically, it was just Marx—renowned for his alleged depreciation of the ideational factor in history—who criticized Hegel for being too resigned about the efficacy of human thought. Perhaps human consciousness was actually assigned a more crucial rôle in Marx’s interpretation of history, while Hegel emphasized the significance of individuality more than Marx did. But this is not the place to discuss the metaphysics of the world spirit, the “cunning of reason,” the importance of the economic factor, or the problems of pluralistic causation. Suffice it to insist that one of the decisive elements in the historical process is to be found in the personalities and lives of its leading characters, and that Goethe was one of these.

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Goethe’s influence is clearly a function of his works as well as of his personality, and it might be supposed that his creations embody his ideas. After all, no other poet has developed such intricate scientific theories or been in such steady communion with the great intellects of his time. Goethe’s novels manifest an increasing concern with intellectual issues, and so does his \textit{Faust}. Moreover, he himself stressed his debt to Spinoza; the influence

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Rechtsphilosophie}, preface.
of Leibniz may seem even more striking; and some of his finest poems appear to be philosophic. His aphorisms, letters, and conversations abound in keen insights. One cannot doubt that he had a most powerful intellect and surpassing wisdom. His characteristic greatness, however, is not a function of these qualities, and his great works are invariably not primarily vehicles for his ideas.

This goes without saying for such lyrical poems as Über allen Gipfeln or such outcries as Prometheus and the Marienbader Elegie. Yet it will be asked: what of Faust, so often hailed as Goethe’s masterpiece? Faust, I should answer, is not a philosophic poem, and it neither reveals nor illustrates Goethe’s Weltanschauung, let alone his “philosophy.” The ideational Leitmotif of the drama—“Wer immer strebend sich bemüht, Den können wir erlösen”6—is, in this characteristically unqualified form, not even the core of Goethe’s magna confessio, nor the theory for which one might find the experiment or demonstration in Goethe’s life. We shall see later that Goethe and Faust are almost antithetical characters. First, however, let us inquire what the drama is, if it is not a poetic presentation of Goethe’s ideas.

Neither Gretchen’s death sentence at the end of Faust I nor the traditionally religious trappings of the closing scene of Faust II represent a theory of morals or religion. Shakespeare, not Dante, was our poet’s model: instead of illustrating another man’s philosophy, he let his poetic imagination reflect the cosmos, unimpeded by, and without the benefit of, any theoretical framework. “Am farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben”7—that is the poet’s philosophy: not just Goethe’s, but that of the poet in general. Goethe was a poets’ poet and the embodiment of the aesthetic temperament no less than Socrates was the incarnation of the philosophic spirit.

Schiller’s pertinent contrast of “naïve and sentimental (sentimentalisch)” poetry is well known, but one of Goethe’s aphorisms is at least as relevant and incomparably more concise:

It makes a big difference whether the poet seeks the particular for the

6 Faust II, last scene. “We can redeem him who exerts himself in constant striving.”

7 Faust II, Act. I, Scene 1. “In the colored reflection we have life.”
universal or whether he beholds the universal in the particular. From the first procedure originates allegory, where the particular is considered only as an illustration, as an example of the universal. The latter, however, is properly the nature of poetry: it expresses something particular without thinking of the universal or pointing to it. Whoever grasps this particular in a living way will simultaneously receive the universal, too, without becoming aware of it—or only late.8

One should keep this in mind when one considers the usual disputes about Goethe's ideas. When the poet mitigated the original ending of Faust I by adding the line "She is saved," or when he concluded the Wahlverwandtschaften with a reference to the "friendly moment when they will once awaken again together," he was not avowing any faith in another life in which all wrongs are redressed. The essentially aesthetic bent of his mind and its sovereign Shakespearean playfulness—the word is not too extreme, if its literal denotation is allowed to soften it—are ignored all too often.

