

The Story of My Life

By Rudolf Steiner

GA 28

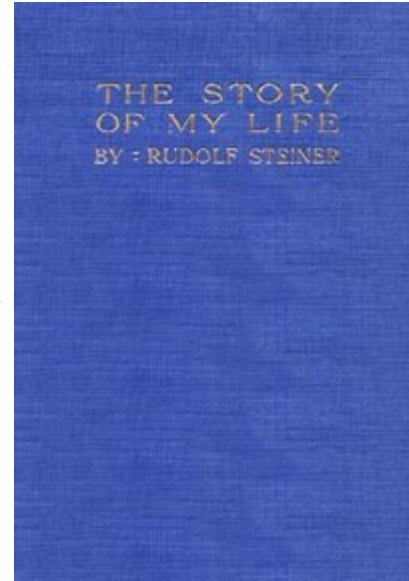
eText - Electronic Scanning by: John Roland Penner <johnpenner@mac.com>, January 1999 - December 10, 2000; with grateful acknowledgment to: The North American Christian Community Priests Reference Library (Toronto).

Copyright © 1928
This eText edition is provided through the wonderful work of:
The Anthroposophical Publishing Company
London

[Download compressed eText and images.](#)

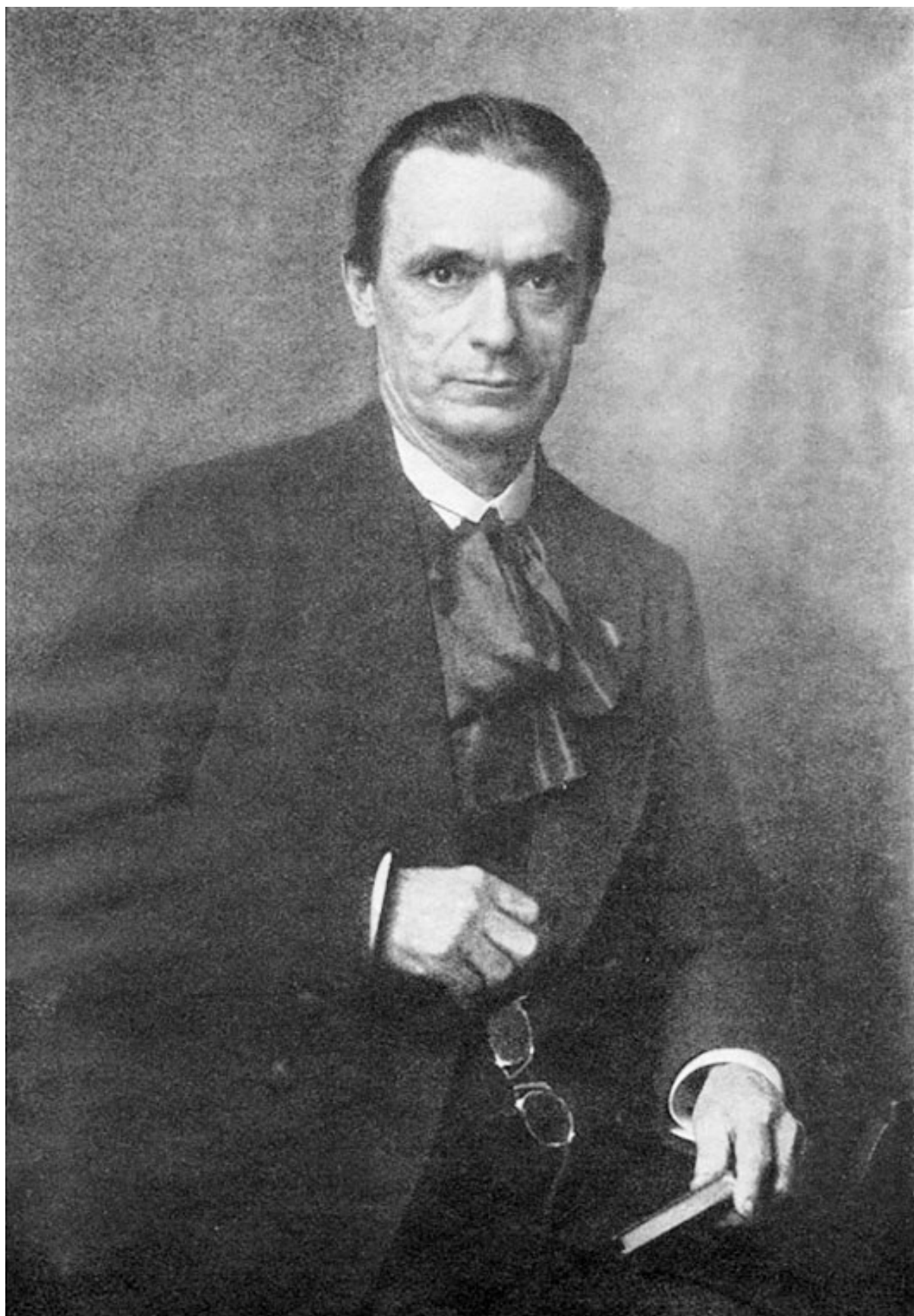
http://wn.elib.com/Steiner/Books/GA028/TSoML/GA028_index.html

Thanks to a donation from John Penner, this book has been made available.



CONTENTS

Steiner Photo 1	Chapter XIX
Cover Sheet	Chapter XX
Letter	Chapter XXI
Steiner Letter Image 1	Chapter XXII
Steiner Letter Image 2	Chapter XXIII
Chapter I	Chapter XXIV
Chapter II	Chapter XXV
Chapter III	Chapter XXVI
Chapter IV	Chapter XXVII
Chapter V	Chapter XXVIII
Chapter VI	Chapter XXIX
Chapter VII	Chapter XXX
Steiner Photo 2	Chapter XXXI
Chapter VIII	Chapter XXXII
Chapter IX	Chapter XXXIII
Chapter X	Chapter XXXIV
Chapter XI	Steiner Photo 3
Chapter XII	Chapter XXXV
Chapter XIII	Chapter XXXVI
Chapter XIV	Chapter XXXVII
Chapter XV	Chapter XXXVIII
Chapter XVI	Conclusion by Marie Steiner
Chapter XVII	Steiner Photo 4



THE STORY OF MY LIFE

BY RUDOLF STEINER, PH.D.

WITH AN AFTERWORD
BY MARIE STEINER

WITH AUTOGRAPHS AND FOUR PORTRAITS
OF RUDOLF STEINER

1928
LONDON - ANTHROPOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING CO.
NEW YORK - ANTHROPOSOPHIC PRESS

Authorized Translation
Edited by H. Collison

Copyright 1928 by Anthroposophical Publishing Co.
Printed in Great Britain by Unwin Brothers, Limited, London and Woking

eText - Electronic Scanning by:
John Roland Penner <johnrpenner@earthlink.net>
January 1999 - December 10, 2000; with grateful acknowledgment to:
The North American Christian Community Priests Reference Library (Toronto).

The Story of My Life

SCHLACHTENSEE, 22. Sept. 1903.

DEAR FRÄULEIN M—

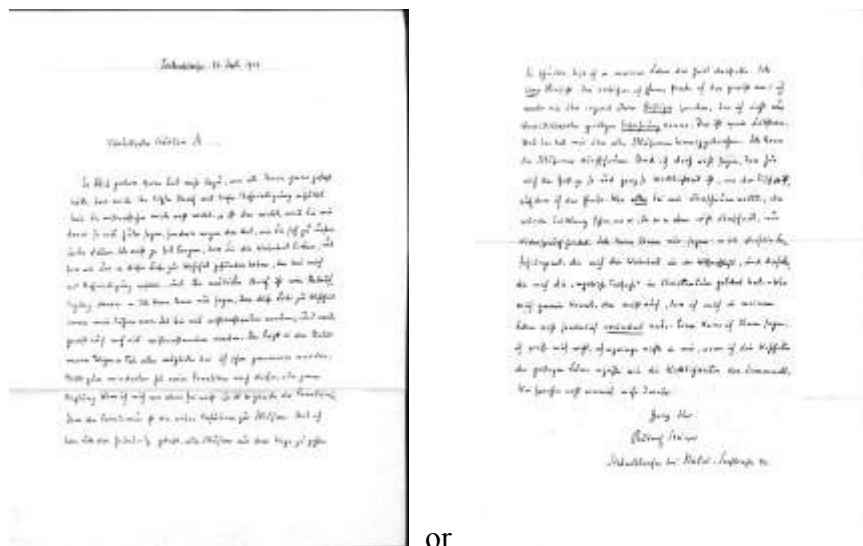
There was no time left yesterday for what I should have liked to say to you: that your last letter was deeply gratifying to me. You will not misunderstand me: it is not because of your kind and good words to myself, but on account of the whole way in which you relate yourself to our cause. For a long time I have known that you love the truth; it has been a joy and satisfaction to me that we have found one another in this love for truth, and your recent letter confirms and strengthens this feeling. I can only say to you that this love for the truth has always been my guide. I have been much misunderstood, and shall no doubt be much misunderstood in future, too. That lies in the very nature of my path. Every imaginable role has been ascribed to me - not least, that of a fanatic in one direction or in another. Fanaticism is the one thing of all others from which I know that I am free. For it is the greatest tempter into illusions. And it has ever been my principle to keep out of the way of all illusion. You write that I make manifest the Spirit in my life. In one respect, I assure you, I strive to do so: I never speak of anything spiritual that I do not know by the most direct spiritual experience. This principle is my guiding star, and it has enabled me to overcome illusions. I can see through the illusions. And I can truly say that for me the spiritual is absolutely real - not a whit less real than is the table at which I am now writing. Whoever is ready to look into all that I have said and done will discover harmony, where by not looking at the whole he only finds contradictions. I can but say: The same kind of experience which has taught me the truth in science has also taught me the "mystical fact" in Christianity. Moreover, those who know me well know that I have not unduly altered in my life. Of one thing I can assure you: I do not force myself, I put

myself under no kind of strain, when I relate the truths of the spiritual life just as I would relate the realities of this world of the senses. We shall speak of these things again, no doubt, another time.

Your devoted

RUDOLF STEINER.

SCHLACHTENSEE NEAR BERLIN,
SEESTRASSE 40.



or

The Story of My Life

Schlaachtenher, 22. Sept. 1903

Verehrtesten Fräulein M....

Es blieb gestern keine Zeit mehr dazu, was ich Ihnen gerne gesagt hätte: dass mich Ihr letzter Brief mit tiefer Befriedigung erfüllt hat. Sie missverstehen mich wohl nicht, es ist das nicht, weil Sie mir darin so viel Gutes sagen, sondern wegen der Art, wie Sie auf zu unser Sache stellen. Ich weiß ja seit langem, dass Sie die Wahrheit lieben; und dass wir uns in dieser Liebe zur Wahrheit gefunden haben, das hat mich mit Befriedigung erfüllt, und Ihr neuerlicher Brief ist eine Bestätigung davon. — Ich kann Ihnen nur sagen, dass diese Liebe zur Wahrheit immer mein Führer war. Ich bin viel missverstanden worden, und werde gewiß auf noch viel missverstanden werden. Das liegt in der Natur meines Weges. — Für alles mögliche bin ich schon genommen worden. Nicht zum mindesten für einen Fanatiker nach dieser, oder jener Richtung. Wenn ich mich von etwas frei weiß, so ist es gerade der Fanatismus. Denn der Fanatismus ist der wahre Verführer zur Illusion. Und ich habe stets den Grundsatz gehabt, aller Illusion aus dem Wege zu gehen

The Story of My Life

Sie schreiben, daß ich in meinem Leben den Geist durchschau. Ich
bin blind. Das verheißt ich Ihnen, heute ist das gewiß an: ich
werde nie über irgend etwas Geistiges sprechen. Das ist nicht aus
unmittelbarster geistiger Erfassung Kunde. Das ist mein Lüpfen.
Und das hat mich über alle Illusionen hinweggehoben. Ich kann
die Illusionen durchschauen. Und ich darf wohl sagen, daß für
mich das Geistige so und ganz so Wirklichkeit ist, wie der Tisch ist,
auf dem ich das schreibe. Wer alles bei mir übersehen wollte, der
würde Entlang sehen, wo er, da er es eben nicht übersehen will, nur
Widerstand findet. Ich kann Ihnen nur sagen: es ist dieselbe Er-
fassung, die mich die Wahrheit in der Wissenschaft, und dieselbe,
die mich die „mystische Tatsache“ im Christentum gelehrt hat. - Wer
mich genauer kennt, der weiß auch, daß ich mich in meinem
Leben nicht sonderlich verändert habe. Eines kann ich Ihnen sagen:
ich presse mich nicht, ich zwinge mich in mir, wenn ich die Wurzeln
des geistigen Lebens ergreife wie die Wirklichkeiten der Sinnenwelt.
Wir sprechen wohl einmal mehr darüber.

Ganz Ihr

Rudolf Steiner

The Story of My Life

RUDOLF STEINER
THE STORY OF MY LIFE
(1928)

IN public discussions of the anthroposophy for which I stand there have been mingled for some time past statements and judgments about the course which my life has taken. From what has been said in this connection conclusions have been drawn with regard to the origin of the variations so called which some persons believe they have discovered in the course of my spiritual evolution. In view of these facts, friends have felt that it would be well if I myself should write something about my own life.

This does not accord, I must confess, with my own inclinations. For it has always been my endeavour so to order what I might have to say and what I might think well to do according as the thing itself might require, and not from personal considerations. To be sure, it has always been my conviction that in many provinces of life the personal element gives to human action a colouring of the utmost value; only it seems to me that this personal element should reveal itself through the manner in which one speaks and acts, and not through conscious attention to one's own personality. Whatever may come about as a result of such attention is something a man has to settle with himself.

And so it has been possible for me to resolve upon the following narration only because it is necessary to set in a true light by means of an objective written statement many a false judgment in reference to the consistency between my life and the thing that I have fostered, and because those who through friendly interest have urged this upon me seem to me justified in view of such false judgments.

The home of my parents was in Lower Austria. My father was born at Geras, a very small place in the Lower Austrian forest region; my mother at Horn, a city of the same district.

My father passed his childhood and youth in the most intimate association with the seminary of the Premonstratensian Order at Geras. He always looked back with the greatest affection upon this time in his life. He liked to tell how he served in the college, and how the monks instructed him. Later on, he was a huntsman in the service of Count Hoyos. This family had a place at Horn. It was there that my father became acquainted with my mother. Then he gave up the work of huntsman and became a telegraphist on the Southern Austrian Railway. He was sent at first to a little station in southern Styria. Then he was transferred to Kraljevec on the border between Hungary and Croatia. It was during this period that he married my mother. Her maiden name was Blie. She was descended from an old family of Horn. I was born at Kraljevec on February 27, 1861. It

thus happened that the place of my birth was far removed from that part of the world from which my family came.

My father, and my mother as well, were true children of the South Austrian forest country, north of the Danube. It is a region into which the railway was late in coming. Even to this day it has left Geras untouched. My parents loved the life they had lived in their native region. When they spoke of this, one realized instinctively how in their souls they had never parted from that birthplace in spite of the fate that forced them to pass the greater part of their lives far away from it. And so, when my father retired, after a life filled with work, they returned at once there-to Horn.

My father was a man of the utmost good will, but of a temper – especially while he was still young – which could be passionately aroused. The work of a railway employee was to him a matter of duty; he had no love for it. While I was still a boy, he would sometimes have to remain on duty for three days and three nights continuously. Then he would be relieved for twenty-four hours. Under such conditions life for him wore no bright colours; all was dull grey. Some pleasure he found in keeping up with political developments. In these he took the liveliest interest. My mother, since our worldly goods were none too plentiful, was forced to devote herself to household duties. Her days were filled with loving care of her children and of the little home.

When I was a year and a half old; my father was transferred to Mödling, near Vienna. There my parents remained a half-year. Then my father was put in charge of the little station on the Southern Railway at Pottschach in Lower Austria, near the Styrian border. There I lived from my second to my eighth year. A wonderful landscape formed the environment of my childhood. The view stretched as far as the mountains that separate Lower Austria from Styria: “Snow Mountain,” Wechsel, the Rax Alps, the Semmering. Snow Mountain caught the sun's earliest rays on its bare summit, and the kindling reflection of these from the mountain down to the little village was the first greeting of dawn in the beautiful summer days. The grey back of the Wechsel put one by contrast in a sober mood. It was as if the mountains rose up out of the all-surrounding green of the friendly landscape. On the distant boundaries of the circle one had the majesty of the peaks, and close around the tenderness of nature.

But around the little station all interest was centered on the business of the railway. At that time the trains passed in that region only at long intervals; but, when they came, many of the men of the village who could spare the time were generally gathered at the station, seeking thus to bring some change into their lives, which they found otherwise very monotonous. The schoolmaster, the priest, the book-keeper of the manor, and often the burgomaster as well, would be there.

It seems to me that passing my childhood in such an environment had a certain significance for my life. For I felt a very deep interest in everything about me of a mechanical character; and I know how this interest tended constantly to overshadow in my childish soul the affections which went out to that tender and yet mighty nature into

which the railway train, in spite of being in subjection to this mechanism, must always disappear in the far distance.

In the midst of all this there was present the influence of a certain personality of marked originality, the priest of St. Valentin, a place that one could reach on foot from Pottschach in about three-quarters of an hour. This priest liked to come to the home of my parents. Almost every day he took a walk to our home, and he nearly always stayed for a long time. He belonged to the liberal type of Catholic cleric, tolerant and genial; a robust, broad-shouldered man. He was quite witty, too; had many jokes to tell, and was pleased when he drew a laugh from the persons about him. And they would laugh even more loudly over what he had said long after he was gone. He was a man of a practical way of life, and liked to give good practical advice. Such a piece of practical counsel produced its effects in my family for a long time. There was a row of acacia trees (Robinien) on each side of the railway at Pottschach. Once we were walking along the little footpath under these trees, when he remarked: "Ah, what beautiful acacia blossoms these are!" He seized one of the branches at once and broke off a mass of the blossoms. Spreading out his huge red pocket-handkerchief – he was extremely fond of snuff – he carefully wrapped the twigs in this, and put the "Binkerl" under his arm. Then he said: "How lucky you are to have so many acacia blossoms! "My father was astonished, and answered: "Why, what can we do with them?" "Wh-a-a-t?" said the priest. "Don't you know that you can bake the acacia blossoms just like elder flowers, and that they taste much better then because they have a far more delicate aroma?" From that time on we often had in our family, as opportunity offered from time to time, "baked acacia blossoms."

In Pottschach a daughter and another son were born to my parents. There was never any further addition to the family.

As a very young child I showed a marked individuality. From the time that I could feed myself, I had to be carefully watched. For I had formed the conviction that a soup-bowl or a coffee cup was meant to be used only once; and so, every time that I was not watched, as soon as I had finished eating something I would throw the bowl or the cup under the table and smash it to pieces. Then, when my mother appeared, I would call out to her : "Mother, I've finished!"

This could not have been a mere propensity for destroying things, since I handled my toys with the greatest care, and kept them in good condition for a long time. Among these toys those that had the strongest attraction for me were the kind which even now I consider especially good. These were picture-books with figures that could be made to move by pulling strings attached to them at the bottom. One associated little stories with these figures, to whom one gave a part of their life by pulling the strings. Many a time have I sat by the hour poring over the picture-books with my sister. Besides, I learned from them by myself the first steps in reading.

My father was concerned that I should learn early to read and write. When I reached the required age, I was sent to the village school. The schoolmaster was an old man to whom the work of "teaching school" was a burdensome business. Equally burdensome to me

was the business of being taught by him. I had no faith whatever that I could ever learn anything from him. For he often came to our house with his wife and his little son, and this son, according to my notions at that time, was a scamp. So I had this idea firmly fixed in my head: "Whoever has such a scamp for a son, nobody can learn anything from him." Besides, something else happened, "quite dreadful." This scamp, who also was in the school, played the prank one day of dipping a chip into all the ink-wells of the school and making circles around them with dabs of ink. His father noticed these. Most of the pupils had already gone. The teacher's son, two other boys, and I were still there. The schoolmaster was beside himself; he talked in a frightful manner. I felt sure that he would actually roar but for the fact that his voice was always husky. In spite of his rage, he got an inkling from our behaviour as to who the culprit was. But things then took a different turn. The teacher's home was next-door to the school-room. The "lady head mistress" heard the commotion and came into the school-room with wild eyes, waving her arms in the air. To her it was perfectly clear that her little son could not have done this thing. She put the blame on me. I ran away. My father was furious when I reported this matter at home. Then, the next time the teacher's family came to our house, he told them with the utmost bluntness that the friendship between us was ended, and added baldly: "My boy shall never set foot in your school again," Now my father himself took over the task of teaching me; and so I would sit beside him in his little office by the hour, and had to read and write between whiles whenever he was busy with his duties.

Neither with him could I feel any real interest in what had to come to me by way of direct instruction. What interested me was the things that my father himself was writing. I would imitate what he did. In this way I learned a great deal. As to the things I was taught by him, I could see no reason why I should do these just for my own improvement. On the other hand, I became rooted, in a child's way, in everything that formed a part of the practical work of life. The routine of a railway office, everything connected with it, – this caught my attention. It was, however, more especially the laws of nature that had already taken me as their little errand boy. When I wrote, it was because I had to write, and I wrote as fast as I could so that I should soon have a page filled. For then I could strew the sort of dust my father used over this writing. Then I would be absorbed in watching how quickly the dust dried up the ink, and what sort of mixture they made together. I would try the letters over and over with my fingers to discover which were already dry, which not. My curiosity about this was very great, and it was in this way chiefly that I quickly learned the alphabet. Thus my writing lessons took on a character that did not please my father, but he was good-natured and reprimanded me only by frequently calling me an incorrigible little "rascal." This, however, was not the only thing that evolved in me by means of the writing lessons. What interested me more than the shapes of the letters was the body of the writing quill itself. I could take my father's ruler and force the point of this into the slit in the point of the quill, and in this manner carry on researches in physics, concerning the elasticity of a feather. Afterwards, of course, I bent the feather back into shape; but the beauty of my handwriting distinctly suffered in this process.

This was also the time when, with my inclination toward the understanding of natural phenomena, I occupied a position midway between seeing through a combination of things, on the one hand, and "the limits of understanding" on the other. About three

minutes from the home of my parents there was a mill. The owners of the mill were the god-parents of my brother and sister. We were always welcome at this mill. I often disappeared within it. Then I studied with all my heart the work of a miller. I forced a way for myself into the "interior of nature." Still nearer us, however, there was a yarn factory. The raw material for this came to the railway station; the finished product went away from the station. I participated thus in everything which disappeared within the factory and everything which reappeared. We were strictly forbidden to take one peep at the "inside" of this factory. This we never succeeded in doing. There were the "limits of understanding" And how I wished to step across the boundaries! For almost every day the manager of the factory came to see my father on some matter of business. For me as a boy this manager was a problem, casting a miraculous veil, as it were, over the "inside" of those works. He was spotted here and there with white tufts; his eyes had taken on a certain set look from working at machinery. He spoke hoarsely, as if with a mechanical speech. "What is the connection between this man and everything that is surrounded by those walls?" – this was an insoluble problem facing my mind. But I never questioned anyone regarding the mystery. For it was my childish conviction that it does no good to ask questions about a problem which is concealed from one's eyes. Thus I lived between the friendly mill and the unfriendly factory.

Once something happened at the station that was very "dreadful." A freight train rumbled up. My father stood looking at it. One of the rear cars was on fire. The crew had not noticed this at all. All that followed as a result of this made a deep impression on me. Fire had started in a car by reason of some highly inflammable material. For a long time I was absorbed in the question how such a thing could happen. What my surroundings said to me in this case was, as in many other matters, not to my satisfaction. I was filled with questions, and I had to carry these about with me unanswered. It was thus that I reached my eighth year.

During my eighth year the family moved to Neudörfel, a little Hungarian village. This village is just at the border over against Lower Austria. The boundary here was formed by the Laytha River. The station that my father had in charge was at one end of the village. Half an hour's walk further on was the boundary stream. Still another half-hour brought one to Wiener-Neustadt.

The range of the Alps that I had seen close by at Pottschach was now visible only at a distance. Yet the mountains still stood there in the background to awaken our memories when we looked at lower mountains that could be reached in a short time from our family's new home. Massive heights covered with beautiful forests bounded the view in one direction; in the other, the eye could range over a level region, decked out in fields and woodland, all the way to Hungary. Of all the mountains, I gave my unbounded love to one that could be climbed in three-quarters of an hour. On its crest there stood a chapel containing a painting of Saint Rosalie. This chapel came to be the objective of a walk which I often took at first with my parents and my sister and brother, and later loved to take alone. Such walks were filled with a special happiness because of the fact that at that time of year we could bring back with us rich gifts of nature. For in these woods there were blackberries, raspberries, and strawberries. One could often find an inner

satisfaction in an hour and a half of berrying for the purpose of adding a delicious contribution to the family supper, which otherwise consisted merely of a piece of buttered bread or bread and cheese for each of us.

Still another pleasant thing came from rambling about in these forests, which were the common property of all. There the villagers got their supplies of wood. The poor gathered it for themselves; the well-to-do had servants to do this. One could become acquainted with all of these most-friendly persons. They always had time for a chat when Steiner Rudolf met them. "So thou goest again for a bit of a walk, Steiner Rudolf" – thus they would begin, and then they would talk about everything imaginable. The people did not think of the fact that they had a mere child before them. For at the bottom of their souls they also were only children, even when they could number sixty years. And so I really learned from the stories they told me almost everything that happened in the houses of the village.

Half an hour's walk from Neudörfel is Sauerbrunn, where there is a spring containing iron and carbonic acid. The road to this lies along the railway, and part of the way through beautiful woods. During vacation time I went there every day early in the morning, carrying with me a "Blutzer." This is a water vessel made of clay. The smallest of these hold three or four litres. One could fill this without charge at the spring. Then at midday the family could enjoy the delicious sparkling water.

Toward Wiener-Neustadt and farther on toward Styria, the mountains fall away to a level country. Through this level country the Laytha River winds its way. On the slope of the mountains there was a cloister of the Order of the Most Holy Redeemer. I often met the monks on my walks. I still remember how glad I should have been if they had spoken to me. They never did. And so I carried away from these meetings an undefined but solemn feeling which remained constantly with me for a long time. It was in my ninth year that the idea became fixed in me that there must be weighty matters in connection with the duties of these monks which I ought to learn to understand. There again I was filled with questions which I had to carry around unanswered. Indeed, these questions about all possible sorts of things made me as a boy very lonely.

On the foothills of the Alps two castles were visible: Pitten and Frohsdorf. In the second there lived at that time Count Chambord, who, at the beginning of the year 1870, claimed the throne of France as Henry V. Very deep were the impressions that I received from that fragment of life bound up with the castle Frohsdorf. The Count with his retinue frequently took the train for a journey from the station at Neudörfel.

Everything drew my attention to these men. Especially deep was the impression made by one man in the Count's retinue. He had but one ear. The other had been slashed off clean. The hair lying over this he had braided. At the sight of this I perceived for the first time what a duel is. For it was in this manner that the man had lost one ear.

Then, too, a fragment of social life unveiled itself to me in connection with Frohsdorf. The assistant teacher at Neudörfel, whom I was often permitted to see at work in his little

chamber, prepared innumerable petitions to Count Chambord for the poor of the village and the country around. In response to every such appeal there always came back a donation of one gulden, and from this the teacher was always allowed to keep six kreuzer for his services. This income he had need of, for the annual salary yielded him by his profession was fifty-eight gulden. In addition, he had his morning coffee and his lunch with the “schoolmaster.” Then, too, he gave special lessons to about ten children, of whom I was one. For such lessons the charge was one gulden a month.

To this assistant teacher I owe a great deal. Not that I was greatly benefited by his lessons at the school. In that respect I had about the same experience as at Pottschach. As soon as we moved to Neudörfel, I was sent to school there. This school consisted of one room in which five classes of both boys and girls all had their lessons. While the boy who sat on my bench was at their task of copying out the story of King Arpad, the very little fellows stood at a black board on which *i* and *u* had been written with chalk for them. It was simply impossible to do anything save to let the mind fall into a dull reverie while the hands almost mechanically took care of the copying. Almost all the teaching had to be done by the assistant teacher alone. The “schoolmaster” appeared in the school only very rarely. He was also the village notary, and it was said that in this occupation he had so much to take up his time that he could never keep school.

In spite of all this I learned earlier than usual to read well. Because of this fact the assistant teacher was able to take hold of something within me which has influenced the whole course of my life. Soon after my entrance into the Neudörfel school, I found a book on geometry in his room. I was on such good terms with the teacher that I was permitted at once to borrow the book for my own use. I plunged into it with enthusiasm. For weeks at a time my mind was filled with coincidences, similarities between triangles, squares, polygons; I racked my brains over the question: Where do parallel lines actually meet? The theorem of Pythagoras fascinated me. That one can live within the mind in the shaping of forms perceived only within oneself, entirely without impression upon the external senses – this gave me the deepest satisfaction. I found in this a solace for the unhappiness which my unanswered questions had caused me. To be able to lay hold upon something in the spirit alone brought to me an inner joy. I am sure that I learned first in geometry to experience this joy.

In my relation to geometry I must now perceive the first budding forth of a conception which has since gradually evolved in me. This lived within me more or less unconsciously during my childhood, and about my twentieth year took a definite and fully conscious form.

I said to myself: “The objects and occurrences which the senses perceive are in space. But, just as this space is outside of man, so there exists also within man a sort of soul-space which is the arena of spiritual realities and occurrences.” In my thoughts I could not see anything in the nature of mental images such as man forms within him from actual things, but I saw a spiritual world in this soul-arena. Geometry seemed to me to be a knowledge which man appeared to have produced but which had, nevertheless, a significance quite independent of man. Naturally I did not, as a child, say all this to

myself distinctly, but I felt that one must carry the knowledge of the spiritual world within oneself after the fashion of geometry.

For the reality of the spiritual world was to me as certain as that of the physical. I felt the need, however, for a sort of justification for this assumption. I wished to be able to say to myself that the experience of the spiritual world is just as little an illusion as is that of the physical world. With regard to geometry I said to myself: "Here one is permitted to know something which the mind alone, through its own power, experiences." In this feeling I found the justification for the spiritual world that I experienced, even as, so to speak, for the physical. And in this way I talked about this. I had two conceptions which were naturally undefined, but which played a great role in my mental life even before my eighth year. I distinguished things as those "which are seen" and those "which are not seen."

I am relating these matters quite frankly, in spite of the fact that those persons who are seeking for evidence to prove that anthroposophy is fantastic will, perhaps, draw the conclusion from this that even as a child I was marked by a gift for the fantastic: no wonder, then, that a fantastic philosophy should also have evolved within me.

But it is just because I know how little I have followed my own inclinations in forming conceptions of a spiritual world – having on the contrary followed only the inner necessity of things – that I myself can look back quite objectively upon the childlike unaided manner in which I confirmed for myself by means of geometry the feeling that I must speak of a world "which is not seen."

Only I must also say that I loved to live in that world For I should have been forced to feel the physical world as a sort of spiritual darkness around me had it not received light from that side.

The assistant teacher of Neudörfel had provided me, in the geometry text-book, with that which I then needed – justification for the spiritual world.

In other ways also I owe much to him. He brought to me the element of art. He played the piano and the violin and he drew a great deal. These things attracted me powerfully to him. Just as much as I possibly could be, was I with him. Of drawing he was especially fond, and even in my ninth year he interested me in drawing with crayons. I had in this way to copy pictures under his direction. Long did I sit, for instance, copying a portrait of Count Szedgenyi.

Very seldom at Neudörfel, but frequently in the neighbouring town of Sauerbrunn, could I listen to the impressive music of the Hungarian gipsies.

All this played its part in a childhood which was passed in the immediate neighbourhood of the church and the churchyard. The station at Neudörfel was but a few steps from the church, and between these lay the churchyard. If one went along by the churchyard and then a short stretch further, one came into the village itself. This consisted of two rows of

houses. One row began with the school and the other with the home of the priest. Between those two rows of houses flowed a little brook, along the banks of which grew stately nut trees. In connection with these nut trees an order of precedence grew up among the children of the school. When the nuts began to get ripe, the boys and girls assailed the trees with stones, and in this way laid in a winter's supply of nuts. In autumn almost the only thing anyone talked about was the size of his harvest of nuts. Whoever had gathered most of all was the most looked up to, and then step by step was the descent all the way down – to me, the last, who as an “outsider in the village” had no right to share in this order of precedence.

Near the railway station, the row of most important houses, in which the “big farmers” lived, was met at right angles by a row of some twenty houses owned by the “middle class” villagers. Then, beginning from the gardens which belonged to the station, came a group of thatched houses belonging to the “small cottagers.” These constituted the immediate neighbourhood of my family. The roads leading out from the village went past fields and vineyards that were owned by the villagers. Every year I took part with the “small cottagers” in the vintage, and once also in a village wedding.

Next to the assistant teacher, the person whom I loved most among those who had to do with the direction of the school was the priest. He came regularly twice a week to give instruction in religion and often besides for inspection of the school. The image of the man was deeply impressed upon my mind, and he has come back into my memory again and again throughout my life. Among the persons whom I came to know up to my tenth or eleventh year, he was by far the most significant. He was a vigorous Hungarian patriot. He took active part in the process of Magyarizing the Hungarian territory which was then going forward. From this point of view he wrote articles in the Hungarian language, which I thus learned through the fact that the assistant teacher had to make clear copies of these and he always discussed their contents with me in spite of my youthfulness. But the priest was also an energetic worker for the Church. This once impressed itself deeply upon my mind through one of his sermons.

At Neudörfl there was a lodge of Freemasons. To the villagers this was shrouded in mystery, and they wove about it the most amazing legends. The leading role in this lodge belonged to the manager of a match-factory which stood at the end of the village. Next to him in prominence among the persons immediately interested in the matter were the manager of another factory and a clothing merchant. Otherwise the only significance attaching to the lodge arose from the fact that from time to time strangers from “remote parts” were visitors there, and these seemed to the villagers in the highest degree unwelcome. The clothing merchant was a noteworthy person. He always walked with his head bowed over as if in deep thought. People called him “the make-believe,” and his isolation rendered it neither possible nor necessary that anyone should approach him. The building in which the lodge met belonged to his home.

I could establish no sort of relationship to this lodge. For the entire behaviour of the persons about me in regard to this matter was such that here again I had to refrain from

asking questions; besides, the utterly absurd way in which the manager of the match-factory talked about the church made a shocking impression on me.

Then one Sunday the priest delivered a sermon in his energetic fashion in which he set forth in due order the true principles of morality for human life and spoke of the enemy of the truth in figures of speech framed to fit the lodge. As a climax, he delivered his advice: "Beloved Christians, beware of him who is an enemy of the truth: for example, a Mason or a Jew." In the eyes of the people, the factory owner and the clothing merchant were thus authoritatively exposed. The vigour with which this had been uttered made a specially deep impression upon me. I owe to the priest also, because of a certain profound impression made upon me, a very great deal in the later orientation of my spiritual life. One day he came into the school, gathered round him in the teacher's little room the "riper" children, among whom he included me, unfolded a drawing he had made, and with the help of this explained to us the Copernican system of astronomy. He spoke about this very vividly – the revolution of the earth around the sun, its rotation on its axis, the inclination of the axis in summer and winter, and also the zones of the earth. In all of it I was absorbed; I made drawings of a similar kind for days together, and then received from the priest further special instruction concerning eclipses of the sun and the moon; and thence-forward I directed all my search for knowledge toward this subject. I was then about ten years old, and I could not yet write without mistakes in spelling and grammar.

Of the deepest significance for my life as a boy was the nearness of the church and the churchyard beside it. Everything that happened in the village school was affected in its course by its relationship to these. This was not by reason of certain dominant social and political relationships existing in every community; it was due to the fact that the priest was an impressive personality. The assistant teacher was at the same time organist of the church and custodian of the vestments used at Mass and of the other church furnishings. He performed all the services of an assistant to the priest in his religious ministrations. We schoolboys had to carry out the duties of ministrants and choristers during Mass, rites for the dead, and funerals. The solemnity of the Latin language and of the liturgy was a thing in which my boyish soul found a Vital happiness. Because of the fact that up to my tenth year I took such an earnest part in the services of the church, I was often in the company of the priest whom I so revered. In the home of my parents I received no encouragement in this matter of my relationship to the church. My father took no part in this. He was then a "freethinker." He never entered the church to which I had become so deeply attached; and yet he also, as a boy and as a young man, had been equally devoted and active. In his case this all changed once more only when he went back, as an old man on a pension, to Horn, his native region. There he became again "a pious man." But by that time I had long ceased to have any association with my parents' home.

From the time of my boyhood at Neudörfel, I have always had the strongest impression of the manner in which the contemplation of the church services in close connection with the solemnity of liturgical music causes the riddle of existence to rise in powerful suggestive fashion before the mind. The instruction in the Bible and the catechism imparted by the priest had far less effect upon my mental world than what he accomplished by means of liturgy in mediating between the sensible and the

supersensible. From the first this was to me no mere form, but a profound experience. It was all the more so because of the fact that in this I was a stranger in the home of my parents. Even in the atmosphere I had to breathe in my home, my spirit did not lose that vital experience which it had acquired from the liturgy. I passed my life amid this home environment without sharing in it, perceived it; but my real thoughts, feelings, and experience were continually in that other world. I can assert emphatically however, in this connection that I was no dreamer, but quite self-sufficient in all practical affairs.

A complete counterpart to this world of mine was my father's political affairs. He and another employee took turns on duty. This man lived at another railway station, for which he was partly responsible. He came to Neudörfel only every two or three days. During the free hours of the evening he and my father would talk politics. This would take place at a table which stood near the station under two huge and wonderful lime trees. There our whole family and the other employee would assemble. My mother knitted or crocheted; my brother and sister busied themselves about us; I would often sit at the table and listen to the unheard of political arguments of the two men. My participation, however, never had anything to do with the sense of what they were saying, but only with the form which the conversation took. They were always on opposite sides; if one said "Yes," the other always contradicted him with "No." All this, however, was marked, not only by a certain intensity – indeed, violence – but also by the good humour which was a basic element in my father's nature.

In the little circle often gathered there, to which were frequently added some of the "notabilities" of the village, there appeared at times a doctor from Wiener-Neustadt. He had many patients in this place, where at that time there was no physician. He came from Wiener-Neustadt to Neudörfel on foot, and would come to the station after visiting his patients to wait for the train on which he went back. This man passed with my parents, and with most persons who knew him, as an odd character. He did not like to talk about his profession as a doctor, but all the more gladly did he talk about German literature. It was from him that I first heard of Lessing, Goethe, Schiller. At my home there was never any such conversation. Nothing was known of such things. Nor in the village school was there any mention of such matters. There the emphasis was all on Hungarian history. Priest and assistant teacher had no interest in the masters of German literature. And so it happened that with the Wiener-Neustadt doctor a whole new world came within my range of vision. He took an interest in me; often drew me aside after he had rested for a while under the lime trees, walked up and down with me by the station, and talked – not like a lecturer, but enthusiastically – about German literature. In these talks he set forth all sorts of ideas as to what is beautiful and what is ugly.

This also has remained as a picture with me, giving me many happy hours in memory throughout my life: the tall, slender doctor, with his quick, long stride, always with his umbrella in his right hand held invariably in such a way that it dangled by his side, and I, a boy of ten years, on the other side, quite absorbed in what the man was saying.

Along with all these things I was tremendously concerned with everything pertaining to the railroad. I first learned the principles of electricity in connection with the station telegraph. I learned also as a boy to telegraph.

As to language, I grew up in the dialect of German that is spoken in Eastern Lower Austria. This was really the same as that then used in those parts of Hungary bordering on Lower Austria. My relationship to reading and that to writing were entirely different. In my boyhood I passed rapidly over the words in reading; my mind went immediately to the perceptions, the concepts, the ideas, so that I got no feeling from reading either for spelling or for writing grammatically. On the other hand, in writing I had a tendency to fix the word-forms in my mind by their sounds as I generally heard them spoken in the dialect. For this reason it was only after the most arduous effort that I gained facility in writing the literary language; whereas reading was easy for me from the first.

Under such influences I grew up to the age at which my father had to decide whether to send me to the **Gymnasium**⁽¹⁾ or to the **Realschule**⁽¹⁾ at Wiener-Neustadt. From that time on I heard much talk with other persons – in between the political discussions – as to my own future. My father was given this and that advice; I already knew: “He likes to listen to what others say, but he acts according to his own fixed and definite determination.”

Notes:

1. The Gymnasium and the Realschule are secondary schools, the curriculum of the former giving more prominence to the classics and that of the later to science and modern languages.

The Story of My Life

II

THE decision as to whether I should be sent to the Gymnasium or the Realschule was arrived at by my father, on the basis of his intention to give me the right preparation for a “position” on the railway. This purpose of his finally took definite form in the decision that I should be a railway civil engineer. Hence his choice was the Realschule.

Next, however, the question remained to be settled as to whether in passing from the village school of Neudörfel to one of the schools in the neighbouring Wiener-Neustadt, I should be prepared for admission to such a school. So I was taken to the town hall for an examination.

These plans which were thus being carried through for my own future did not excite in me any deep interest. At that age these questions concerning my “position,” and whether

the choice should fall on town school, Realschule, or Gymnasium were to me matters of indifference. Through what I observed around me and felt within me, I was conscious of undefined but burning questions about life and the world and the soul, and my wish was to learn something in order to be able to answer these questions of mine. I cared very little through what sort of school this should be brought about.

The examination at the town school I passed very creditably. All the drawings I had made for the assistant teacher had been brought along; and these made such an impression upon the teachers who examined me that on this account my very defective knowledge was overlooked. I came out of the examination with a “brilliant” record. There was great rejoicing on the part of my parents, the assistant teacher, the priest, and many of the notabilities of Neudörfl. People were happy over the result of my examination because to many of them it was a proof that “the Neudörfl school can teach a thing or two!”

For my father there came out of all this the thought that I should not spend a preliminary year in the town school – seeing that I was already so far along – but should enter the Realschule at once. So a few days later I was taken to that school for another examination. In this case matters did not turn out so well; nevertheless, I was admitted. This was in October 1872.