Some of the most celebrated quotations from Faust probably throw less light on their author than does this sarcastic retort, seeing that it came from the lips of one who so often referred to himself as a pagan:

I pagan? Well, after all I let Gretchen be executed and Ottilie starve to death. Don't people find that Christian enough? What do they want that would be more Christian?9

This rejoinder not only crystallizes—as perfectly as that can be done—the contrast between the original "glad tidings" (evangel) and the resentful bourgeois morality which purports to be Christian even while it insists on throwing the first stone; the remark also goes far to elucidate Gretchen's and Ottilie's fate. Primarily their deaths are an aesthetic reflection—ein farbiger Ab-

8 Maximen und Reflexionen IV. Cf. Eckermann, July 5, 1827; Jan. 3, 1830; Feb. 1, 1831; and, above all, May 6, 1827: "They come and ask me which idea I sought to embody in my Faust. As if I knew . . . that myself! . . . Indeed, that would have been a fine thing, had I wanted to string such a rich, variegated . . . life . . . upon the meagre thread of a single . . . idea! It was altogether not my way to strive, as a poet, for the embodiment of anything abstract. . . . I did not have to do anything, but round out and form such visions and impressions artistically . . . so that others would receive the same impressions when hearing or reading what I presented."

glanz—of life. Beyond that, however, they represent an Olympic concession to society: the appeasing gesture of one whose paganism was anything but zealous, aggressive, or "Dionysian."

The last lines of *Faust I* and the *Wahlverwandtschaften* do not indicate the poet's adherence to any traditional dogma. They give aesthetic expression to his experience of human hearts ironically and hypocritically divided against themselves. Because there is no question here of any critique prompted by a rival theory of ethics, no new symbolism is required; and Goethe is naturally led to administer his rebuke—even this word is too intellectual—out of the very bosom of the tradition which he takes to task. In the same way, Christian symbolism is employed at the end of *Faust II* as a vehicle for the poet's negation of what he took to be conventional Christian morality: Faust is saved. What is revealed is not a new idea and certainly no philosophy, but the poetic vision of a world which preaches both the law and grace, conformity and individuality, convention and intention.

One may note that Goethe did not avail himself of Christian symbolism when he dealt with themes one would generally consider Christian, like the Incarnation or the redemptive power of love. Thus he transports us to Hindu India both in *Der Pariah* and in *Der Gott und die Bajadere*. He was not trying to allegorize traditional truths but seeking to express an original experience which called for new imagery. Perhaps the poems were first envisaged in the fresh encounter with some Indian lore. In any case, it was not a body of ideas but an unprecedented personal vision which had to be made manifest. To summarize: while Goethe's influence was a function of his works as well as of his character, the works themselves are not allegorical representations of ideas but the characteristic function of his personality.

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These general reflections on the history of ideas and on the nature of Goethe's creations set the stage for our estimate of Goethe's influence. We shall not tarry over his well-known influence on Carlyle and Coleridge, on Matthew Arnold and Emerson, or over the equally familiar impact of his personality on Schiller's aesthetic theories—and hence on much subsequent work done in that field. Still better known and more important is the liberating effect of the young Goethe's character on the stuffy and
sterile Germany of Klopstock and Gellert—the light he kindled in
the hearts of a new generation, the age of genius he inaugurated. These matters need only be mentioned to be remembered.

There are other perspectives which lack this traditional sanc-
tion, and it is these I propose to deal with now. Let us proceed
in medias res. Out of the Gothic chaos of the German past, Goethe distilled a national character which was accepted by his
people as their ideal prototype: Faust. It is doubtful whether
there is any real parallel to this feat—that a great nation should
assign such a rôle to a largely fictitious character, presented to
it so late in its history.

A nation's conception of itself determines in large measure its
attitude toward its own past as well as—and this seems even
more significant—toward its future behavior. Goethe's vision of
Faust is therefore not only a major clue to the Romantics’ an-
thologies and historiography but also a decisive factor in the
shaping of German history during the past century and a half.
This claim must seem extravagant to anyone unfamiliar with the
idolatry of Faust in the German schools. Yet this golem has pro-
duced effects no less considerable than those of his maker, and
our discussion will revolve around these two focal points and
their interrelation—Goethe and Faust.