I had now to go every day from Neudörfl to Wiener Neustadt. In the morning I could go by train; but I had to come back in the afternoon on foot, since there was no train at the right time. Neudörfl was in Hungary, Wiener Neustadt in Lower Austria. So every day I went from “Transleitanien” to “Cisleitanien.” (These were the official designations for the Hungarian and the Austrian districts.)

During the noon recess I remained in Wiener-Neustadt. It so happened that a certain woman had come to know me during one of her stops at the Neudörfl station, and had learned that I was coming to Wiener-Neustadt to school. My parents had spoken to her of their concern as to how I was to pass the noon recess during my attendance at the Wiener-Neustadt school. She told them she would be glad to have me take lunch at her home without charge, and would welcome me there whenever I needed to come.

In summer the walk from Wiener-Neustadt to Neudörfl was very beautiful; in winter it was often exceedingly hard. To get from the outskirts of the town to the village one had to walk for half an hour across fields which were not cleared of snow. There I often had to “wade” through the snow, and I would arrive at home a veritable “snow man.”

The town life I could not share inwardly as I could the life of the country. I would fall into a brown study over the problem of what might be happening in and between those houses closed tight one against the other. Only before the booksellers' shops of Wiener-Neustadt did I often linger for a long time.

What went on in the school also, and what I had to do there, proceeded at first without awakening any lively interest in my mind. In the first two classes I had great difficulty in “keeping up.” Only in the second half-year was the work easier in these two classes. Only

then had I become a “good scholar”. I was conscious of one overwhelming need. I craved men whom I could take as human models to follow. The teachers of the first two classes were not such men. In this school life something now occurred which impressed me deeply. The principal of the school, in one of the annual reports which had to be issued at the close of each school year, published a lecture entitled *Die Anziehungskraft betrachtet als eine Wirkung der Bezeugung*.⁽¹⁾ As a child of eleven years I could at first understand almost nothing of the content of this paper; for it began at once with higher mathematics. Yet from some of the sentences I got hold of a certain meaning. There formed itself in my mind a bridge between what I had learned from the priest concerning the creation of the world and these sentences in the paper. The paper referred also to a book which the principal had written, *Die allgemeine Bewegung der Materie als Grundursache aller Naturerscheinungen*.⁽²⁾ I saved my money until I was able to buy that book. It now became my aim to learn as quickly as possible everything that might lead me to an understanding of the paper and the book.

The thing was like this. The principal held that the conception of forces acting at a distance from the bodies exerting these forces was an unproved “mystical” hypothesis. He wished to explain the “attraction” between the heavenly bodies as well as that between molecules and atoms without reference to such “forces.” He said that between any two bodies there are many small bodies in motion. These, moving back and forth, thrust the larger bodies. Likewise these larger bodies are thrust from every direction on the sides turned away from each other. The thrusts on the sides turned away from each other are much more numerous than those in the spaces between the two bodies. It is for this reason that they approach each other. “Attraction” is not any special force, but only an “effect of motion.” I came across two sentences stated positively in the first pages of the volume: “1. There exist space and in space motion continuing for a long period of time. 2. Space and time are continuous, homogeneous masses; but matter consists of separate particles (atoms).” Out of the motions occurring in the manner described between the small and great parts of matter, the professor would derive all physical and chemical occurrences in nature.

I had nothing within me which inclined me in any way whatever to accept such a view; but I had the feeling that it would be a very important matter for me when I could understand what was in this manner expressed. And I did everything I could in order to reach that point. Whenever I could get hold of books of mathematics and physics, I seized the opportunity. It was a slow process. I set myself to read the paper over and over again; each time there was some improvement.

Now something else happened. In the third class I had a teacher who really fulfilled the “ideal” I had before my mind. He was a man whom I could emulate. He taught computation, geometry, and physics. His teaching was wonderfully systematic and thorough-going. He built everything so clearly out of its elements that it was in the highest degree beneficial to one's thinking to follow him.

A lecture accompanying the second annual school report was delivered by him. It had to do with the law of probabilities and calculations in life insurance. I buried myself in this

paper also, although of this likewise I could not understand very much. But I soon came to grasp the idea of the law of probabilities. A more important result, however, for me was that the exactness with which my favourite teacher handled his materials gave me a model for my own thinking in mathematics. This now brought about a wonderfully beautiful relationship between this teacher and me. I was very happy to have this man through all the classes of the Realschule as teacher of mathematics and physics.

Through what I learned from him I drew nearer and nearer to the riddle that had arisen for me through the paper by the principal.

With still another teacher I came only after a long time into a more intimate spiritual relationship. This was the one who taught constructive geometry in the lower classes and descriptive geometry in the upper. He taught even in the second class. But only during his course in the third class did I come to an appreciation of the kind of man he was. He was an enthusiastic constructor. His teaching also was a model of clearness and order. The drawing of circles, lines, and triangles became to me, through his influence, a favourite occupation. Behind all that I was taking into myself from the principal, the teacher of mathematics and physics, and the teacher of geometrical design, there arose in me in a boyish way of thinking the problem of what goes on in nature. My feeling was: I must go to nature in order to win a standing place in the spiritual world, which was there before me, consciously perceived.

I said to myself: "One can take the right attitude toward the experience of the spiritual world by one's own soul only when one's process of thinking has reached such a form that it can attain to the reality of being which is in natural phenomena." With such feelings did I pass through life during the third and fourth years of the Realschule. Everything that I learned I so directed as to bring myself nearer to the goal I have indicated.

Then one day I passed a bookshop. In the show window I saw an advertisement of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*.⁽³⁾ I did everything that I could to acquire this book as quickly as possible.

As Kant then entered the circle of my thinking, I knew nothing whatever of his place in the spiritual history of mankind. What anyone whatever had thought about him, in approval or in disapproval, was to me entirely unknown. My boundless interest in the *Critique of Pure Reason* had arisen entirely out of my own spiritual life. In my boyish way I was striving to understand what human reason might be able to achieve toward a real insight into the being of things.

The reading of Kant met with every sort of obstacle in the circumstances of my external life. Because of the long distance I had to traverse between school and home, I lost every day at least three hours. In the evenings I did not get home until six o'clock. Then there was an endless quantity of school assignments to master. On Sundays I devoted myself almost entirely to geometrical designing. It was my ideal to attain the greatest precision

in carrying out geometrical constructions, and the most immaculate neatness in hatching and the laying on of colours.

So I had scarcely any time left for reading the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I found the following way out. Our history course was handled in such a manner that the teacher appeared to be lecturing but was in reality reading from a book. Then from time to time we had to learn from our books what he had given us in this fashion. I thought to myself that I must take care of this reading of what was in my book while at home. From the teacher's "lecture" I got nothing at all. From listening to what he read I could not retain the least thing. I now took apart the single sections of the little Kant volume, placed these inside the history book, which I there kept before me during the history lesson, and read Kant while the history was being "taught" down to us from the professor's seat. This was, of course, from the point of view of school discipline, a serious fault; yet it disturbed nobody and it subtracted so little from what I should otherwise have acquired that the grade I was given on my history lesson at that very time was "excellent."

During vacations the reading of Kant went forward briskly. Many a page I read more than twenty times in succession. I wanted to reach a decision as to the relation sustained by human thought to the creative work of nature.

The feeling I had in regard to these strivings of thought was influenced here from three sides. In the first place, I wished so to build up thought within myself that every thought should be completely subject to survey, that no vague feeling should incline the thought in any direction whatever. In the second place, I wished to establish within myself a harmony between such thinking and the teachings of religion. For this also at that time had the very strongest hold upon me.

In just this field we had truly excellent text-books. From these books I took with the utmost devotion the symbol and dogma, the description of the church service, the history of the church. These teachings were to me a vital matter. But my relation to them was determined by the fact that to me the spiritual world counted among the objects of human perception. The very reason why these teachings penetrated so deeply into my mind was that in them I realized how the human spirit can find its way consciously into the supersensible. I am perfectly sure that I did not lose my reverence for the spiritual in the slightest degree through this relationship of the spiritual to perception.

On the other side I was tremendously occupied over the question of the scope of human capacity for thought. It seemed to me that thinking could be developed to a faculty which would actually lay hold upon the things and events of the world. A "stuff" which remains outside of the thinking, which we can merely "think toward," seemed to me an unendurable conception. Whatever is in things, this must be also inside of human thought, I said to myself again and again. Against this conviction, however, there always opposed itself what I read in Kant. But I scarcely observed this conflict. For I desired more than anything else to attain through the *Critique of Pure Reason* to a firm standing ground in order to get the mastery of my own thinking. Wherever and whenever I took my holiday walks, I had in any case to set before myself this question, and once more

clear it up: How does one pass from simple, clear-cut perceptions to concepts in regard to natural phenomena? I held then quite uncritically to Kant; but no advance did I make by means of him.

Through all this I was not drawn away from whatever pertains to the actual doing of practical things and the development of human skill. It so happened that one of the employees who took turns with my father in his work understood book-binding. I learned bookbinding from him, and was able to bind my own school books in the holidays between the fourth and fifth classes of the Realschule. And I learned stenography also at this time during the vacation without a teacher.

Nevertheless, I took the course in stenography which was given from the fifth class on.

Occasions for practical work were plentiful. My parents were assigned near the station a little orchard of fruit trees and a small patch for potatoes. Gathering cherries, taking care of the orchard, preparing the potatoes for planting, cultivating the soil, digging the potatoes – all this work fell to my sister and brother and me. Buying the family groceries in the village, of this I would not let anyone deprive me at those times when the school left me free.

When I was about fifteen years old I was permitted to come into more intimate relationship with the doctor at Wiener Neustadt whom I have already mentioned. I had conceived of a great liking for him because of the way in which he talked to me during his visits to Neudörfel. So I often slipped past his home, which was on the ground floor of a building at the corner of two very narrow streets in Wiener-Neustadt. One day he was at the window. He called me into his room I stood before what seemed to me then a great library. He talked again about literature; then took down Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm* from the collection of books, and said I must read that and afterwards come back to him. In this way he gave me one book after another to read and invite me from time to time to come to see him. Every time that I had an opportunity to go back, I had to tell him my impression of what I had read. In this way he became really my teacher in poetic literature. For up to that time both at my home and also at school, all this – except for some “extracts” – had been quite outside of my life. In the atmosphere of this lovable doctor, sensitive to everything beautiful, I learned especially to know Lessing.

Another event deeply influenced my life. The mathematics books which Lübsen had prepared for home study became known to me. I was then able to teach myself analytical geometry, trigonometry, and even differential and integral calculus long before I learned these in school. This enabled me to return to the reading of those books on *The General Motion of Matter as the Fundamental Cause of All the Phenomenon of Nature*. For now I could understand them better through my understanding of mathematics. Meanwhile, we had come to the course in physics following that in chemistry, and this brought me a new set of riddles concerning human knowledge to add to the older ones. The teacher of chemistry was a distinguished man. He taught almost entirely by means of experiments. He spoke little. He let natural processes speak for themselves. He was one of our favourite teachers. There was something noteworthy in him which distinguished him in

the eyes of his pupils from the other teachers. One felt that he stood in a closer relationship to his science than did the others. The others we addressed with the title "Professor"; he, although he was just as much a professor, was called "Doctor." He was the brother of the thoughtful Tyrolean poet Hermann von Gilm. He had an eye which held one's attention firmly. One felt that this man was accustomed to looking intently at the phenomena of nature and then retaining what he had perceived.

His teaching puzzled me a little. The feeling for facts which marked him could not always hold concentrated that state of mind through which I was then striving toward unification. Still he must have considered that I made good progress in chemistry, for he marked my notes from the start "creditable," and I kept this grade through all the classes.

One day I found at an antiquary's in Wiener-Neustadt Rotteck's history of the world. Until then, in spite of the fact that I received the highest grades in the school in history, this subject had always remained to me something external. Now it grew to be an inner thing. The warmth with which Rotteck conceived and set forth historic events swept me along. His one-sidedness of view I did not then perceive. Through him I was led to two other books which, by reason of their style and their vivid historical conceptions, made the deepest impression on me: Johannes von Müller and Tacitus.

Amid such impressions, it was very hard for me to take any interest in the school lessons in history and in literature. But I strove to give life to these lessons from all that I made my own out of other sources. In this manner I passed my time in the three upper classes of the seven years of the Realschule.

From my fifteenth year on I taught other pupils of the same grade as myself or of a lower grade. The teachers were very willing to assign me this tutoring, for I was rated as a very "good scholar." Through this means I was enabled to contribute at least a very little toward what my parents had to spend out of their meagre income for my education. I owe much to this tutoring. In having to give to others in turn the matter which I had been taught, I myself became, so to speak, awake to this. For I cannot express the thing otherwise than by saying that I received in a sort of dream life the knowledge imparted to me by the school. I was always awake to what I gained by my own effort, and what I received from a spiritual benefactor, such as the doctor I have mentioned of Wiener-Neustadt. What I received thus in a fully self-conscious state of mind was noticeably different from what passed over to me like dream-pictures in the class-room instruction. The development of what had thus been received in a half-waking state was now brought about by the fact that in the periods of tutoring I had to vitalize my own knowledge.

On the other hand, this experience compelled me at an early age to concern myself with practical pedagogy. I learned the difficulties of the development of human minds through my pupils.

To the pupils of my own grade whom I tutored the most important thing I had to teach was German composition. Since I myself had also to write every such composition, I had to discover for each theme assigned to us various forms of development. I often felt then

that I was in a very difficult situation. I wrote my own theme only after I had already given away the best thoughts on that topic.

A rather strained relationship existed between the teacher of the German language and literature in the three upper classes and myself. The pupils considered him the “keenest professor,” and especially strict. My essays had always been unusually long. The briefer forms I had dictated to my fellow pupils. It took the teacher a long time to read my papers. After the final examination, during the celebration before the close of the session, when for the first time he was “in a good humour” among us pupils, he told me how I had annoyed him with my long themes.

Still another thing happened. I had the feeling that some thing was brought into the school through this teacher which I must master. When he discussed the nature of poetic descriptions, it seemed to me that there was something in the background behind what he said. After a time I found out what this was. He adhered to the philosophy of Herbart. He himself said nothing of this. But I discovered it. And so I bought an *Introduction to Philosophy* and a *Psychology*, both of which were written from the point of view of Herbart's philosophy.

And now began a sort of game of hide-and-seek between the teacher and me in my compositions. I began to understand much in him which he set forth in the colours of Herbart's philosophy; and he found in my compositions all sorts of ideas that came from the same source. Only neither he nor I mentioned Herbart as the source of our ideas. This was through a sort of tacit agreement. But one day I ended a composition in a way that was imprudent in view of the situation. I had to write about some characteristic or other of human beings. At the end I used this sentence: “Such a man possesses psychological freedom.” Our teacher would discuss the compositions with the class after he had corrected them. When he came to the discussion of this particular theme, he drew in the corners of his mouth with obvious irony and said: “You say something here about psychological freedom. There is no such thing” I answered: “That seems to me a mistake, Professor. There really is a psychological freedom, only there is no ‘transcendental freedom’ in an ordinary state of consciousness.” The lips of the teacher became smooth again. He looked at me with a penetrating glance and remarked: “I have noticed for a long while from your compositions that you have a philosophical library. I would advise you not to use it; you only confuse your thinking by so doing.” I could never understand at all why I would confuse my thinking by reading the same books from which his own thinking was derived. And thus the relation between us continued to be somewhat strained.

His teaching gave me much to do. For he covered in the fifth class the Greek and Latin poets, from whom selections were used in German translation. Then for the first time I began to regret once in a while that my father had put me in the Realschule instead of the Gymnasium. For I felt how little of the character of Greek and Roman art I should get hold of through the translations. So I bought Greek and Latin text-books, and carried along secretly by the side of the Realschule course also a private Gymnasium course of instruction. This required much time; but it also laid the foundation by means of which I

met, although in unusual fashion yet quite according to the rules, the Gymnasium requirements. I had to give many hours of tutoring, especially when I was in the **Technische Hochschule**⁽⁴⁾ in Vienna. I soon had a Gymnasium pupil to tutor. Circumstances of which I shall speak later brought it about that I had to help this pupil by means of tutoring through almost the whole Gymnasium course. I taught him Latin and Greek, so that in teaching him I had to go through every detail of the Gymnasium course with him.

The teachers of history and geography who could give me so little in the lower classes became, nevertheless, important to me in the upper classes. The very one who had driven me to such unusual reading of Kant wrote once a lecture for a school report on *Die Eiszeit und ihre Ursachen*.⁽⁵⁾ I grasped the meaning of this with great eagerness of mind, and conceived from it a strong interest in the problem of the glacial age. But this teacher was also a good pupil of the distinguished geographer, Friedrich Simony. This fact led him to explain in the upper classes the geological-geographical evolution of the Alps with illustrative drawings on the blackboard. Then I did not by any means read Kant, but was all eyes and ears. From this side I now got a great deal from this teacher, whose lessons in history did not interest me at all.

In the last class I had for the first time a teacher who gripped me with his instruction in history. He taught history and geography. In this class the geography of the Alps was set forth in the same delightful fashion as had already been the case with the other teacher. In the history lessons the new teacher got a strong hold upon us. He was to us a personality in the full sense of the word. He was a partisan, enthusiastic for the progressive ideas of the Austrian liberal movement of the time. But in the school there was no evidence of this. He brought nothing from his partisan views into the class room. Yet his teaching of history had, by reason of his own participation in life, a strong vitality. I listened to the temperamental historical analyses of this teacher with the results from my reading of the Rotteck volumes still in my memory. The experience produced a satisfying harmony. I cannot but think it was an important thing for me to have had the opportunity to imbibe the history of modern times in this manner.

At home I heard much talk about the Russo-Turkish war (1877-78). The employee who then took my father's place every third day was an original sort of person. When he came to relieve my father, he always brought along a huge carpet-bag. In this he had great packets of manuscript. These were abstracts of the most varied assortments of scientific books. Those abstracts he gave to me, one after another, to read. I devoured them. He would then discuss these things with me. For he really had in his head a conception, somewhat chaotic to be sure but comprehensive, concerning all these things that he had compiled. With my father, however, he talked politics. He delighted to take the side of the Turks; my father defended with great earnestness the Russians. He was one of those persons still grateful to Russia for the service she rendered to Austria at the time of the Hungarian uprising (1848). For my father was on no sort of terms with the Hungarians. He lived in the Hungarian border town of Neudörfel during that period when the process of Magyarizing was going forward, and the sword of Damocles hung over his head – the danger that he might not be allowed to remain in charge of the station of Neudörfel unless

he could speak Magyar. This language was quite unnecessary in that originally German place, but the Hungarian regime was endeavouring to bring it to pass that railway lines in Hungary should be manned with Magyar-speaking employees, even the privately owned lines. But my father wished to hold his place at Neudörfel long enough for me to finish at the school at Wiener-Neustadt. By reason of all this, he was then not friendly to the Hungarians. So, since he could not endure the Hungarians, he liked in his simple way to think of the Russians as those who in 1848 had “shown the Hungarians who were their masters.” This way of thinking manifested itself with extraordinary earnestness, and yet in the wonderfully lovable manner of my father toward his Turkophile friend in the person of the “substitute.” The tide of discussion rose oft times very high. I was greatly interested in the mutual outbursts of the two personalities, but scarcely at all in their political opinions. For me a much more vital need at that time was that of finding an answer to this question: To what extent is it possible to prove that in human thinking real spirit is the agent?

Notes:

1. Attraction Considered as an Effect of Motion.
2. The General Motion of Matter as the Fundamental Cause of All the Phenomenon of Nature.
3. “Critique of Pure Reason”.
4. The Technische Hochschule does not correspond wholly to any English or American institution. It might be called a “university” with marked scientific emphasis.
5. The Glacial Age and Its Causes.

The Story of My Life

III

MY father had been promised by the management of the Southern Railway that he would be assigned to a small station near Vienna as soon as I should have finished at the Realschule and should need to attend the Technische Hochschule. In this way it would be possible for me to go to Vienna and return every day. So it happened that my family came to Inzersdorf am Wiener Berge. The station was at a distance from the town, very lonely, and in unlovely natural surroundings. My first visit to Vienna after we had moved to Inzersdorf was for the purpose of buying a greater number of philosophical books. What my heart was now especially devoted to was the first sketch of *Fichte's Wissenschaftslehre*.⁽¹⁾ I had got so far with my reading of Kant that I could form a notion, even though immature, of the advance which Fichte wished to make beyond Kant. But this did not greatly interest me. What interested me then was to express the living weaving of the human mind in a sharply outlined mental picture. My strivings after conceptions in natural science had finally brought me to see in the activity of the human

ego the sole starting-point for true knowledge. When the ego is active and itself perceives this activity, man has something spiritual in immediate presence in his consciousness – thus I said to myself. It seemed to me that what was thus perceived ought now to be expressed in clear, vivid concepts. In order to find a way to do this, I devoted myself to Fichte's *Theory of Science*. And yet I had my own opinions. So I took the volume and rewrote it, page by page. This made a lengthy manuscript. I had previously striven to find conceptions for the phenomena of nature from which one might derive a conception of the ego. Now I wished to do the opposite: from the ego to penetrate into the nature's process of becoming. Spirit and nature were present before my soul in their absolute contrast. There was for me a world of spiritual beings. That the ego, which itself is spirit, lives in a world of spirits was for me a matter of direct perception. But nature would not pass over into this spirit-world of my experience.

From my study of the Theory of Science I conceived a special interest in Fichte's treatises *Über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten*⁽²⁾ and *Über das Wesen des Gelehrten*⁽³⁾. In these writings I found a sort of ideal toward which I myself would strive. Along with these I read also the *Reden an die Deutsche Nation*⁽⁴⁾. This took hold of me much less at that time than Fichte's other works.

But I wished now to come also to a better understanding of Kant than I had yet been able to attain. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* this understanding refused to be revealed to me. So I attacked the problem with the *Prolegomena zu einer jeden Künftigen Metaphysik*.⁽⁵⁾ Through this book I thought I recognized that a thorough penetration into all the questions which Kant had raised among thinkers was necessary for me. I now worked more consciously to the end that I might mould into the forms of thought the immediate vision of the spiritual world which I possessed. And while I was occupied with this inner work I sought to get my bearings with reference to the roads which had been taken by the thinkers of Kant's time and the succeeding epoch. I studied the dry, bald *Transcendentalen Synthetismus*⁽⁶⁾ of Traugott Krug just as eagerly as I entered into the tragedy of knowledge by which Fichte was possessed when he wrote his *Bestimmung des Menschen*.⁽⁷⁾ The history of philosophy by Thilo of the school of Herbart broadened my view of the evolution of philosophical thought from the period of Kant onward. I fought my way through to Schelling, to Hegel. The opposition between the thought of Herbart and of Fichte passed before my mind in all its intensity.

The summer months of 1879, from the end of my Realschule period until my entrance into the Technische Hochschule, I spent entirely in such philosophical studies. In the autumn I was to decide my choice of studies with reference to my future career. I decided to prepare to teach in a Realschule. The study of mathematics and descriptive geometry would have suited my inclination. But I should have to give up the latter; for the study of this subject required a great many practice hours during the day in geometrical drawings, but in order to earn some money I had to have leisure to devote to tutoring. This was possible while attending lectures whose subject-matter, when it was necessary to be absent from lectures, could afterwards be taken up in readings, but not possible when one had to spend hours assigned for drawing regularly in the school.

So I had myself enrolled for mathematics, natural history, and chemistry. Of special import for me, however, were the lectures which Karl Julius Schröer gave at that time in the Hochschule on German literature. He lectured during my first year on "Literature since Goethe" and "Schiller's Life and Work." From the very first lecture he impressed me. He developed a survey of the life of the spirit in Germany in the second half of the eighteenth century and placed in dramatic contrast with this Goethe's first appearance and its effect upon this spiritual life. The warmth of his manner of treating the subject, the inspiring way in which he entered into the selections read from the poets, introduced us through an inner process into the nature of poetry.

In connection with these lectures he had the habit of requiring "practice in oral and written lectures." The students had then to deliver orally or read what they themselves had prepared. Schröer would give informal suggestions during these student performances as to style, manner of delivery, and the like. My first discussion dealt with Lessing's *Laokoon*. Then I undertook a longer paper. I worked up the theme: "To what extent is man in his actions a free being?" In connection with this paper I drew much upon Herbart's philosophy. Schröer did not like this at all. He had not shared in the enthusiasm for Herbart which then prevailed in Austria both in philosophical circles and also in pedagogy. He was devoted completely to Goethe's type of mind. So everything which was derived from Herbart seemed to him pedantic and prosaic, although he recognized the discipline of thought to be had from this philosopher.

I was now able to attend also certain lectures at the university. I took great satisfaction in the Herbartian, Robert Zimmermann. He lectured on "Practical Philosophy." I attended that part of his lectures in which he developed the ground principles of ethics. I alternated, generally attending his lecture one day and the next that of Franz Brentano, who at the same period lectured on the same field. I could not keep this up very long, for I missed too much of the courses in the Hochschule.

I was deeply impressed by learning philosophy in this way, not merely out of books, but from the lips of the philosophers themselves.

Robert Zimmermann was a notable personality. He had an extraordinarily high forehead and a long philosopher's beard. With him everything was measured, reduced to style. When he entered through the door and mounted to his seat, his steps seemed to be studied, and all the more so because one felt: "With this man it is obviously natural to be like that." In posture and movement he was as if he had formed himself thus through long discipline according to the aesthetic principles of Herbart. And yet one could entirely sympathize with all this. He then slowly sat down on the chair, cast a long glance through his spectacles over the auditorium, then slowly and precisely took off his glasses, looked once more for a long time without spectacles over the circle of auditors, and finally began to lecture, without manuscript but in carefully formed, artistically spoken sentences. There was something classic in his speech. Yet, owing to the long periods, one easily lost the thread of his discourse. He expounded Herbart's philosophy in a somewhat modified form. The close logic of his teaching impressed me. But it did not impress the other hearers. During the first three or four periods the great hall in which he lectured was full.

“Practical Philosophy” was required for the law students in the first year. They needed the signature of the professor on their cards. From the fifth or sixth lecture on, most of them stayed away; while one listened to the classical philosopher, one was in a very small group of auditors on the farthest benches.

To me these lectures afforded a powerful stimulus, and the difference between the views of Schröer and Zimmermann interested me deeply. The little time I did not spend in attendance at lectures or in tutoring I utilized either in the *Hofbibliothek*⁽⁸⁾ or the library of the Hochschule. Then for the first time I read Goethe's *Faust*. In truth, until my nineteenth year, when I was inspired by Schröer, I had never been drawn to this work. Then, however, it won a strong claim upon my interest. Schröer had already begun his lectures on the first part. It happened that after only a few of the lectures I became better acquainted with Schröer. He then often took me to his home, told me this or that in amplification of his lectures, gladly answered my questions, and sent me away with a book from his library, which he lent me to read. In addition he said many things about the second part of *Faust*, an annotated edition of which he was already preparing. This part also I read at that time.

In the library I spent my time on Herbart's metaphysics through *Zimmermann's Aesthetic als Formwissenschaft*⁽⁹⁾, which was written from Herbart's point of view. Together with this I made a thorough study of Haeckel's *Generelle Morphologie*.⁽¹⁰⁾ I may say that everything which I felt to be entering into me through the lectures of Schröer and Zimmermann, as well as the reading I have mentioned, became a matter of the deepest mental experience. Riddles of knowledge and of world conception shaped themselves within me from these things.

Schröer was a spirit who cared nothing for system. He thought and spoke out of a certain intuition. Besides, he gave the greatest possible care to the manner in which he clothed his views in language. For this reason he almost never lectured without manuscript. He needed to write things down undisturbed in order himself to give the requisite attention to the bodying forth of this thought in appropriate words. Then he read a lecture in such a way as to bring into prominence its true inner meaning. Yet once he spoke extemporaneously about Anastasius Grün and Lenau. He had forgotten his manuscript. In the next period, however, he treated the whole topic again, reading from his manuscript. He was not satisfied with the form he had been able to give to the matter extemporé.

From Schröer I learned to understand many concrete examples of beauty. Through Zimmermann there came to me a developed theory of beauty. The two did not agree well. Schröer, the intuitive personality with a certain scorn for the systematic, stood before my mind side by side with Zimmermann, the rigidly systematic theorist of beauty.

Franz Brentano, whose lectures also on “Practical Philosophy” I attended, particularly interested me through his personality. He was a keen thinker and at the same time given to reverie. In his manner of lecturing there was something ceremonious. I listened to what he said, but I had also to observe every glance, every movement of his head, every gesture of his expressive hands. He was the perfect logician. Each thought must be

absolutely complete and linked up with many other thoughts. The forms of these thought-series were determined by the most scrupulous attention to the requirements of logic. But I had the feeling that these thoughts did not come forth from the loom of his own mind; never did they penetrate into reality. And such also was the whole attitude of Brentano. He held the manuscript loosely in his hand as if at any moment it might slip from his fingers; with his glance he merely skimmed along the lines. And this was the action suited to a merely superficial touch upon reality, not for a firm grasp of it. I could understand his philosophy better from his "philosopher's hands" than from his words.

The stimulus which came from Brentano worked strongly upon me. I soon began to study his writings, and in the course of the following years read most of what he had published.

I felt in duty bound at that time to seek through philosophy for the truth. I had to study mathematics and natural science. I was convinced that I should find no relationship between these and myself unless I could place under them a solid foundation of philosophy. But I perceived a spiritual world, none the less, as a reality. In clear vision the spiritual individuality of every one revealed itself to me. This found in the physical body and in action in the physical world merely its manifestation. It united itself with that which came down as a physical germ from the parents. Dead men I followed farther on their way in the spiritual world. After the death of a schoolmate I wrote about this phase of my spiritual life to one of my former teachers, who had been a close friend of mine during my Realschule days. He wrote back to me with unusual affection; but he did not deign to say one word about what I had written regarding the dead schoolmate.

And this is what happened to me always at that time in this manner of my perception of the spiritual world. No one would pay any attention to it. From all directions persons would come with all sorts of spiritistic stuff. With this I in turn would have nothing to do. It was distasteful to me to approach the spiritual in such a way.

It then chanced that I became acquainted with a simple man of the plain people. Every week he went to Vienna by the same train that I took. He gathered medicinal plants in the country and sold them to apothecaries in Vienna. We became friends. With him it was possible to talk about the spiritual world as with one who had his own experience therein. He was a personality of inner piety. He was quite without schooling. He had read very many mystical books, but what he said was not at all influenced by this reading. It was the outflowing of a spiritual life which was marked by its own quite elementary creative wisdom. It was easy to perceive that he read these books only because he wished to find in others what he knew for himself. He revealed himself as if he, as a personality, were only the mouthpiece for a spiritual content which desired to utter itself out of hidden fountains. When one was with him one could get a glimpse deep into the secrets of nature. He carried on his back his bundle of medicinal plants; but in his heart he bore results which he had won from the spirituality of nature in the gathering of these herbs. I have seen many a man smile who now and then chanced to make a third party while I walked through the streets of Vienna with this "initiate." No wonder; for his manner of expression was not to be understood at once. One had first in a certain sense to learn his spiritual dialect. To me also it was at first unintelligible. But from our first acquaintance I

was in the deepest sympathy with him. And so I gradually came to feel as if I were in company with a soul of the most ancient times who – quite unaffected by the civilization, science, and general conceptions of the present age – brought to me an instinctive knowledge of earlier eras.

According to the usual conception of “learning,” one might say that it would be impossible to “learn” anything from this man. But, if one possessed in oneself a perception of the spiritual world, one might obtain glimpses very deep into this world through another who had a firm footing there. Moreover, anything of the nature of mere dreams was utterly foreign to this personality. When one entered his home, one was in the midst of the most sober and simplest family of country folk. Above the entrance to his home were the words: “With the blessing of God, all things are good.” One was entertained just as by other village people. I always had to drink coffee there, not from a cup, but from a **porridge bowl**⁽¹¹⁾ which held nearly a litre; with this I had to eat a piece of bread of enormous dimensions. Nor did the villagers by any means look upon the man as a dreamer. There was no occasion for jesting at his behaviour in his village. Besides, he possessed a sound, wholesome humour, and knew how to chat, whenever he met with young or old of the village folk, in such fashion that the people liked to hear him talk. There was no one who smiled like those persons that watched him and me going together through the streets of Vienna, and these persons simply perceived in him some thing quite foreign to themselves.

This man always continued to be, even after life had taken me again far away from him, very close to me in soul. He appears in my mystery plays in the person of Felix Balde.

It was no light matter for my mental life at that time that the philosophy which I learned from others could not in its thought be carried all the way to the perception of the spiritual world. Because of the difficulty that I experienced in this respect, I began to fashion a form of “theory of knowledge” within myself. The life of thought in men came gradually to seem to me the reflection radiated into physical man from that which I experienced in the spiritual world. Thought experience was to me the thing itself with a reality into which – as something actually experienced through and through – doubt could find no entrance. The world of the senses did not seem to me so completely a matter of experience. It is there; but one does not lay hold upon it as upon thought. In it or behind it there might be an unknown reality concealed. Yet man himself is set in the midst of this world. Therefore, the question arises: Is this world, then, a reality complete in itself? When man from within weaves into this world of the senses the thoughts which bring light into this world, does he then bring into this world something foreign to it? This does not accord at all with the experience that man has when the world of the senses stands before him and he breaks into it by means of his thought. Thought then appears to be that by means of which the world of the senses expresses its own nature. The further development of this reflection was at that time a weighty part of my inner life.

But I wished to be prudent. To follow a course of thought too hastily to the extent of building up a philosophical view of one's own appeared to me a risky thing. This drove me to a thorough-going study of Hegel. The manner in which this philosopher set forth

the reality of thought was distressing to me. That he made his way through only to a thought world, even though a living thought-world, and not to the perception of a world of concrete spirit – this repelled me. The assurance with which one philosophizes when one advances from thought to thought drew me on. I saw that many persons felt there was a difference between experience and thought. To me thought itself was experience, but of such a nature that one lived in it, not such that it entered from without into men. And so for a long time Hegel was very helpful to me.

As to my required studies, which in the midst of these philosophical interests had naturally to be cramped for time, it was fortunate for me that I had already occupied myself a great deal with differential and integral calculus and with analytical geometry. Because of this I could remain away from many lectures in mathematics without losing my connection. Mathematics was very important for me as the foundation under all my strivings after knowledge. In mathematics there is afforded a system of percepts and concepts which have been reached independently of any external sense impressions. And yet, said I to myself constantly at that time, one carries over these perceptions and concepts into sense-reality and discovers its laws. Through mathematics one learns to understand the world, and yet in order to do this one must first evoke mathematics out of the human mind.

A decisive experience came to me just at that time from the side of mathematics. The conception of space gave me the greatest inner difficulty. As the illimitable, all-encompassing vacuity – the form in which it lay at the basis of the dominant theories of natural science – it could not be conceived in any definite manner. Through the more recent (synthetic) geometry, which I learned by means of lectures and in private study, there came into my mind the perception that a line which should be prolonged endlessly toward the right hand would return again from the left to its starting-point. The infinitely distant point on the right is the same as the point infinitely distant on the left.

It came over me that by means of such conceptions of the newer geometry one might form a conception of space, which otherwise remained fixed in vacuity. The straight line returning upon itself like a circle seemed to be a revelation. I left the lecture at which this had first passed before my mind as if a great load had fallen from me. A feeling of liberation came over me. Again, as in my early boyhood, something satisfying had come to me out of geometry.

Behind the riddle of space stood at that period of my life the riddle of time. Might a conception be possible here also which would contain within itself in idea a return out of the past by way of an advance into the infinitely distant future? My happiness over the space conception caused a profound unrest over that of time. But there was then visible no way out. All efforts of thought led only to the realization that I must beware especially of applying the clear conception of space to the problem of time. All clarification which the striving for understanding could bring was frustrated by the riddle of time. The stimulus which I had received from Zimmermann toward the study of aesthetics led me to read the writings of the famous specialist in aesthetics of that time, Friedrich Theodor Vischer. I found in a passage of his work a reference to the fact that more recent scientific

thought rendered necessary a change in the conception of time. There was always a sense of joy aroused in me when I found in others the recognition of any cognitional need which I had conceived. In this case it was like a confirmation in my struggle toward a satisfying concept of time.

The lectures for which I was enrolled in the Technische Hochschule I always had to finish with a corresponding examination. For a scholarship had been granted me, and I could draw my allowance only when I showed each year the results of my studies. But my need for understanding, especially in the sphere of natural science, was but little aided by these required studies. It was possible then, however, in the technical institutes of Vienna both to attend lectures as a visitor and also to carry on practical courses. I found everywhere those who met me half-way when I sought thus to foster my scientific life, even so far as to the study of medicine.

I may state positively that I never allowed my insight into the spiritual world to become a disturbing factor when I was engaged in the endeavour to understand science as it was then developed. I applied myself to what was taught, and only in the background of my thought did I have the hope that some day the blending of natural science with the knowledge of the spirit would be granted me.

Only from two sides was I disturbed in this hope.

The sciences of organic nature were then – wherever I could lay hold of them – steeped in Darwinian ideas. To me Darwinism appeared in its leading ideas as scientifically impossible. I had little by little reached the stage of forming for myself a conception of the inner man. This was of a spiritual sort. And this inner man I thought of as a member of the spiritual world. He was conceived as dipping down out of the spiritual world into nature, uniting with the organism of nature in order thereby to perceive and to act in the world of the senses.

The fact that I felt a certain respect for the course of thought characterizing the evolutionary theory of organisms did not render it possible for me to sacrifice anything from the conception. The derivation of higher out of lower organisms seemed to me a fruitful idea, but the identification of this idea with that which I knew as the spiritual world appeared to me immeasurably difficult.

The studies in physics were penetrated throughout by the mechanical theory of heat and the wave theory of the phenomena of light and colour.

The study of the mechanical theory of heat had taken on for me the charm of a personal colouring because in this field of physics I attended lectures by a personality for whom I felt quite extraordinary respect. This was Edmund Reitlinger, the author of that beautiful book, *Freie Blicke*.⁽¹²⁾

This man was of the most captivating loveliness. When I became his student, he was already very seriously ill with tuberculosis. For two years I attended his lectures on the

theory of heat, physics for chemists, and the history of physics. I worked under him in the physics laboratory in many fields, especially in that of spectrum-analysis.

Of special importance for me were Reitlinger's lectures on the history of physics. He spoke in such a way that one felt that, on account of his illness, every word was a burden to him. And yet his lectures were in the best possible sense inspiring. He was a man of a strongly inductive method of research. For all methods in physics he liked to cite the book of Whewell on inductive science. Newton marked for him the climax of research in physics. The history of physics he set forth in two parts: the first from the earliest times to Newton; the second from Newton to recent times. He was an universal thinker. From the historical consideration of problems in physics he always passed over to the perspective of the general history of culture. Indeed, quite general philosophic ideas would appear in his discussions of physics. In this way he treated the problems of optimism and pessimism, and spoke most impressively about the legitimacy of setting up scientific hypotheses. His exposition of Kepler, his characterization of Julius Robert Mayers, were masterpieces of scientific discussion.

I was then stimulated to read almost all the writings of Julius Robert Mayers, and I was able to experience the truly great pleasure of talking face to face with Reitlinger about the content of these.

I was filled with a deep sorrow when, only a few weeks after I had passed my final examination on the mechanical theory of heat under Reitlinger, my beloved teacher succumbed to his grievous illness. Just a short while before his death he had given me as his legacy a testimonial of personal qualifications which would enable me to secure pupils for private tutoring. This had most fortunate results. No small part of what came to me in the following years as means of livelihood I owed to Reitlinger after his death.

Through the mechanical theory of heat and the wave theory of light and of electric phenomena, I was impelled to a study of theories of cognition. At that time the external physical world was conceived as motion-events in matter. The sensations appeared to be only subjective experiences, as the effects of pure motion-events upon the senses of men. Out there in space occurred the motion-events in matter; if these events affected the human heat-sense, man experienced the sensation of heat. There are outside of man wave-events in the ether; if these affect the optic nerve, light and colour sensations are generated within man.

These conceptions met me everywhere. They caused me unspeakable difficulties in my thinking. They banished all spirit from the objective external world. Before my mind there stood the idea that even if the observations of natural phenomena led to such opinions, one who possessed a perception of the spiritual world could not arrive at these opinions. I saw how seductive these assumptions were for the manner of thought of that time, educated in the natural sciences, and yet I could not then resolve to oppose a manner of thought of my own against that which then prevailed. But just this caused me bitter mental struggles. Again and again must the criticism I could easily frame against

this manner of thinking be suppressed within me to await the time in which more comprehensive sources and ways of knowledge should give me a greater assurance.

I was deeply stirred by the reading of Schiller's letters concerning the aesthetic education of man. His statement that human consciousness oscillates, as it were, back and forth between different states, afforded me a connection with the notion that I had formed of the inner working and weaving of the human soul. Schiller distinguished two states of consciousness in which man evolves his relationship to the world. When he surrenders himself to that which affects him through the senses, he lives under the compulsion of nature. The sensations and impulses determine his life. If he subjects himself to the logical laws and principles of reason then he is living under a rational compulsion. But he can evolve an intermediate state of consciousness. He can develop the "aesthetic mood," which is not given over either on the one side to the compulsion of nature, or on the other to the necessities of the reason. In this aesthetic mood the soul lives through the senses; but into the sense-perception and into the action set on foot by sense-stimuli the soul brings over something spiritual. One perceives through the senses, but as if the spiritual had streamed over into the senses. In action one surrenders oneself to the gratification of the present desire; but one has so ennobled this desire that to him the good is pleasing and the evil displeasing. Reason has then entered into union with the sensible. The good becomes an instinct; instinct can safely direct itself, for it has taken on the character of the spiritual. Schiller sees in this state of consciousness that condition of the soul in which man can experience and produce works of beauty. In the evolution of this state he sees the coming to life in men of the true human being.

These thoughts of Schiller's were to me very attractive. They implied that man must first have his consciousness in a certain condition before he can attain to a relationship to the phenomena of the world corresponding to man's own being. Something was here given to me which brought to greater clarity the questions which presented themselves before me out of my observation of nature and my spiritual experience. Schiller spoke of the state of consciousness which must be present in order that one may experience the beauty of the world. Might one not also think of a state of consciousness which would mediate to us the truth in the beings of things? If this is granted, then one must not, after the fashion of Kant, observe the present state of human consciousness and investigate whether this can enter into the true beings of things. But one must first seek to discover the state of consciousness through which man places himself in such a relationship to the world that things and facts reveal their being to him.