We behold Faust sacrificing Gretchen to his own self-realiza-
tion—or, even more characteristically, Faust closing both eyes
while Mephistopheles advances the fulfillment of his ultimate am-
bitions by ruthlessly destroying Philemon and Baucis. This ego-
istic disregard for the concrete human being, this utter ignorance
of human rights and love, and this unbounded will to power over
everything and everybody but one’s self cause us to wonder why
the interpreters of Faust have failed to find in it the frightful
dangers of the German character and a prophetic vision of its
later vices. The vast majority of German students, to be sure,
have never heard of Philemon and Baucis (though they know of
Gretchen)—but their teachers have; and the training, outlook,
and ideals of generations of teachers and large portions of a na-
ton’s intelligentsia are of singular significance. Goethe’s drama-
tization of Faust may thus be considered one of the many factors
which helped to bring about historic outrages by giving the Ger-
mans so intoxicating a picture of themselves.
We may seem to have gone far in our speculation. Perhaps we find support in the consideration—hardly subject to any serious objection—that the vastly influential Romantic movement in Germany drew its inspiration from the work of the young Goethe. What was this movement if not a hopeless chase after his personality, the often ridiculous desire to equal his genius, his resurrection of Goetz, Faust, and the heroic past, and his cult of creativity? Here is the clue to much of Fichte’s and Schelling’s philosophies and to the literary activities of the Schlegels and Brentano. And it was among these Romantics that modern German nationalism and Teutonism was bred. If theirs had a Christian tinge, so did Wagner’s and Chamberlain’s. If the Wartburg men were self-styled liberals, the Nazis called themselves socialists.

Historical causation is extremely complex and cannot be dealt with adequately by the mere assertion of an influence. The question always remains why the later generation should have let itself be influenced by one factor rather than another. It would be rash to assume that priority entails responsibility. The present case offers a particularly striking illustration. For the Romantics’ vision of neither Goethe nor Faust should be mistaken for the real Goethe who repudiated the Romantics unequivocally. He was the author of Der West-Ostliche Divan no less than of Faust, a translator as well as a poet, and the coiner of the word, if not the concept of, Weltliteratur. He ever insisted:

There is no patriotic art and no patriotic science! Both belong, like all that is high and good, to the whole world and can be promoted only by

What they saw in Faust and Meister were the conceptions of the young Goethe, rather than the later qualifications; and O. Harnack has shown how F. Schlegel read his own intentions into Meister, not Goethe’s. Even these qualifications are unnecessary if “young Goethe” is understood as an inclusive contrast to “old Goethe.”

Schopenhauer's conception of the relentlessly striving Will may be considered a cosmic projection of Faust’s ceaseless striving—pushing endlessly and purposelessly into infinity.

The many striking similarities between the Wartburg “liberals”—Hegel has often been reviled for denouncing them—and the Nazis have been pointed out by Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution (Oxford University Press 1941), 178 ff. Eckermann, January 31 and July 15, 1827, and Werke, Ausgabe letzter Hand, XLVI, 141, 260 and XLIX, 127, 137 ff.
universal and free interaction of all who live at the same time. . . .

Is it Goethe’s fault that he has never been popular with his people as the incarnate anti-Romantic and Good European? Yet it is a tragic fact that the Germans have, on the whole, worshipped Faust while having little use for the old Goethe. 