And I believed that I knew that such a state of consciousness is reached up to a certain degree when man not only has thoughts which conceive external things and events, but *such thoughts that he himself experiences them as thoughts*. This living in thoughts revealed itself to me as quite different from that in which man ordinarily exists and also carries on ordinary scientific research. If one penetrates deeper and deeper into thought-life, one finds that spiritual reality comes to meet this thought life. One then takes the path of the soul into the spirit. But on this inner way of the soul one arrives at a spiritual reality which one also finds again within nature. One gains a deeper knowledge of nature when one then faces nature after having in living thoughts beheld the reality of the spirit.

It became clearer and clearer to me how, through going forward beyond the customary abstract thoughts to these spiritual perceptions – which, however, the calmness and luminousness of the thought serve to confirm – man lives himself into a reality from which customary consciousness bars him out. This customary state has on one side the living quality of the sense-perception; on the other the abstractness of thought-conceiving. The spiritual vision perceives spirit as the senses perceive nature; but it does not stand apart in thought from the spiritual perception as the customary state of consciousness stands in its thoughts apart from the sense-perceptions. Spiritual vision thinks while it experiences spirit, and experiences while it sets to thinking the awakened spirituality of man.

A spiritual perception formed itself before my mind which did not rest upon dark mystical feeling. It proceeded much more in a spiritual activity which in its thoroughness might be compared with mathematical thinking. I was approaching the state of soul in which I felt that I might consider that the perception of the spiritual world which I bore within me was confirmed before the forum of natural scientific thought.

When these experiences passed through my mind I was in my twenty-second year.

Notes:

1. Theory of Science.
2. The Vocation of the Scholar.
3. The Nature of the Scholar.
4. Addresses to the German Nation.
5. Prolegomena to all Future Metaphysics
6. Transcendental Synthesism.
7. Destiny of Man.
8. The Public Library.
9. Aesthetics as the Science of Form.
10. General Morphology.
11. Höferl.
12. Open Vistas

The Story of My Life

IV

FOR the form of the experience of spirit which I then desired to establish upon a firm foundation within me, music came to have a critical significance. At that time there was proceeding in the most intense fashion in the spiritual environment in which I lived the “strife over Wagner.” During my boyhood and youth I had seized every opportunity to improve my knowledge of music. The attitude I held toward thinking required this by

implication. For me, thought had content in itself. It possessed this not merely through the percept which it expressed. This, however, obviously led over into the experience of pure musical tone-forms as such. The world of tone in itself was to me the revelation of an essential side of reality. That music should “express” something else besides the tone-form, as was then maintained in every possible way by the followers of Wagner, seemed to me utterly “unmusical.”

I was always of a social disposition. Because of this I had even in my school-days at Wiener-Neustadt, and then again in Vienna, formed many friendships. In opinions I seldom agreed with these friends. This, however, did not mean at all that there was not an inwardness and mutual stimulus in these friendships. One of these was with a young man pre-eminently idealistic. With his blond hair and frank blue eyes he was the very type of a young German. He was then quite absorbed in Wagnerism. Music that lived in itself, that would weave itself in tones alone, was to him a cast-off world of horrible Philistines. What revealed itself in the tones as in a kind of speech – that for him gave the tone-forms their value. We attended together many concerts and many operas. We always held opposite views. My limbs grew as heavy as lead when “oppressive music” inflamed him to ecstasy; and he was horribly bored by music which did not pretend to be anything else but music.

The debates with this friend stretched out endlessly. In long walks together, in long sessions over our cups of coffee, he drew out his “proofs” expressed in animated fashion, that only with Wagner had true music been born, and that everything which had gone before was only a preparation for this “discoverer of music.” This led me to assert my own opinions in drastic fashion. I spoke of the barbarism of Wagner, the graveyard of all understanding of music.

On special occasions the argument grew particularly animated. At one time my friend very noticeably formed the habit of directing our almost daily walk to a narrow little street, and passing up and down it many times discussing Wagner. I was so absorbed in our argument that only gradually did it dawn upon me how he had got this bent. At the window of one of the little houses on the narrow alley there sat at the time of our walk a charming girl. There was no relationship between him and the girl except that he saw her sitting at the window almost every day, and at times was aware that a glance she let fall on the street was meant for him.

At first I only noticed that his championship of Wagner – which in any case was fierce enough – was fanned to a brilliant flame in this little alley. And when I became aware of what a current flowed from that vicinity into his inspired heart, he grew confidential in this matter also, and I came to share in the tenderest, most beautiful, most passionate young love. The relation between the two never went much beyond what I have described. My friend, who came of people not blessed with worldly goods, had soon after to take a petty journalistic job in a provincial city. He could not think of any nearer tie with the girl. But neither was he strong enough to overcome the existing relationship. I kept up a correspondence with him for a long time. A melancholy note of resignation

marked his letters. That from which he had been forced to cut himself off was still living and strong in his heart.

Long after life had brought to an end my correspondence with this friend of my youth, I chanced to meet a person from the same city in which he had found a place as a journalist. I had always been fond of him, and I asked about him. This person said to me: "Yes, things turned out very badly for him; he could scarcely earn his bread. Finally he became a writer in my employ, and then he died of tuberculosis." This news stabbed me to the heart, for I knew that once the idealistic, fair-haired youth, under the compulsion of circumstances, had in his own feelings severed his relation with his young love, then it made no difference to him what life might further bring to him. He considered it of no value to lay the basis for a life which could not be that one which had floated before him as an ideal during our walks in that little street.

In intercourse with this friend my anti-Wagnerism of that period came to realization in even more positive form. But, apart from this, it played any way a great rôle in my mental life at that time. I strove in all directions to find my way into, music which had nothing to do with Wagnerism. My love for "pure music" increased with the passage of years; my horror at the "barbarism" of "music as expression" continued to increase. And in this matter it was my lot to get into a human environment in which there were scarcely any other persons than admirers of Wagner. This all contributed much toward the fact that only much later did I grudgingly fight my way to an understanding of Wagner, the obviously human attitude toward so significant a cultural phenomenon. This struggle, however, belongs to a later period of my life. In the period I am now describing, a performance of *Tristan*, for example, to which I had to accompany one of my pupils, was to me "mortally boring."

To this time belongs still another youthful friendship very significant for me. This was with a young man who was in every way the opposite of the fair-haired youth. He felt that he was a poet. With him, too, I spent a great deal of time in stimulating talk. He was very sensitive to everything poetic. At an early age he undertook important productions. When we became acquainted, he had already written a tragedy, *Hannibal*, and much lyric verse.

I was with both these friends in the "practice in oral and written lectures" which Schröer conducted in the Hochschule. From this course we three, and many others, received the greatest inspiration. We young people could discuss what we had arrived at in our minds and Schröer talked over everything with us and elevated our souls by his dominant idealism and his noble capacity for imparting inspiration.

My friend often accompanied me when I had the privilege of visiting Schröer. There he always grew animated, whereas elsewhere a note of burden was manifest in his life. Because of a certain discord he was not ready to face life. No calling was so attractive to him that he would gladly have entered upon it. He was altogether taken up with his poetic interest, and apart from this he found no satisfying relation with existence. At last he had to take a position quite unattractive to him. With him also I continued my connection by

means of letters. The fact that even in his poetry he could not find real satisfaction preyed upon his spirit. Life for him was not filled with anything possessing worth. I had to observe to my sorrow, how little by little in his letters and also in his conversation the belief grew upon him that he was suffering from an incurable disease. Nothing sufficed to dispel this groundless obsession. So one day I had to receive the distressing news that the young man who was very near to me had made an end of himself.

A real inward friendship I formed at this time also with a young man who had come from the German Transylvania to the Vienna Hochschule. Him also I had first met in Schröder's seminar periods. There he had read a paper on pessimism. Everything which Schopenhauer had presented in favour of this conception of life was revived in that paper.

In addition there was the personal, pessimistic temperament of the young man himself. I determined to oppose his views. I refuted pessimism with veritable words of thunder, even calling Schopenhauer narrow-minded, and wound up my exposition with the sentence: "If the gentleman who read the paper were correct in his position with respect to pessimism, then I had rather be the wooden board on which my feet now tread than be a man." These words were for a long time repeated jestingly about me among my acquaintances. But they made of the young pessimist and me inwardly united friends. We now passed much time together. He also felt himself to be a poet, and many a time I sat for hours in his room and listened with pleasure to the reading of his poems. In my spiritual strivings of that time he also showed a warm interest, although he was moved to this less by the thing itself with which I was concerned than by his personal affection for me. He was bound up with many a delightful friendship, and also youthful love affairs. As a means of living he had to carry a truly heavy burden. At Hermannstadt he had gone through the school as a poor boy and even then had to make his living by tutoring. He then conceived the clever idea of continuing to instruct by correspondence from Vienna the pupils he had gained at Hermannstadt. The sciences in the Hochschule interested him very little. One day, however, he wished to pass an examination in chemistry. He had never attended a lecture or opened a single one of the required books. On the last night before the examination he had a friend read to him a digest of the whole subject-matter. He finally fell asleep over this. Yet he went with this friend to the examination. Both made "brilliant" failures.

This young man had boundless faith in me. For a long time he treated me almost as his father-confessor. He opened up to my view an interesting, often melancholy, life sensitive to all that is beautiful. He gave to me so much friendship and love that it was really hard at times not to cause him bitter disappointment. This happened especially because he often felt that I did not show him enough attention. And yet this could not be otherwise when I had so many varieties of interests for which I found in him no real understanding.

All this, however, only contributed to make the friendship a more inward relationship. He spent his summer vacation at Hermannstadt. There he sought for students in order to tutor them by correspondence the following year from Vienna. I always received long letters at these times from him. He was grieved because I seldom or never answered these. But,

when he returned to Vienna in the autumn, he hurried to me like a boy, and the united life began again. I owed it to him at that time that I was able to mingle with many men. He liked to take me to meet all the people with whom he associated. And I was eager for companionship. This friend brought into my life much that gave me happiness and warmth. Our friendship remained the same till my friend died a few years ago. It stood the test of many storms of life, and I shall still have much to say of it.

In retrospective consciousness much comes to mind of human and vital relationships which still continues to-day fully present in my mind, united with feelings of love and gratitude. Here I cannot relate all this in detail, but must leave quite unmentioned much which was indeed very near to me in my personal experience, and is near even now.

My youthful friendships in the time of which I am here speaking had in the further course of my life a special import. They forced me into a sort of double mental life. The struggle with the riddle of cognition, which then filled my mind more than all else, aroused in my friends always, to be sure, a strong interest, but very little active participation. In the experience of this riddle I was always rather lonely. On the other hand, I myself shared completely in whatever arose in the existence of my friends. Thus there flowed along in me two parallel currents of life: one which I as a lone wanderer followed, the other which I shared in vital companionship with men bound to me by ties of affection. But this twofold life was on many occasions of profound and lasting significance for my development.

In this connection I must mention especially a friend who had already been a schoolmate of mine at Wiener-Neustadt. During that time, however, we were far apart. First in Vienna, where he visited me often and where he later lived as an employee, he came very close to me. And yet even at Wiener-Neustadt, without any external relationship between us, he had already had a significance for my life. Once I was with him in a gymnasium period. While he was exercising and I had nothing to do, he left a book lying by me. It was Heine's book on the romantic school and the history of philosophy in Germany. I glanced into it. The result of this was that I read the whole book. I found many stimulating things in the book, but was vitally opposed to the manner in which Heine treated the content of life which was dear to me. In this perception of a way of thought and order of feeling which were utterly opposed to those shaping themselves in me, I received a powerful stimulus toward a self-consciousness in the orientation of the inner life which was a necessity of my very nature. I then talked with my schoolmate in opposition to the book. Through this the inner life of his soul came to the fore, which later led to the establishing of a lasting friendship. He was an uncommunicative man who confided very little. Most people thought him an odd character. With those few in whom he was willing to confide he became quite expressive, especially in letters. He considered himself called by his inner nature to be a poet. He was of the opinion that he bore a great treasure in his soul. Besides, he was inclined to imagine that he was in intimate relation with other persons, especially women, rather than actually to form these ties into objective fact. At times he was close to such a relation, but he could not bring it to actual experience. In conversation with me he would then live through his fancies with the same

inwardness and enthusiasm as if they were actual. Therefore it was inevitable that he experienced bitter emotions when the dreams always went amiss.

This produced in him a mental life that had not the slightest relation to his outward existence. And this life again was to him the subject of tormenting reflections about himself, which were mirrored for me in many letters and conversations. Thus he once wrote me a long exposition of the way in which the least or the greatest experience became to him a symbol and how he lived in such symbols.

I loved this friend, and in my love for him I entered into his dreams, although I always had the feeling when with him: "We are moving about in the clouds and have no ground under our feet!" For me, who ceaselessly busied myself to find firm support for life just there – in knowledge – this was an unique experience. I always had to slip outside of my own being and leap across into another skin, as it were, when I was in company with this friend. He liked to share his life with me; at times he even set forth extensive theoretical reflections concerning the "difference between our two natures." He was quite unaware how little our thoughts harmonized, because his friendly sentiments led him on in all his thinking.

The case was similar in my relation with another Wiener-Neustadt schoolmate. He belonged to the next lower class in the Realschule, and we first came together when he entered the Hochschule in Vienna a year after me. Then, however, we were often together. He also entered but little into that which concerned me so inwardly, the problem of cognition. He studied chemistry. The natural scientific opinions in which he was then involved prevented him from showing himself in any other light than as a sceptic concerning the spiritual conceptions with which I was filled. Later on in life I found in the case of this friend how close to my state of mind he then stood in his innermost being; but at that time he never allowed this innermost being to show itself. Thus our lively and long arguments became for me a "battle against materialism." He always opposed to my avowal of the spiritual substance of the world all the contradictory results which seemed to him to be given by natural science. Then I always had to array everything I possessed by way of insight in order to drive from the field his arguments, drawn from the materialistic orientation of his thought, against the knowledge of a spiritual world.

Once we were arguing the question with great zeal. Every day after attending the lectures in Vienna my friend went back to his home, which was still at Wiener-Neustadt. I often accompanied him through the streets of Vienna to the station of the Southern Railway. One day we reached a sort of climax in the argument over materialism after we had already arrived at the station and the train was almost due. Then I put together what I still had to say in the following words: "So, then, you maintain that, when you say 'I think,' this is merely the necessary effect of the occurrences in your brain-nerve system. Only these occurrences are a reality. So it is, likewise, When you say 'I am this or that,' 'I go,' and so forth. But observe this. You do not say, 'My brain thinks,' 'My brain sees this or that,' 'My brain goes.' If, however, you have really come to the opinion that what you theoretically maintain is actually true, you must correct your form of expression. When you continue to speak of 'I,' you are really lying. But you cannot do otherwise than

follow your sound instinct against the suggestion of your theory. Experience offers you a different group of facts from that which your theory makes up. Your consciousness calls your theory a lie.” My friend shook his head. He had no time to reply. As I went back alone, I could not but think that opposing materialism in this crude fashion did not correspond with a particularly exact philosophy. But it did not then really concern me so much to furnish, five minutes before the train left, a philosophically convincing proof as to give expression to my certitude from inner experience of the reality of the human ego. To me this ego was an inwardly observable experience of a reality present in itself. This reality seemed to me no less certain than any known to materialism. But in it there is absolutely nothing material.

This thorough-going perception of the reality and the spirituality of the ego has in the succeeding years helped me to overcome every temptation to materialism. I have always known “the ego is unshakable.” And it has been clear to me that no one really knows the ego who considers it as a form of phenomenon, as a result of other events. The fact that I possessed this perception inwardly and spiritually was what I wished to get my friend to understand. We fought together many times thereafter on this battlefield. But in general conceptions of life we had so many similar sentiments that the earnestness of our theoretical battling never resulted in the least disturbance of our personal relationship. During this time I got deeper into the student life in Vienna. I became a member of the “German Reading Club” in the Hochschule. In the assembly and in smaller gatherings the political and cultural phenomena of the time were thoroughly discussed. These discussions brought out all possible – and impossible – points of view, such as young people hold. Especially when officers were to be elected, opinions clashed against one another quite violently. Very exciting and stimulating was much that there found expression among the youth in connection with the events in the public life of Austria. It was the time when national parties were becoming more and more sharply defined. Everything which led later more and more to the disruption of the Empire, which appeared in its results after the World War, could then be experienced in germ.

I was first chosen librarian of the reading-room. As such I found out all possible authors who had written books that I thought would be of value to the student library. To such authors I wrote “begging letters.” I often wrote in a single week a hundred such letters. Through this “work” of mine the library was very soon much enlarged. But the thing had a secondary effect for me. Through the work it was possible for me to become acquainted in a comprehensive fashion with the scientific, artistic, culture-historical, political literature of the time. I was an eager reader of the books given.

Later I was chosen president of the Reading Club. This, however, was to me a burdensome office. For I faced a great number of the most diverse party view-points and saw in all of these their relative justification. Yet the adherents of the various parties would come to me. Each would seek to persuade me that his party alone was right. At the time when I was elected every party had favoured me. For until then they had only heard how in the assemblies I had taken the part of justice. After I had been president for a half-year, all turned against me. In that time they had found that I could not decide as positively for any party as that party wished.

My craving for companionship found great satisfaction in the reading-room. And an interest was awakened in a broader field of the public life through its reflection in the occurrences in the common life of the students. In this way I came to be present at very interesting parliamentary debates, sitting in the gallery of the House of Delegates or of the Senate.

Apart from the bills under discussion – which often affected life profoundly – I was especially interested in the personalities of the House of Delegates. There stood every year at the end of his bench, as the chief budget expositor, the keen philosopher, Bartolemäus Carneri. His words were a hailstorm of accusations against the Taaffe Ministry; they were a defence of Germanism in Austria. There stood Ernst von Plener, the dry speaker, the unexcelled authority in matters of finance. One was chilled while he criticized the statement of the Minister of Finance, Dunajewski, with the coldness of an accountant. There the Ruthenian Thomeszuck thundered against the politics of nationalities. One had the feeling that upon his discovery of an especially well-coined word for that moment depended the fostering of antipathy against the Minister. There argued, in peasant-theatrical fashion, always intelligently, the clerical Lienbacher. His head, bowed over a little, caused what he said to seem like the outflow of clarified perceptions. There argued in his cutting style the Young Czech Gregor. One felt in him a half-demagogue. There stood Rieger of the Old Czechs, altogether with the deeply characteristic sentiment of the organized Czechs as they had been built up during a long period and had come to self consciousness during the second half of the nineteenth century – a man seldom shut up to himself, a powerful mind and a steadfast will. There spoke on the right side of the Chamber in the midst of the Polish seats Otto Hausner – often only setting forth the results of reading spiritually rich; often sending well-aimed shafts to all sides of the House with a certain sense of satisfaction in himself. A thoroughly self-satisfied but intelligent eye sparkled behind a monocle; the other always seemed to say “Yes” to the sparkle. A speaker who, however, even then often spoke prophetic words as to the future of Austria. One ought to-day to read again what he then said; one would be amazed at the keenness of his vision. One then laughed, to be sure, over much which years later became bitter earnest.

The Story of My Life

V

I COULD not at that time bring myself to reflections concerning public life in Austria which might have taken a deeper hold in any way whatever upon my mind. I merely continued to observe the extraordinarily complicated relationships involved. Expressions which won my deeper interest I could find only in connection with Karl Julius Schröer. I had the pleasure of being with him often just at this time. His own fate was closely bound up with that of German Austria-Hungary. He was the son of Tobias Schröer, who conducted a German school in Presburg and wrote dramas as well as books on historical

and aesthetic subjects. The last appeared under the name *Christian Oeser*, and they were favourite text-books. The poetic writings of Tobias Gottfried Schröer, although they are doubtless significant and received marked recognition within restricted circles, did not become widely known. The sentiment that breathes through them was opposed to the dominant political current in Hungary. They had to be published in part without the author's name in German regions outside of Hungary. Had the tendencies of the author's mind been known in Hungary, he would have risked, not only dismissal from his post, but also severe punishment.

Karl Julius Schröer thus experienced the impulse toward Germanism even as a young man in his own home. Under this impulse he developed his intimate devotion to the German nature and German literature as well as a great devotion to everything belonging to Goethe or concerning him. The history of German poetry by Gervinus had a profound influence upon him. He went in the fortieth year of the nineteenth century to Germany to pursue his studies in the German language and literature at the universities of Leipzig, Halle, and Berlin. After his return he was occupied in teaching German literature in his father's school, and in conducting a Seminar. He now became acquainted with the Christmas folk-plays which were enacted every year by the German colonists in the region of Presburg. There he was face to face with Germanism in a form profoundly congenial to him. The roving Germans who had come from the west into Hungary hundreds of years before had brought with them these plays of the old home, and continued to perform them as they had done at the Christmas festival in regions which no doubt lay in the neighbourhood of the Rhine. The Paradise story, the birth of Christ, the coming of the three kings were alive in popular form in these plays. Schröer then published them, as he heard them, or as he read them in old manuscripts that he was able to see at peasants' homes, using the title *Deutsche Weihnachtspiele aus Ungarn*.⁽¹⁾

The delightful experience of living in the German folk life took an even stronger hold upon Schröer's mind. He made journeys in order to study German dialects in the most widely separated parts of Austria. Wherever the German folk was scattered in the Slavic, Magyar, or Italian geographical regions, he wished to learn their individuality. Thus came into being his glossary and grammar of the Zipser dialect, which was native to the south of the Carpathians; of the Gottschze dialect, which survived with a little fragment of German folk in Krain; the language of the Heanzen, which was spoken in western Hungary.