Let us consider the vast difference between Faust and Goethe—the Faust of the second part no less than the first. Goethe, unlike Faust, did not sacrifice the present to the future or value the moment only as a foretaste of things to come. He knew that "a succession of consecutive moments is . . . always a kind of eternity," and he found "permanence in the transitory." To Eckermann he said: "ever hold fast to the present . . . every moment is of infinite value, for it is the representative of a whole eternity." When Goethe hurt others, whether the beloved Friederike or the young poet, Heinrich von Kleist, it was not—Faustlike—in the wanton quest of self-aggrandizement or an external projection of his power, but part of his daily dose of painful self-denial and his economy of creation: a matter of life and death today, not an unscrupulous calculated risk for the day after tomorrow. The cliche of Goethe’s "great confession" should not deceive us into assuming any real parallel between the author and his heroes. The Gretchen tragedy is no more a portrayal of Goethe’s treatment of Friederike than the infamous Weislingen or Tasso, so utterly lacking in self-control, are accurate representations of their maker. Goethe’s own experience merely kindled his poetic imagination, and the creation of these splendid caricatures of his failings let him breathe more freely. Again, was it Goethe’s fault if Germany could not assimilate his greatness, rejected him, and idolized—not indeed a golden calf but a scapegoat, Faust?

To be sure, we should not claim that Faust is nothing but the dross of Goethe’s gradual refinement, although the Gothic past and the Romantic future were indeed what our poet sought to overcome. I should suspect that Faust reflects, to some extent,
Goethe’s experience of the idol of his youth, Frederick the Great. It is often assumed, falsely, that the king’s brilliant victories at the beginning of the Seven Years’ War brought about his final triumph; but his early successes were wiped out by the disastrous defeat at Kunersdorf and the Russian occupation of Berlin. More memorable than any battle was Frederick’s decision to hold out and to stay in the field, shifting small forces (no large ones were left) wherever they were most needed—never resting, although no reasonable chance of victory remained. Only the death of the Tsarina and her successor’s stunning order to his troops to change sides saved the king:

Wer immer strebend sich bemüht,
Den können wir erlösen.\(^{16}\)

And did not the aging king, in his last years, when peace had come, design a project to drain and colonize the Oder-Bruch? In some ways, the old Faust may reflect the personality of Frederick more than that of Goethe.

Unfortunately, the character of the enlightened anti-Gothic king has been less influential than its colorful reflection in *Faust*. Goethe himself, in the text of *Faust*, likened the Philemon and Baucis episode to the Biblical tale of Naboth’s vineyard. Frederick, in an exactly parallel situation, let his miller keep his mill—not as a matter of capricious grace, but in explicit recognition of the rights of man. And Frederick’s austere self-control, no less than the refinement of his personality, furnishes the most striking contrast to the Nazis. While one could trace the gradual and steady decline from Frederick and Faust through the Romantics and Wagner to the Hitler movement, one should keep in mind that the Nazis represent the ultimate fruition of all the failings of the German character—unmitigated by its undoubted genius.

To return to Goethe: he made history not only through his *Faust*. His *Divan*, for example, inspired Rückert’s and Platen’s artful translations of Persian poetry; and German scholarship has done much to give substance to Goethe’s conception of world literature. Above all, however, the heritage of the mature Goethe was developed by Hegel, Heine, and Nietzsche. Perhaps this is more obvious in the case of the cosmopolitan poet than in that of

\(^{16}\) See footnote 6.
the two philosophers, and a word of explanation may not be amiss.

The old Goethe has been made familiar in our time by Thomas Mann. Yet since Mann tends, rather more than Goethe, to draw self-portraits, he has exaggerated the bourgeois (bürgerliche) elements in his hero. I see Goethe more nearly as did Nietzsche, who was, incidentally, almost the first great German writer to realize and emphasize the surpassing greatness of the old Goethe and to find in the conversations with Eckermann, not in Faust, "the best German book." Goethe as the living embodiment of Selbstüberwindung can be understood only against the background of his youth, of Werther, Goetz, Prometheus, and the Urfaust—but not as an old man embarrassed by the passions of his past, as one of millions whose maturity involves the loss of all their force and fire:

\[\text{Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben,}
\text{Der täglich sie erobern muss.}\]

Life he had to conquer ever again in his ceaseless combat with ill health and sickness unto death—and freedom, in his daily fight with passions which others, for the most part, do not know and which he harnessed into ever new creations.

Goethe so considered is the historic event which Nietzsche’s whole philosophy attempts to recapture in aphorisms. Goethe, not Faust, served as the prototype of Nietzsche’s superman. The “Bad Infinity”—to speak in Hegel’s terms—of Faust’s unbounded striving was explicitly repudiated by Nietzsche, who preached the glory of the moment. And the greatest power was, to Nietzsche’s mind, not power over others but the perfect self-control and creativity of the old Goethe. To be sure, that did not keep his “Faustian” interpreters from following the established procedure of blandly putting Faust in Goethe’s place.

Goethe’s influence on Hegel was no less great and can be traced from Hegel’s first book to his last—from his attempt in the Phänomenologie to emulate Wilhelm Meister by writing the Bildungsroman of God himself to the contention in the Rechtsphilosophie that freedom is to be found only in self-limitation and that, while absolute freedom can be found only in the realm

\[\text{Der Wanderer und sein Schatten, aphorism 109.}\]

\[\text{Faust II, Act V, Faust’s last speech: “He alone earns himself freedom and life who must conquer them daily.”}\]
of "Absolute Spirit," *i.e.*, in art, religion and philosophy, these pursuits must be grounded in a responsible civic existence—like Goethe's as a minister of state in Weimar.

Nietzsche, who also considered art and philosophy man's noblest enterprises, illustrated his diametrically opposite claim that they can prosper only apart from all civic existence and that culture thrives only at the expense of the State, by also citing Goethe—the Alpine recluse did not take the Weimar court as seriously as the Berlin professor. Moreover, Nietzsche was keenly aware of Goethe's Olympic contempt for civic conventions, and he insisted passionately and repeatedly on Goethe's anti-political opposition to the "Wars of Liberation."

Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche could all have said to Goethe, with Hegel:

> When I survey the course of my spiritual development, I see you everywhere woven into it and would like to call myself one of your sons; my inward nature has... set its course by your creations as by signal fires.\(^\text{19}\)

In other words, nineteenth-century German philosophy consisted, to a considerable extent, in a series of efforts to assimilate the phenomenon of Goethe. As in the case of Socrates, it was not a body of ideas that influenced the philosophers, but it was a personality which was variously reflected in their systems.

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Having considered Goethe's surpassing significance for the contents of the history of ideas, let us conclude with a very few words about how he revolutionized its form. His highly personal poems and dramas should be considered together with the fact that his *Wilhelm Meister* established the genre of the *Bildungsroman*—a literary form taken up by the Romantics, by Gottfried Keller, and in our time by Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse, to mention only a very few of the best known German writers. What is at stake is far more than a literary convention; it is a new way of approaching the human being, a new vision of man. Yet it is once again not a new theory or philosophic anthropology but a projection of Goethe's character and life. He experienced himself—if I may coin a phrase—*sub specie temporis*, and his character, life, and work cannot be understood except under the category of development.

\(^{19}\) Letter to Goethe, April 24, 1825.
It is not a mere accident that we know so much more of Goethe's life and conversations than, say, of Shakespeare's. The bard's works, too, have been arranged in chronological order by the scholars, and Michelangelo's creations can also be studied in their development. That this is done, however, is due to Goethe. While the works of others did not require this approach, Goethe could not and did not wait for the professors of a future century to establish the probable sequence of his works. It was not a bare coincidence that he hired Eckermann and conversed with him, nor did he take a chance that some admiring genius after his death might write *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. It was Goethe who established the developmental approach to the human personality and the artist in particular. And here, too, it was his own character and life rather than any theory or proposition that made history.

Goethe was effective by his works no less than by his character; but though I should consider him incomparably the greatest German, this claim could not be founded on any single one of his works. No one of his creations is clearly superior to Beethoven's masterpieces. It is Goethe's personality which is unique, and we have tried to show why it would profit us to learn from him rather than from his dramas. In the end, we should apply to the poet himself his verse which reminds us that man is not a means to anything else, not even to the formulation or verification of ideas:

*Höchstes Glück der Erdenkinder  
Sei nur die Persönlichkeit.*

Princeton University.

*West-Östlicher Divan*, Buch Suleika: "Let personality alone be man's highest happiness." This interpretation of the verse as an imperative is debatable.