For Schröer these studies were never merely a scientific task. He lived with his whole soul in the revelation of the folk-life, and wished by word and writing to bring its nature to the consciousness of those men who have been uprooted from it by life. He was then a professor in Budapest. There he could not feel at home in the presence of the prevailing current of thought; so he removed to Vienna, where at first he was entrusted with the direction of the evangelical schools, and where he later became a professor of the German language and literature. When he already occupied this position, I had the privilege of knowing him and of becoming intimate with him. At the time when this occurred, his whole sentiment and life were directed toward Goethe. He was engaged in

editing the second part of *Faust*, and writing an introduction for this, and had already published the first part.

When I went to call at Schröer's little library, which was also his work-room, I felt that I was in a spiritual atmosphere in the highest degree beneficial to my mental life. I understood at once why Schröer was maligned by those who accepted the prevailing literary-historical methods on account of his writings, and especially on account of his *Geschichte der Deutschen Dichtung im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*.⁽²⁾ He did not write at all like the members of the Scherer school, who treated literary phenomena after the fashion of investigators in natural science. He had certain sentiments and ideas concerning literary phenomena, and he spoke these out in frank, manly fashion without turning his eyes much at the moment of writing to the "sources." It had even been said that he had written his exposition "from the wrist out."

This interested me very little. I experienced a spiritual warmth when I was with him. I could sit by his side for hours. Out of his inspired heart the Christmas plays lived on his lips, the spirit of the German dialect, the course of the life of literature. The relation between dialect and cultured speech became perceptible to me in a practical way. I experienced a real joy when he spoke to me, as he had already done in his lectures, of the poet of the Lower Austrian dialect, Joseph Misson, who wrote the splendid poem, *Da Naaz, a niederösterreichischer Bauernbua, geht ind Fremd*.⁽³⁾ Schröer then constantly gave me books from his library in which I could pursue further what was the content of this conversation. I always had, in truth, when I sat there alone with Schröer, the feeling that still another was present – Goethe's spirit. For Schröer lived so strongly in the spirit and the work of Goethe that in every sentiment or idea which entered his soul he feelingly asked the question, "Would Goethe have felt or thought thus?"

I listened in a spiritual sense with the greatest possible sympathy to everything that came from Schröer. Yet I could not do otherwise even in his presence than build up independently in my own mind that toward which I was striving in my innermost spirit. Schröer was an idealist, and the world of ideas as such was for him that which worked as a propulsive force in the creation of nature and of man. I then found it indeed difficult to express in words for myself the difference between Schröer's way of thinking and mine. He spoke of ideas as the propelling forces in history. He felt life in the idea itself. For me the life of the spirit was behind the ideas, and these were only the phenomena of that life in the human soul. I could then find no other terms for my way of thinking than "objective idealism." I wished thereby to denote that for me the reality is not in the idea; that the idea appears in man as the subject, but that just as colour appears on a physical object, so the idea appears on the spiritual object, and that the human mind – the subject – perceives it there as the eye perceives colour on a living being.

My conception, however, Schröer very largely satisfied in the form of expression he used when we talked about that which reveals itself as "folk-soul." He spoke of this as of a real spiritual being which lives in the group of individual men who belong to a folk. In this matter his words took on a character which did not pertain merely to the designation of an idea abstractly held. And thus we both observed the texture of ancient Austria and the

individualities of the several folk-souls active in Austria. From this side it was possible for me to conceive thoughts concerning the state of public life which penetrated more deeply into my mind.

Thus my experience at that time was strongly bound up with my relationship to Karl Julius Schröer. What, however, were more remote from him, and in which I strove most of all for an inner explanation, were the natural sciences. I wished to know that my “objective idealism” was in harmony with the knowledge of nature.

It was during the period of my most earnest intercourse with Schröer that the question of the relation between the spiritual and natural worlds came before my mind in a new form. This happened at first quite independently of Goethe's way of thought concerning the natural sciences. For even Schröer could tell me nothing distinctive concerning this realm of Goethe's creative work. He was happy whenever he found in one or another natural scientist a generous recognition of Goethe's observations concerning the beings of plants and animals. As regards Goethe's theory of colour, however, he was met on all sides by natural scientific conceptions utterly opposed. So in this direction he developed no special opinion.

My relationship to natural science was not at this time of my life influenced from this side, in spite of the fact that in my intercourse with Schröer I came into close touch with Goethe's spiritual life. It was determined much more by the difficulties I experienced when I had to think out the facts of optics in the sense of the physicist.

I found that light and sound were thought of in an analogy which is invalid. The expressions “sound in general” and “light in general” were used. The analogy lay in the following: The individual tones and sounds were viewed as specially modified air-vibrations; and objective sound, outside of the human perception, was viewed as a state of vibration of the air. Light was thought of similarly. That which occurs outside of man when he has a perception by means of phenomena caused by light was defined as vibration in ether. The colours, then, are especially formed ether-vibrations. These analogies became at that time an actual torment to my inner life. For I believed myself perfectly clear in the perception that the concept “sound” is merely an abstract union of the individual occurrences in the sphere of sound; whereas “light” signifies a concrete thing over against the phenomena in the sphere of illumination. “Sound” was for me a composite abstract concept; “light” a concrete reality. I said to myself that light is really not perceived by the senses; “colours” are perceived by means of light, which manifests itself everywhere in the perception of colours but is not itself sensibly perceived. “White” light is not light, but that also is a colour. Thus for me light became a reality in the sense-world, yet in itself not perceptible to the senses. Now there came before my mind the conflict between nominalism and realism as this was developed within scholasticism. The realists maintained that concepts were realities which lived in things and were simply reproduced out of these by human understanding. The nominalists maintained, on the contrary, that concepts were merely names formed by man which include together a complex of what is in the things, but names which have no existence themselves. It now

seemed to me that the sound experience must be viewed in the nominalist manner and the experiences which proceed from light in the realist manner.

I carried this orientation into the optics of the physicist. I had to reject much in this science. Then I arrived at perceptions which gave me a way to Goethe's colour theory.

On this side the door opened before me through which to approach Goethe's writings on natural science. I first took to Schröer brief treatises I had written on the basis of my views in the field of natural science. He could make but little of them; for they were not yet worked out on the basis of Goethe's way of thinking, but I had merely attached at the end this remark: "When men come to the point of thinking about nature as I have here set forth, then only will Goethe's researches in science be confirmed." Schröer felt an inner pleasure when I made such a statement, but beyond this nothing then came of the matter. The situation in which I then found myself comes out in the following: Schröer related to me one day that he had spoken with a colleague who was a physicist. But, said the man, Goethe opposed himself to Newton, and Newton was "such a genius"; to which Schröer replied: But Goethe "also was a genius." Thus again I felt that I had a riddle to solve with which I struggled entirely alone.

In the views at which I had arrived in the physics of optics there seemed to me to be a bridge between what is revealed to insight into the spiritual world and that which comes out of researches in the natural sciences. I felt then a need to prove to sense experience, by means of certain experiments in optics in a form of my own, the thoughts which I had formed concerning the nature of light and that of colour.

It was not easy for me to buy the things needed for such experiments; for the means of living I derived from tutoring was little enough. Whatever was in any way possible for me I did in order to arrive at such plans of experimentation in the theory of light as would lead to an unprejudiced insight into the facts of nature in this field.

With the physicist's usual arrangements for experiments I was familiar through my work in Reitlinger's physics laboratory. The mathematical treatment of optics was easy to me, for I had already pursued thorough courses in this field. In spite of all objections raised by the physicists against Goethe's theory of colour, I was driven by my own experiments farther and farther away from the customary attitude of the physicist toward Goethe. I became aware that all such experimentation is only the establishing of certain facts "about light" – to use an expression of Goethe's – and not experimentation with light itself. I said to myself: "The colours are not, in Newton's way of thinking, produced out of light; they come to manifestation when obstructions hinder the free unfolding of the light." It seemed to me that this was the lesson to be learned directly from my experiments. Through this, however, light was for me removed from the properly physical realities. It took its place as a midway stage between the realities perceptible to the senses and those visible to the spirit.

I was not inclined forthwith to engage in a merely philosophical course of thinking about these things. But I held strongly to this: to read the facts of nature aright. And then it

became constantly clearer to me how light itself does not enter the realm of the sense-perceptible, but remains on the farther side of this, while colours appear when the sense-perceptible is brought into the realm of light. I now felt myself compelled anew to press inward to the understanding of nature from the most diverse directions. I was led again to the study of anatomy and physiology. I observed the members of the human, animal, and plant organisms in their formations. In this study I came in my own way to Goethe's theory of metamorphosis. I became more and more aware how that conception of nature which is attainable through the senses penetrates through to that which was visible to me in spiritual fashion.

If in this spiritual way I directed my look to the soul-activity of man, thinking, feeling, and willing, then the “spiritual man” took form for me, a clearly visible image. I could not linger in the abstractions in which men generally think when they speak of thinking, feeling, and willing. In these living manifestations I saw creative forces which set “the man as spirit” there before me. If I then turned my glance to the sense-manifestation of man, this became complete to my observation by means of the spirit-form which ruled in the sense-perceptible.

I came upon the sensible-supersensible form of which Goethe speaks and which thrusts itself, both for the true natural vision and for the spiritual vision, between what the senses grasp and what the spirit perceives.

Anatomy and physiology struggled through step by step to the sensible-supersensible form. And in this struggling I through my look fell, at first in a very imperfect way, upon the threefold organization of the human being, concerning which – after having pursued my studies regarding this for thirty years in silence – I first began to speak openly in my book *Von Seelenrätzeln*.⁽⁴⁾ It then became clear to me that in that portion of the human organization in which the shaping is chiefly directed to the elements of the nerves and the senses, the sensible-supersensible form also stamps itself most strongly in the sense-perceptible. The head organization appeared to me as that in which the sensible-supersensible becomes most strongly visible in the sensible form. On the other hand, I was forced to look upon the organization consisting of the limbs as that in which the sensible-supersensible most completely submerges itself, so that in this organization the forces active in nature external to man pursue their work in the shaping of the human body. Between these poles of the human organization everything seemed to me to exist which expresses itself in a rhythmic manner, the processes of breathing, circulation, and the like. At that time I found no one to whom I could have spoken of these perceptions. If I referred here or there to something of this, then it was looked upon at once as the result of a philosophic idea, whereas I was certain that I had disclosed these things to myself by means of an understanding drawn from unbiased anatomical and physiological experimentation.

For the mood which depressed my soul by reason of this isolation in my perceptions I found an inner release only when I read over and over the conversation which Goethe had with Schiller as the two went away from a meeting of the Society for Scientific Research in Jena. They were both agreed in the view that nature should not be observed in such

piece-meal fashion as had been done in the paper of the botanist Batsch which they had heard read. And Goethe with a few strokes drew before Schiller's eyes his "archetypal plant." This through a sensible-supersensible form represents the plant as a whole out of which leaf, blossom, etc., reproducing the whole in detail, shape themselves. Schiller, because he had not yet overcome his Kantian point of view, could see in this "whole" only an "idea" which human understanding formed through observation of the details. Goethe would not allow this to pass. He saw spiritually the whole as he saw with his senses the group of details, and he admitted no difference in principle between the spiritual and the sensible perception, but only a transition from the one to the other. To him it was clear that both had the right to a place in the reality of experience. Schiller, however, did not cease to maintain that the archetypal plant was no experience, but an idea. Then Goethe replied, in his way of thinking, that in this case he perceived his ideas with his eyes. There was for me a rest after a long struggle in my mind, in that which came to me out of the understanding of these words of Goethe, to which I believed I had penetrated Goethe's perception of nature revealed itself before my mind as a spiritual perception.

Now, by reason of an inner necessity, I had to strive to work in detail through all of Goethe's scientific writings. At first I did not think of undertaking an interpretation of these writings, such as I soon afterward published in an introduction to them in Kürschner's *Deutsche National Literatur*. I thought much more of setting forth independently some field or other of natural science in the way in which this science now hovered before me as "spiritual." My external life was at that time not so ordered that I could accomplish this. I had to do tutoring in the most diverse subjects. The "pedagogical" situations through which I had to find my way were complex enough. For example, there appeared in Vienna a Prussian officer who for some reason or other had been forced to leave the German military service. He wished to prepare himself to enter the Austrian army as an officer of engineers. Through a peculiar course of fate I became his teacher in mathematics and physical-scientific subjects. I found in this teaching the deepest satisfaction; for my "scholar" was an extraordinarily lovable man who formed a human relationship with me when we had put behind us the mathematical and scientific developments he needed for his preparation. In other cases also, as in those of students who had completed their work and who were preparing for doctoral examinations, I had to give the instruction, especially in mathematics and the physical sciences.

Because of this necessity of working again and again through the physical sciences of that time, I had ample opportunity of immersing myself in the contemporary views in these fields. In teaching I could give out only these views; what was most important to me in relation to the knowledge of nature I had still to carry locked up within myself.

My activity as a tutor, which afforded me at that time the sole means of a livelihood, preserved me from one-sidedness. I had to learn many things from the foundation up in order to be able to teach them. Thus I found my way into the "mysteries" of book-keeping, for I found opportunity to give instruction even in this subject.

Moreover, in the matter of pedagogical thought, there came to me from Schröer the most fruitful stimulus. He had worked for years as director of the Evangelical schools in Vienna, and he had set forth his experiences in the charming little book, *Unterrichtsfrage*.⁽⁵⁾ What I read in this could then be discussed with him. In regard to education and instruction, he spoke often against the mere imparting of information, and in favour of the evolution of the full and entire human being.

Notes:

1. German Christmas Plays from Hungary.
2. History of German Poetry in the Nineteenth Century.
3. Ignatius, a peasant boy of Lower Austria, goes abroad.
4. Riddles of the Soul.
5. Questions on Teaching.

The Story of My Life

VI

IN the field of pedagogy Fate gave me an unusual task. I was employed as tutor in a family where there were four boys. To three I had to give only the preparatory instruction for the *Volkschule*⁽¹⁾ and then assistance in the work of the Mittelschule. The fourth, who was almost ten years old, was at first entrusted to me for all his education. He was the child of sorrow to his parents, especially to his mother. When I went to live in the home, he had scarcely learned the most rudimentary elements of reading, writing, and arithmetic. He was considered so subnormal in his physical and mental development that the family had doubts as to his capacity for being educated. His thinking was slow and dull. Even the slightest mental exertion caused a headache, lowering of vital functions, pallor, and alarming mental symptoms. After I had come to know the child, I formed the opinion that the sort of education required by such a bodily and mental organism must be one that would awaken the sleeping faculties, and I proposed to the parents that they should leave the child's training to me. The mother had enough confidence to accept this proposal, and I was thus able to set myself this unusual educational task.

I had to find access to a soul which was, as it were, in a sleeping state, and which must gradually be enabled to gain the mastery over the bodily manifestations. In a certain sense one had first to draw the soul within the body. I was thoroughly convinced that the boy really had great mental capacities, though they were then buried. This made my task a profoundly satisfying one. I was soon able to bring the child into a loving dependence upon me. This condition caused the mere intercourse between us to awaken his sleeping faculties of soul. For his instruction I had to feel my way to special methods. Every fifteen minutes beyond a certain time allotted to instruction caused injury to his health. To many subjects of instruction the boy had great difficulty in relating himself.

This educational task became to me the source from which I myself learned very much. Through the method of instruction which I had to apply there was laid open to my view the association between the spiritual-mental and the bodily in man. Then I went through my real course of study in physiology and psychology. I became aware that teaching and instructing must become an art having its foundation in a genuine understanding of man. I had to follow out with great care an economic principle. I frequently had to spend two hours in preparing for half an hour of instruction in order to get the material for instruction in such a form that in the least time, and with the least strain upon the mental and physical powers of the child, I might reach his highest capacity for achievement. The order of the subjects of instruction had to be carefully considered; the division of the entire day into periods had to be properly determined. I had the satisfaction of seeing the child in the course of two years accomplish the work of the *Volkschule*, and successfully pass the examination for entrance to the **Gymnasium**⁽²⁾. Moreover, his physical condition had materially improved. The hydrocephalic condition was markedly diminishing. I was able to advise the parents to send the child to a public school. It seemed to me necessary that he should find his vital development in company with other children. I continued to be a tutor for several years in the family, and gave special attention to this boy, who was always guided to make his way through the school in such a way that his home activities should be carried through in the spirit in which they were begun. I then had the inducement, in the way I have already mentioned, to increase my knowledge of Latin and Greek, for I was responsible for the tutoring of this boy and another in this family for the *Gymnasium* lessons.

I must needs feel grateful to Fate for having brought me into such a life relationship. For through this means I developed in vital fashion a knowledge of the being of man which I do not believe could have been developed by me so vitally in any other way. Moreover, I was taken into the family in an extraordinarily affectionate way; we came to live a beautiful life in common. The father of these boys was a sales-agent for Indian and American cotton. I was thus able to get a glimpse of the working of business, and of much that is connected with this. Moreover, through this I learned a great deal. I had an inside view of the conduct of a branch of an unusually interesting import business, and could observe the intercourse between business friends and the interlinking of many commercial and industrial activities.

My young charge was successfully guided through the *Gymnasium*; I continued with him even to the **Unter-Prima**⁽³⁾. By that time he had made such progress that he no longer needed me. After completing the *Gymnasium* he entered the school of medicine, became a physician, and in this capacity he was later a victim of the World War. The mother, who had become a true friend of mine because of what I had done for her boy, and who clung to this child of sorrow with the most devoted love, soon followed him in death. The father had already gone from this world.

A good portion of my youthful life was bound up with the task which had grown so close to me. For a number of years I went during the summer with the family of the children whom I had to tutor to the *Attersee* in the *Salzkammergut*, and there became familiar with the noble Alpine nature of Upper Austria. I was gradually able to eliminate the private

lessons I had continued to give to others even after beginning this tutoring, and thus I had time left for prosecuting my own studies.

In the life I led before coming into this family I had little opportunity for sharing in the play of children. In this way it came about that my “play-time” came after my twentieth year. I had then to learn also how to play, for I had to direct the play, and this I did with great enjoyment. To be sure, I think I have not played any less in my life than other men. Only in my case what is usually done in this direction before the tenth year I repeated from the twenty-third to the twenty-eighth year.

It was during this period that I was occupied with the philosophy of Eduard von Hartmann. As I studied his theory of knowledge, continual opposition was aroused within me. The opinion that the genuinely real lies as the unconscious beyond conscious experience, and that the latter is nothing more than an unreal pictorial reflection from the real – this was to me utterly repugnant. In opposition to this I postulated that the conscious experience can, through the strengthening of mental life, dip down within the real. I was clear in my own mind that the divine-spiritual reveals itself in man if man makes this revelation possible through his own inner life.

The pessimism of Eduard von Hartmann appeared to me as an utterly false questioning of human life. I had to conceive man as striving toward the goal of drawing up from within himself that with which life fills him for his satisfaction. I said to myself: “If through the ordering of the world a ‘best life’ were simply imparted to man, how could he bring this inner spring to a flowing stream?” The external world order has come to a stage in evolution in which it has ignored the good and the bad in things and in facts. Then first the human being awakes to self-consciousness and guides the evolution farther, but in such way that this evolution takes its direction toward freedom, not from things and facts, but only from the fountain head of man's being. The mere introduction of the question of pessimism or optimism seemed to me to be running counter to the free being of man. I frequently said to myself: “How could man be the free creator of his highest happiness if a measure of happiness were imparted to him through the ordering of the external world?”

On the other hand, Hartmann's work *Phänomenologie des Sittlichen Bewusstseins*⁽⁴⁾ attracted me. There, I found, the moral evolution of man was traced according to the clue of what is empirically observable. It does not become – as in the case of Hartmann's theory of knowledge – speculative thought linked to unknown being which lies beyond consciousness; but rather it is that which can be experienced as morality, and grasped in its manifestations. And it was clear to me that no philosophical speculation must think *beyond* the phenomena if it desires to reach the genuinely real. The phenomena of the world reveal of themselves this genuinely real as soon as the conscious soul prepares itself to receive the revelation. Whoever takes into consciousness only what is perceptible to the senses may seek for real being in a beyond-consciousness; whoever grasps the spiritual in his perception speaks of this as being on this side, not of a beyond in the sense characteristic of a theory of cognition. Hartmann's consideration of the moral world seemed to me congenial because in this his *beyond* standpoint withdraws wholly into the

background, and he confines himself to that which can be observed. Through a deeper penetration into phenomena, even to the point where these disclose their spiritual being – it was in this way that I desired to know that knowledge of real being is brought to pass, not through inferential reasoning as to what is “behind” phenomena.

Since I was always striving to sense a human capacity on its positive side, Eduard von Hartmann's philosophy became useful to me, in spite of the fact that its fundamental tendency and its conception of life were repugnant; for it cast a penetrating light upon many phenomena. And even in those writings of the “philosopher of the unconscious” from which in principle I dissented I yet found much that was immensely stimulating. So it was also with the popular writings of Eduard von Hartmann, which dealt with cultural historical, pedagogical, and political problems. I found in this pessimist “sound” conceptions of life such as I could not discover in many optimists. It was just in connection with him that I experienced that which I needed, – to be able to understand even though I had to oppose.

It was thus that I sat till late many a night – when I could leave my boys to themselves, and after I had admired the starry heavens from the balcony of the house – in studying *the Phenomenology of Moral Consciousness* and the *Religiöses Bewusstsein der Menschheit in der Stufenfolge seiner Entwicklung*⁽⁵⁾, and while I was reading these writings I attained to an ever increasing assurance concerning my own standpoint in regard to the theory of knowledge.

Upon the suggestion of Schröer, Joseph Kürschner invited me in 1884 to edit Goethe's scientific writings with an introduction and accompanying interpretive notes as a part of the edition of *Deutsche National-Literatur* planned by him. Schröer, who had taken responsibility for Goethe's dramas within the great collective work, was to preface the first volume assigned to me with an introductory foreword. In this he analysed the manner in which Goethe as poet and as thinker was related to the contemporary spiritual life. In the philosophy introduced by the age of natural science which followed after Goethe, he saw a falling away from the spiritual height upon which Goethe had been standing. The task which had been assigned to me in the editing of Goethe's scientific writings was characterized in a general way in this preface.

For me the task included an exposition in which natural science should be on one side and Goethe's whole philosophy on the other. Now that I had to come before the public with such an exposition, it was necessary for me to bring to a certain issue all that I had thus far won for myself in the way of a world-conception.

Until that time I had occupied myself as a writer with nothing more than brief articles for the press. It was not easy for me to write down what was a vital inner experience in such manner that I could consider my work worthy of publication. I always had the feeling that what had been elaborated within appeared in a very paltry form when I had to present it in a finished shape. So all literary endeavours became to me the source of continual inner unhappiness.

The form of thought by which natural science has been dominated since the beginning of its great influence upon the civilization of the nineteenth century seemed to me ill-adapted to reach an understanding of that which Goethe strove to attain for natural science, and actually did in large measure attain.

I beheld in Goethe a personality who, by reason of the unusual spiritual relationship in which he had placed man with reference to nature, was also in a position to place the knowledge of nature in the right form in the totality of human achievement. The form of thought of the period in which I had grown up appeared to me fit only for shaping ideas regarding lifeless nature. I considered it powerless to enter with capacity for knowledge into the realm of living nature. I said to myself: "In order to attain to ideas which can mediate a knowledge of the organic, it is necessary that one should first endue with life the concepts adapted for an understanding of inorganic nature." For these seemed to me dead, and therefore fit only for grasping that which is dead.

How the ideas became endued with life in Goethe's spirit, how they became ideal forms, this is what I sought to set forth in order to clarify Goethe's conception of nature.

What Goethe thought and elaborated in detail regarding this or that field of the knowledge of nature appeared to me of less importance than the central discovery which I was forced to attribute to him. This I saw in the fact that he had discovered how one must think in regard to the organic in order to come at it understandingly.

I found that mechanics completely satisfy the need for knowledge in that they generate conceptions in a rational manner in the human mind which then prove to be real when applied in the sense-perception of that which is lifeless. Goethe was to me the founder of a law of organics, which in like manner applies to that which has life. When I looked back to Galileo in the history of modern spiritual life, I was forced to remark how he, by the shaping of ideas from the inorganic, had given to the new natural science its present form. What he had introduced for the inorganic Goethe had striven to attain for the organic. Goethe became for me the Galileo of the organic.

For the first volume of Goethe's natural-scientific writings I had first to elaborate his ideas on metamorphosis. It was difficult for me to express the relation between the living ideal forms through which the organic can be understood and the formless ideas suited to enable one to grasp the inorganic. But it seemed to me that my whole task depended upon making this point in true fashion intelligible. In understanding the inorganic, concept is added in series to concept, in order to survey the correlation of forces which bring about an effect in nature. In reference to the organic it is necessary so to allow one concept to grow out of another that in the progressive living metamorphosis of concepts there come to light images of that which appears in nature as a being possessing form. This Goethe strove to do in that he sought to hold fast in his mind an ideal image of a leaf which was not a fixed lifeless concept but such a one as might present itself in the most varied forms. If one permits these forms in the mind to proceed one out of another, one thus constructs the whole plant. One re-creates in the mind in ideal fashion the process whereby nature in actual fashion shapes the plant.

If one seeks in this way to conceive the plant world, one thus stands much nearer in spirit to the world of nature than in conceiving the inorganic by means of formless concepts. For the inorganic one conceives only a spiritual fantasm of that which is present in nature in a manner void of spirit. But in the coming into existence of a plant there lives something which has a remote resemblance to that which arises in the human mind as an image of the plant. One becomes aware of how nature, while bringing forth the organic, is really bringing into action something spiritually similar within her own being.

I desired to show, in the introduction to Goethe's botanical writings, how in his theory of metamorphosis he took the direction of thinking about the workings of organic nature in the manner in which one thinks of spirit. Still more spiritual in form appeared to me Goethe's way of thinking in the realm of the animal and in the lower natural stages of the human being.

In relation to the animal-human, Goethe began by seeing through an error which he noticed among his contemporaries. These sought to ascribe a special position in nature to the organic bases of the human being by finding individual distinctions between man and the animal. They found such a distinction in the intermaxillary bones which the animals possess, in which their upper incisor teeth are bedded. In man, they said, such a special intermediary bone in the upper jaw is lacking; his upper jaw consists of a single piece.

This seemed to Goethe an error. For him the human form was a metamorphosis of the animal to a higher stage. Everything which appears in the forming of the animal must be present also in the human, only in a higher form so that the human organism might become the bearer of the self-conscious spirit.

In the elevation of the whole united form of man Goethe saw the distinction from the animal, not in details.

Step by step does one perceive the organic creative forces become more like spirit as one rises from consideration of the plant-beings to the varied forms of the animals. In the organic form of man creative forces are active which bring to pass the highest metamorphosis of the animal shape. These forces are present in the process of becoming of the human organism; and they finally live there as the human spirit after they have formed in the natural basic parts a vessel which can receive them in their form of existence free from nature.

In this conception of the human organism it seemed to me that Goethe had anticipated everything true which was later affirmed, on the ground of Darwinism, concerning the kinship of the human with the animal. But it also seemed to me that all which was untrue was omitted. The materialistic understanding of that which Darwin discovered leads to the adoption of conceptions based upon the kinship between man and the animals which deny the spirit where it appears in its highest form in an earthly existence – in man. Goethe's conception leads to the perception of a spiritual creation in the animal form which has simply not yet arrived at the stage at which the spirit as such can live. That which lives in man as spirit creates in the animal form at a preliminary stage; and it

metamorphoses this form in the case of man in such a way that it can then appear, not only as creative, but also in its own living presence.

Viewed in this way, Goethe's consideration of nature becomes one which, while tracing the natural process of becoming from the inorganic to the organic, also leads natural science over into spiritual science. To bring out this fact was to me of more importance than anything else in working up the first volume of Goethe's natural-scientific writings. For this reason I allowed my introduction to narrow down to an explanation of the way in which Darwinism establishes a one-sided view, coloured by materialism, which must be restored to wholeness by Goethe's way of thinking.

How one must think in order to penetrate into the phenomena of life – this is what I wished to show in discussing Goethe's view of the organic. I soon came to feel that this discussion required a basis upon which to rest. The nature of cognition was then conceived by my contemporaries in a way which could never arrive at Goethe's view. The theorists of cognition had in mind natural science as it then existed. What they said in regard to the nature of cognition held good only for a conception of inorganic nature. There could be no agreement between what I must say in regard to Goethe's kind of cognition and the theories of cognition ordinarily held at that time.

Therefore, whatever I had established upon the basis of Goethe's theory of the organic sent me afresh to the theory of cognition. I had before my mind theories such as that of Otto Liebmann, which expressed in the most varied forms the dogma that human consciousness can never get outside itself; that it must therefore be content to live in that which reality sends into the human soul, and which presents itself within in spiritual form. If one views the thing in this way, one cannot say that one perceives a spiritual relationship in organic nature after the manner of Goethe. One must seek for the spirit within the human soul, and consider a spiritual contemplation of nature inadmissible.

I discovered that there was no theory of cognition fitting Goethe's kind of cognition. This induced me to undertake to sketch such a theory. I wrote my *Erkenntnistheorie der Goethe'schen Weltanschauung*⁽⁶⁾ out of an inner need before I proceeded to prepare the other volumes of Goethe's natural scientific writings. This little book was finished in 1886.

Notes:

1. The Volksschule course usually extends from the sixth to the tenth year; the Mittelschule covers the three following years, though the term is not always so definite.
2. That is, the boy completed in two years what children usually do in the years from the sixth to the tenth year of age.
3. The next to the last year in the Gymnasium
4. Phenomenology of Moral Consciousness.
5. Religious Consciousness in Man in the Stages of its Evolution.
6. Theory of Cognition in Goethe's World Conception

The Story of My Life

VII

I WROTE down the ideas of the *Theory of Cognition in Goethe's World-Conception* at a time when Fate had led me into a family which made possible for me many happy hours within its circle, and a fortunate chapter of my life. Among my friends there had for a long time been one whom I had come to hold very dear because of his gay and sunny disposition, his accurate observations upon life and men, and his whole manner, so open and loyal. He introduced me and other mutual friends into his home. There we met, in addition to this friend, two daughters of the family, his sisters, and a man whom we soon had to recognize as the fiancé of the elder daughter. In the background of this family there hovered something we were never able to see. This was the father of the brother and sisters. He was there, and yet not there. We learned from the most various sources something about the man who was to us unknown. According to what we were told, he must have been somewhat unusual. At first the brother and sisters never spoke of their father, even though he must have been in the next room. Then they began, at first very gradually, to make one or another remark about him. Every word showed a feeling of genuine reverence. One felt that in this man they honoured a very important person. But one also felt that they dreaded lest by chance we should happen to see him.

Our conversations in the family circle were generally of a literary character, and, in order to refer to this thing or that, many a book would be brought by the brother or sisters from the father's library. And the circumstances brought it about that I became acquainted, little by little, with much which the man in the next room read, although I never had an opportunity to see him.

At last I could no longer do otherwise than inquire about much that concerned the unknown man. And thus, from the talk of the brother and sisters – which held back much, and yet revealed much – there gradually arose in my mind an image of a noteworthy personality. I loved the man, who to me also seemed an important person. I came finally to reverence in him a man whom the hard experiences of life had brought to the pass of dealing thenceforward only with the world within himself, and of foregoing all human intercourse.

One day we visitors were told that the man was ill, and soon afterward the news of his death had to be conveyed to us. The brother and sisters entrusted to me the funeral address. I said what my heart impelled me to say regarding the personality whom I had come to know only through descriptions. It was a funeral at which only the family, the fiancé of one daughter, and my friends were present. The brother and sisters said to me that I had given a true picture of their father in my funeral address. And from the way they spoke, and from their tears, I could not but feel that this was their real conviction.

Moreover, I knew that the man stood as near me in the spirit as if I had had much intercourse with him.

Between the younger daughter and me there gradually came about a beautiful friendship. She really had in her something of the primal type of the German maiden. She bore in her soul nothing acquired from her education, but expressed in her life an original and charming naturalness together with a noble reserve, and this reserve of hers caused a like reserve in me. We loved each other, and both of us were fully aware of this; but neither of us could overcome the fear of saying that we loved each other. Thus the love lived between the words we spoke to each other, and not in the words themselves. I felt the relationship as to our souls was of the most universal kind; but it found no possibility of taking a single step beyond what is of the soul.

I was happy in this friendship; I felt my girl friend like something of the sun in my life. Yet this life later bore us far apart. In place of hours of happy companionship there then remained only a short-lived correspondence, followed by the melancholy memory of a beautiful period of my past life – a memory, however, which has through all my later life arisen again and again from the depths of my soul.

It was at that same time that I once went to Schröder. He was altogether filled with an impression which he had just received. He had become acquainted with the poems of Marie Eugénie de Guérin. Before him there lay a little volume of her poems, an epic *Herman*, a drama *Saul*, and a story *Die Zigeunerin*⁽¹⁾. Schröder spoke enthusiastically of these poetical writings. “And all these have been written by a young person before completing her sixteenth year!” he said. Then he added that Robert Zimmermann had said that she was the only genius he had known in his life.

Schröder's enthusiasm now led me also to read the productions one after another. I wrote an article about the poet. This brought me the great pleasure of being permitted to call upon her. During this call I had the opportunity of a conversation with the poet which has often come to mind during my life. She had already begun to work upon an undertaking in the grand style, her epic *Robespierre*. She discussed the basic ideas of this composition. Already there was present in her conversation an undertone of pessimism. I felt in regard to her as if she meant to represent in such a personality as Robespierre the tragedy in all idealism. Ideals arise in the human heart, but they have no power over the horrible destructive action of nature, empty of all ideals, who utters against all ideals her pitiless cry: “Thou art mere illusion, a phantasm of my own, which I again and again hurl back into nothingness.”

This was her conviction. The poet then spoke to me of a further poetic plan, a *Satanid*. She would represent the antitype of God as the Primal Being which is the Power revealing itself to man in terrible, ruinous nature, empty of the ideal. She spoke with genuine inspiration of the Power from the abyss of being, dominant over all being. I went away from the poet profoundly shocked. The greatness with which she had spoken remained impressed upon me; the content of her ideas was the opposite of everything which stood before my mind as a view of the world. But I was never inclined to withhold

my interest or my admiration from that which seemed to me great, even when it repelled me utterly by its content. Indeed, I said to myself, such opposites in the world must somewhere find their reconciliation. And this enabled me to follow what repelled me just as if it lay in the same direction as the conception held by my own mind.

Shortly after this I was invited again to the home of delle Grazie. She was to read her *Robespierre* before a number of persons, among whom were Schröer and his wife and also a woman friend of his family. We listened to scenes of lofty poetic rhythm, but with a pessimistic undertone of a richly coloured naturalism: life painted in its most terrible aspects. Great human beings, inwardly deceived by Fate, rose to the surface, or sank below in the grip of tragedy. This was my impression. Schröer became indignant. For him art ought not to plunge beneath such abysses of the “terrible.” The women withdrew. They had experienced a sort of convulsion. I could not agree with Schröer, for he seemed to me to be wholly filled with the feeling that poetry can never be made out of what is terrible in the experience of the human soul, even though this terrible experience is nobly endured. Delle Grazie soon after published a poem in which Nature is celebrated as the highest Power, but in such a way that she mocks at all ideals, which she calls into existence only in order to delude man, and which she hurls back into nothingness when this delusion has been accomplished.

In relation to this composition I wrote a paper entitled *Die Natur und unsere Ideale*⁽²⁾, which I did not publish but had privately printed in a small number of copies. In this I discussed the apparent correctness of delle Grazie's view. I said that a view which does not shut out the hostility manifested by nature against human ideals is of a higher order than a “superficial optimism” which blinds itself to the abysses of existence. But I also said in regard to this matter that the free inner being of man creates for itself that which gives meaning and content to life, and that this being could not fully unfold itself if a prodigal nature bestowed upon it from without that which ought to arise within.

Because of this paper I had a painful experience. When Schröer had received it, he wrote me that, if I thought in such a way about pessimism, we had never understood one another, and that anyone who spoke in such a way about nature as I had done in the paper showed thereby that he could not have taken in a sufficiently profound sense Goethe's words: “Know thyself, and live at peace with the world.”

I was cut to the heart when I received these lines from the person to whom I felt the most devoted attachment. Schröer could be passionately aroused when he became aware of a sin against the harmony manifesting itself in art in the form of beauty. He turned against delle Grazie when he was forced to observe this sin against his conception. And he considered the admiration which I felt for the poet as a falling away both from him and also from Goethe. He failed to see in my paper what I said regarding the human spirit overcoming from within itself the obstacles of nature; he was offended because I said that external nature could not be the creator of true inner satisfaction for man. I wished to set forth the meaninglessness of pessimism in spite of its correctness within certain limits; Schröer saw in every concession to pessimism something which he called “the slag from burned-out spirits.”

In the home of Marie Eugenie delle Grazie I passed some of the happy hours of my life. Saturday evening she always received visitors. Those who came were persons of diverse spiritual tendencies. The poet formed the centre of the group. She read aloud from her poems; she spoke in the spirit of her world-conception in very positive language. She cast the light of these ideas upon human life. It was by no means the light of the sun. Always in truth only the pale light of the moon-threatening, overcast skies. But from human dwellings there arose flames of fire into the dusky air as if carrying the sorrows and illusions in which men are consumed. All this, nevertheless, humanly gripping, always fascinating, the bitterness enveloped in the magic power of a wholly spiritualized personality.

At delle Grazie's side was Laurenz Müllner, a Catholic priest, teacher of the poet, and later her discreet and noble friend. He was at that time professor of Christian philosophy in the theological faculty of the University. The impression he made, not only by his face but in his whole figure, was that of one whose development had been mental and ascetic. A sceptic in philosophy, thoroughly grounded in all aspects of philosophy, in conceptions of art and literature. He wrote for the Catholic clerical journal, *Vaterland*, stimulating articles upon artistic and literary subjects. The poet's pessimistic view of the world and of life fell always from his lips also.

Both united in a positive antipathy to Goethe; on the other hand, their interest was directed to Shakespeare and the later poets, children of the sorrowful burden of life, and of the naturalistic confusions of human nature. Dostoevsky they loved warmly; Leopold von Sacher-Masoch they looked upon as a brilliant writer who shrank back from no truth in order to represent that which is growing up in the morass of modern life as all too human and worthy of destruction. In Laurenz Müllner the antipathy to Goethe took on something of the colour of Catholic theology. He praised Baumgarten's monograph, which characterized Goethe as the antithesis of that which is deserving of human endeavour. In delle Grazie there was something like a profound personal antipathy to Goethe.

About the two were gathered professors of the theological faculty, Catholic priests of the very finest scholarship. First among them all was the priest of the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Wilhelm Neumann. Müllner justly esteemed him because of his comprehensive scholarship. He said to me once, when in the absence of Neumann I was speaking with enthusiastic admiration of his broad and comprehensive scholarship: "Yes, indeed, Professor Neumann knows the whole world and three villages besides." I liked to accompany the learned man when we went away from delle Grazie's at the same time. I had many a conversation with this "ideal" of a scientific man who was at the same time a "true son of his Church." I would here mention only two of these. One was in regard to the person of Christ. I expressed my view to the effect that Jesus of Nazareth, by reason of supramundane influence, had received the Christ into himself, and that Christ as a spiritual Being has lived in human evolution since the Mystery of Golgotha. This conversation remained deeply imprinted in my mind; ever and again it has arisen in memory. For it was profoundly significant for me. There were really three persons engaged in that discussion: Professor Neumann and I, and a third, unseen person, the

personification of Catholic dogmatic theology, visible to spiritual perception as he walked behind the professor, always beckoning with his finger threateningly, and always tapping Professor Neumann on the shoulder as a reminder whenever the subtle logic of the scholar led him too far in agreement with me. It was noteworthy how often the first clause of the latter's sentences would be reversed in the second clause. There I was face to face with the Catholic way of life in one of its best representatives. It was through him that I learned to esteem it, but also to know it through and through.

Another time we discussed the question of repeated earth lives. The professor then listened to me, spoke of all sorts of literature in which something on this subject could be found; he often nodded his head lightly, but had no inclination to enter into the merits of a question which seemed to him very fanciful. So this conversation also became of great import to me. The uncomfortableness with which Neumann felt the answers he did not utter in response to my statements was deeply impressed upon my memory.

Besides these, the Saturday evening callers were the historian of the Church and other theologians, and in addition I met now and then the philosopher Adolf Stöhr, Goswine von Berlepsch, the emotionally moving story-teller Emilie Mataja (who bore the pen-name of Emil Marriot, the poet and writer Fritz Lemmermayer, and the composer Stross. Fritz Lemmermayer, with whom I was later on terms of intimate friendship, I came to know at one of delle Grazie's afternoons. A highly noteworthy man. Whatever interested him he expressed with inwardly measured dignity. In his outward appearance he resembled equally the musician Rubinstein and the actor Lewinsky. With Hebbel he developed almost a cult. He had definite views on art and life born out of the sagacious understanding of the heart, and these were unusually fixed. He had written the interesting and profound romance, *Der Alchemist*⁽³⁾, and much besides that was characterized by beauty and depth. He knew how to consider the least things in life from the view-point of the most vital. I recall how I once saw him in his charming little room in a side-street in Vienna together with other friends. He had planned his meal: two soft-boiled eggs, to be cooked in an instantaneous boiler, together with bread. He remarked with much emphasis while the water was heating to boil the eggs for us: "This will be delicious!" In a later phase of my life I shall again have occasion to speak of him.

Alfred Stross, the composer, was a gifted man, but one tinged with a profound pessimism. When he took his seat at the piano in delle Grazie's home and played his études, one had the feeling: Anton Bruckner's music reduced to airy tones which would fain flee this earthly existence. Stross was little understood; Fritz Lemmermayer was inexpressibly devoted to him.

Both Lemmermayer and Stross were intimate friends of Robert Hamerling. Through them I was led later into a brief correspondence with Hamerling, to which I shall refer again. Stross finally died of a serious illness in spiritual darkness.

The sculptor Hans Brandstadter I also met at delle Grazie's. Even though unseen, there hovered over all this group of friends, through frequent wonderful descriptions of him almost like hymns of praise, the historian of theology Werner. Delle Grazie loved him

more than anyone else. Never once did he appear on a Saturday evening when I was able to be present. But his admirer showed us the picture of the biographer of Thomas Aquinas from ever new angles, the picture of the good, lovable scholar who remained naïve even to extreme old age. One imagined a man so selfless, so absorbed in the matter about which he spoke as a historian, so exact, that one said, "If only there were many such historians!"

A veritable fascination ruled over these Saturday evening gatherings. After it had grown dark, a lamp was lighted under a shade of some red fabric, and we sat in a circular space of light which made the whole company festive. Then *delle Grazie* would frequently become extraordinarily talkative – especially when those living at a distance had gone – and one was permitted to hear many a word that sounded like sighs from the depths in the after-pangs of grievous days of fate. But one listened also to genuine humour over the personalities of life, and tones of indignation over the corruption in the press and elsewhere. Between-whiles there were the sarcastic, often caustic, remarks of Müllner on all sorts of philosophical, artistic, and other themes. *Delle Grazie's* house was a place in which pessimism revealed itself in direct and vital force, a place of anti-Goetheanism. Everyone listened whenever I spoke of Goethe; but Laurenz Müllner held the opinion that I ascribed to Goethe things which really had little to do with the actual minister of the Grand-duke Karl August. Nevertheless for me every visit at this house – and I knew that I was welcomed there – was something for which I am inexpressibly grateful; I felt that I was in a spiritual atmosphere which was of genuine benefit to me. For this purpose I did not require agreement in ideas; I required earnest and striving humanity susceptible to the spiritual. I was now between this house, which I frequented with much pleasure, and my teacher and fatherly friend Karl Julius Schröer, who, after the first visit, never again appeared at *delle Grazie's*. My emotional life, drawn in both directions by sincere love and esteem, was actually torn in two. But it was just at this time that those thoughts first came to maturity in me which later formed the volume *Die Philosophie der Freiheit*⁽⁴⁾. In the unpublished paper about *delle Grazie* mentioned above, *Nature and Our Ideals*, there lie the germs of the later book in the following sentences: "Our ideals are no longer so superficial as to be satisfied with a reality often so flat and so empty. Yet I cannot believe that there is no means whereby to rise above the profound pessimism which comes from this knowledge. This elevation comes to me when I look into our inner world, when I enter more intimately into the nature of our ideal world. This is a self-contained world, complete in itself, which can neither win anything nor lose anything by reason of the transitoriness of the external. Do not our ideals, if these are really living individualities, possess an existence for themselves independently of the kindness or unkindness of nature? Even though the lovely rose may for ever be shattered by the pitiless gusts of the wind, it has fulfilled its mission, for it has rejoiced hundreds of human eyes; if to-morrow it should please murderous nature to destroy the whole starry sky, yet for thousands of years men have gazed up reverently toward it, and this is enough. Not the existence in time, no, but the inner being of things, constitutes their completion. The ideals of our spirits are a world for themselves, which must also live for themselves, and which can gain nothing from the co-operation of a good nature. What a pitiable creature man would be if he could not gain satisfaction within his own ideal world, but must first to this end have the co-operation of nature! What divine freedom

remains to us if nature guides and guards us like helpless children tied to leading strings? No, she must deny us everything, in order that, when happiness comes to us, this shall all be the result of our free selves. Let nature destroy every day what we shape in order that we may every day experience anew the joy of creation! We would fain owe nothing to nature; everything to ourselves.

“This freedom, one may say, is only a dream! While we think that we are free, we obey the iron necessity of nature. The loftiest thoughts that we conceive are merely the fruit of the blind power of nature within us. But we surely should finally admit that a being who knows himself cannot be unfree! ... We see the web of law ruling over things, and this it is which constitutes necessity. In our knowledge we possess the power to separate the natural laws from things; and must we ourselves be nevertheless without a will, slaves to these same laws?”

These thoughts I did not evolve out of a spirit of controversy; but I was forced to set forth what my perception of the spiritual world said to me in opposition to a view of life which I had to consider as being at the opposite pole from my own, but which I none the less profoundly revered because it was revealed to me from the depths of true and earnest souls.

At the very time during which I enjoyed such stimulating experiences at the home of *delle Grazie*, I had the privilege of entering also a circle of the younger Austrian poets. Every week we had a free expression and mutual sharing together of whatever one or the other had produced. The most varied characters met in this gathering. Every view of life and every temperament was represented, from the optimistic, naïve painter of life to the leaden-weighted pessimist. Fritz Lemmermayer was the soul of the group. There was present something of the storm which the Hart brothers, Karl Henckel, and others had loosed in the German Empire against “the old” in the spiritual life of the time. But all this was tinged with Austrian “amiability.” Much was said about how the time had come in which new tones must sound forth in all spheres of life; but this was done with that disapproval of radicalism which is characteristic of the Austrian.

One of the youngest of this circle was Joseph Kitir. He devoted his effort to a form of lyric to which he had been inspired by Martin Greif. He did not wish to bring subjective feelings to expression; he wished to set forth an event or situation objectively, and yet as if this had been observed, not with the senses, but with the feelings. He did not wish to say that he was enchanted; but rather he would paint the enchanting event, and its enchantment should act upon hearer or reader without the poet's statement. Kitir did really beautiful things in this way. His soul was naïve. A little while after this he bound himself more closely to me. In this circle I now heard an Austro-German poet spoken of with great enthusiasm, and I afterward became familiar with some of his poems. These made a deep impression upon me. I endeavoured to meet the poet. I asked Fritz Lemmermayer, who knew him well, and also some others whether the poet could not be invited to our gatherings.

But I was told that he could not be dragged there with a four-horse team. He was a recluse, they said, and would not mingle with people. But I was deeply desirous of knowing him. Then one evening the whole company went out and roamed over to the place where the “knowing ones” could find him. It was a little wine-shop in a street parallel to Kärtnerstrasse. There he sat in one corner, his glass of red wine – not a small one – before him. He sat as if he had sat there for an indefinitely long time, and would continue to sit indefinitely long. Already a rather old gentleman, but with shining, youthful eyes, and a countenance which showed the poet and idealist in the most delicate and most speaking lines. At first he did not see us enter. For it was clear that in the nobly shaped head a poem was taking form. Fritz Lemmermayer had first to take him by the arm; then he turned his face in our direction and looked at us. We had disturbed him. His perplexed glance could not conceal this; but he showed it in the most amiable fashion. We took our places around him. There was not space enough for so many to sit in the cramped little room. It was now remarkable how the man who had been described as a “recluse” showed himself in a very short while as enthusiastically talkative. We all had the feeling that with what our minds were then exchanging in conversation we could not remain in the dull closeness of that room. And there was now not much difficulty in bringing the “recluse” with us to another *Lokal*. Except for him and one other acquaintance of his who had for a long time mingled with our circle, we were all young; yet it soon became evident that we had never been so young as on this evening when the old gentleman was with us, for he was really the youngest of us all.

I was completely captivated by the charm of this personality. It was at once clear to me that this man must have produced much that was more significant than what he had published, and I pressed him with questions regarding this. He answered almost timidly: “Yes, I have besides at home some cosmic things.” I succeeded in persuading him to promise that he would bring these the next evening that we could see him.

It was thus that I became acquainted with Fercher von Steinwand. A poet from the Karntnerland, pithy, full of ideas, idealistic in his sentiments. He was the child of poor people, and had passed his youth amid great hardships. The distinguished anatomist Hyrtl came to know his worth, and made possible for him the sort of existence in which he could live wholly in his poems, thoughts, and conceptions. For a considerable time the world knew very little of him. After the appearance of his first poem, *Gräfin Seelenbrand*, Robert Hamerling brought him into full recognition.

After that night we never needed again to go for the “recluse.” He appeared almost regularly on our evenings. I was extremely glad when on one of these evenings he brought along one of his “cosmic things.” It was the *Chor der Urtriebe*⁽⁵⁾ and the *Chor der Urträume*⁽⁶⁾, poems in which feelings live in swinging rhythm which seem as if they penetrated into the very creative forces of the world. There hover ideas as if actual beings in splendid euphony, forming themselves into pictures of the Powers which in the beginning created the world. I consider the fact that I came to know Fercher von Steinwand as one of the most important events of my youth; for his personality acted like that of a sage who reveals his wisdom in genuine poetry.

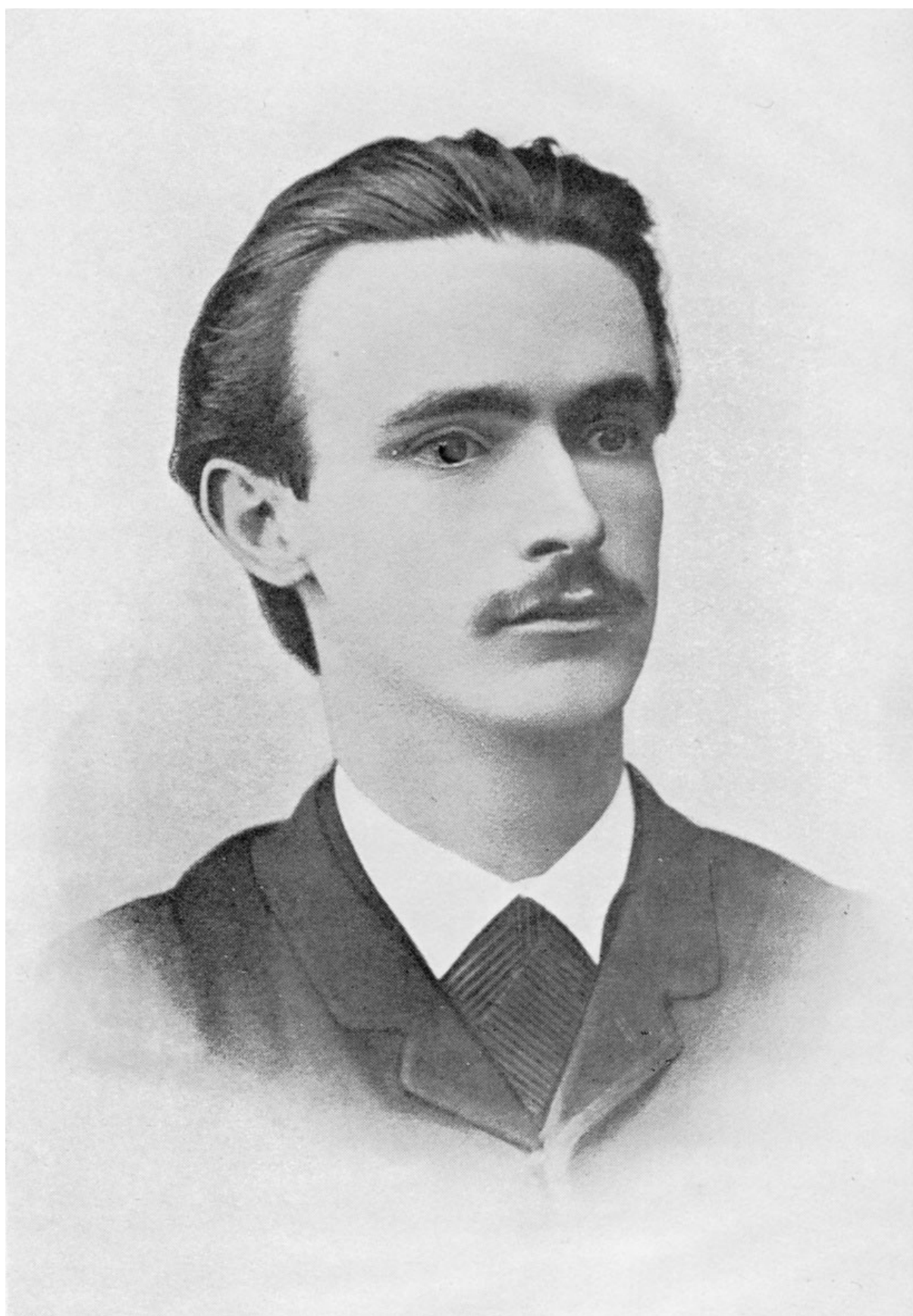
I had struggled with the riddle of man's repeated earth lives. Many a perception in this direction had come to me when I came close to men who in the habit of their lives, in the impress of their personalities revealed clearly the signs of a content within their beings which one would not expect to find in what they had inherited through birth or acquired afterward through experience. But in the play of countenance, in every gesture of Fercher, I saw the essence of a soul which could only have been formed in the time from the beginning of the Christian evolution, while Greek paganism was still influencing this evolution. One does not arrive at such a view when one thinks only of those expressions of a personality which press immediately upon one's attention; it is aroused in one rather by the intuitively perceived marks of the individuality which seem to accompany such direct expressions but which in reality deepen these expressions immeasurably. Moreover, one does not attain to this view when one seeks for it, but only when the strong impression remains active in retrospect, and becomes like the memory of an experience in which that which is essential in the external life falls away and the usually "unessential" begins to speak a deeply significant language. Whoever observes men in order to solve the riddle of their previous earth-lives will certainly not reach his goal. Such observation one must feel to be an offence which does injury to the one observed, for one can hope for the present disclosure of the long past of a man only through the dispensation of fate coming from the outer spiritual world.

It was in the very time of my life which I am now describing that I succeeded in attaining to these definite views of the repeated earth-lives of man. Before this time I was not far from the conceptions, but they had not yet come out of indeterminate lines to sharply defined impressions. Theories, however, in regard to such things as repeated earth-lives, I did not form in my own thoughts; I took them into my understanding out of literature or other sources of information as something illuminating, but I did not theorize about them. And now, since I was conscious within myself of real perception in this region, I was in a position to have the conversation mentioned above with Professor Neumann. A man is not to be blamed if he becomes convinced of the truth of repeated earth-lives and other insights which can be attained only in supersensible ways; for a complete conviction in this region is possible also to the sound and unprejudiced human understanding, even though the man has not yet attained to actual perception. Only the way of theorizing in this region was not my own way.

During the time when concrete perceptions were more and more forming within me in regard to repeated earth-lives, I became acquainted with the theosophical movement, which had been initiated by H. P. Blavatsky. Sinnett's Esoteric Buddhism came into my hands through a friend to whom I had spoken in regard to these things. This book, the first from the theosophical movement with which I became familiar, made upon me no impression whatever. And I was glad that I had not read this book before I had experienced perception out of the life of my own soul. For the content of the book was repellent to me, and my antipathy against this way of representing the supersensible might well have prevented me from going farther at once upon the road which had been pointed out to me.

Notes:

1. The Gipsy.
 2. Nature and Our Ideals.
 3. The Alchemist.
 4. The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity.
 5. The Chorus of Primal Instincts.
 6. The Chorus of Primal Dreams.
-



The Story of My Life

VIII

DURING this time – about 1888 – I felt within me, on the one hand, the impulse to intense spiritual concentration; on the other hand, my life brought me into intercourse with a wide circle of acquaintances. Because of the interpretive introduction which I had to prepare for the second volume of Goethe's scientific writings, I felt an inner necessity to state my view of the spiritual world in a form of thought transparently clear. This required an inward withdrawal from all that bound me to the outer life. It was due in large measure to a certain circumstance that such a withdrawal was possible. I could at that time sit in a coffee-house, with the greatest excitement all around me, and yet be absolutely tranquil within, my thoughts concentrated upon the task of writing down in a rough draft that which later composed the introduction I have mentioned. In this way I led an inner life which had no relation whatever to the outer world, although my interests were still intimately bound up with that world.

It was at this time that these interests were forced to turn to the critical phenomena then appearing in the external situation of things. Persons with whom I was in frequent relation were devoting their strength and their labour to the arrangements which were then coming to completion between the nationalities in Austria. Others were occupied with the social question. Still others were in the midst of a struggle for the rejuvenation of the artistic life of the nation. When I was living inwardly in the spiritual world, I often had the feeling that the struggles toward all these objectives must play themselves out fruitlessly because they refused to enter into the spiritual forces of existence. The sense of these spiritual forces seemed to me the thing needed first of all. But I could find no clear consciousness of this in that sort of spiritual life which surrounded me.

Just then Robert Hamerling's satiric epic *Homunculus* was published. In this a mirror was held before the times in which were reflected purposely caricatured images of its materialism, its interests centred on the outer life. A man who can live only in mechanistic, materialistic conceptions marries a woman whose nature lies, not in a real world, but in a world of fantasy. Hamerling desired to represent the two aspects in which civilization has become warped. On one side he perceived the utterly unspiritual struggle which conceives the world as a mechanism, and would shape human life mechanically; on the other side the soulless fantasy which cares not at all whether its make-believe spiritual life comes into any relation whatever to reality.

The grotesque pictures drawn by Hamerling repelled many who had esteemed him for his earlier works. Even in delle Grazie's home, where Hamerling had enjoyed unmeasured admiration, there was a certain reserve after the appearance of this epic. Upon me, however, the *Homunculus* made a deep impression. It showed, so I thought, those

spiritually darkening forces which are dominant in modern civilization. I found in it a first warning to the time. But I had difficulty in establishing a relationship to Hamerling. And the appearance of the *Homunculus* at first increased this difficulty in my own mind.

In Hamerling I saw a person who was himself a special revelation of the times. I looked back to the period when Goethe and those who worked with him had brought idealism to a height worthy of humanity. I recognized the need to pass through the gateway of this idealism into the world of real spirit. To me this idealism seemed the noble shadow, not cast into man's soul by the sense-world, but falling into his inner being from a spiritual world, and creating the obligation to go forward from this shadow to the world which has cast it.

I loved Hamerling who had painted these idealistic reflections in such mighty pictures. But it gave me deep distress to have him remain at that stage – that his look was directed backward to the reflections of a spirituality destroyed by materialism rather than forward to the spiritual world now breaking through in a new form. Yet the *Homunculus* strongly attracted me. Though it did not show how man enters into the spiritual world, still it indicated the pass to which men come when they restrict themselves to the unspiritual. My interest in the *Homunculus* happened at a time when I was thinking over the problem of the nature of artistic creation and of beauty. What was then passing through my mind is recorded in the pamphlet *Goethe als Vater einer neuen Aesthetik*⁽¹⁾, which reproduces a paper that I had read at the Goethe Society in Vienna. I desired to discover the reasons why the idealism of a bold philosophy, such as had spoken so impressively in Fichte and Hegel, had nevertheless failed to penetrate to the living spirit. One of the ways by which I sought to discover these causes was my reflection over the errors of a merely idealistic philosophy in the sphere of aesthetics. Hegel and those who thought in his way found the content of art in the appearance of the “idea” in the sense-world. When the “idea” appears in the stuff of the senses, it is manifest as the beautiful. This was their opinion. But the succeeding period refused to recognize any reality in the “idea.” Since the idea of the idealistic world-conception, as this lived in the consciousness of the idealists, did not point to a world of spirit, it could therefore not maintain itself with the successors of these idealists as something possessing reality. Thus arose the “realistic” aesthetics, which saw in the work of art, not the appearance of the idea in a sense-form, but only the sense-image which, because of the needs of human nature, takes on in the work of art an unreal form.

I desired to see as the reality in a work of art the same thing which appears to the senses. But the way which the true artist takes in his creative work appeared to me as a way leading to real spirit. He begins with that which is perceptible to the senses, but he transforms this. In this transformation he is not guided by a merely subjective impulse, but he seeks to give to the sensibly apparent a form which reveals it as if the spirit itself were there present. Not the appearance of the idea in the sense-form is the beautiful, so I said to myself, but the representation of the sensible in the form of the spirit. Thus I saw in the existence of art the entrance of the world of spirit within the world of sense. The true artist yields himself more or less consciously to the spirit. And it is only necessary – so I then said to myself over and over again – to metamorphose the powers of the soul,

which in the case of the artist work upon matter, to a pure spiritual perception free of the senses in order to penetrate into a knowledge of the spiritual world.

At that time, true knowledge, the manifestation of the spiritual in art, and the moral will in man became in my thought the members which unite to form a single whole. I could not but recognize in the human personality a central point at which these are bound in the most immediate unity with the primal being of the world. It is from this central point that the will takes its rise. If the clear light of the spirit shines at this central point, then the will is free. Man is then acting in harmony with the spiritual nature of the world, which creates, not by reason of necessity, but in the evolution of its own nature. At this central point in man the motives of action arise, not out of obscure impulses, but from intuitions which are just as transparent in character as the most transparent thought. In this way I desired by means of a conception of the freedom of the will to find that spirit through which man exists as an individual in the world. By means of an experience of true beauty I desired to find the spirit which works in man when he so labours through the sensible as to express his own being, not merely spiritually as a free spirit, but in such a way that this spiritual being of his flows forth into the world, which is indeed of the spirit but does not directly manifest it. Through a perception of the true I desired to experience the spirit which manifests itself in its own being, whose spiritual reflection is moral conduct, and toward which creative art strives in the shaping of sensible form.

A “philosophy of freedom,” a living vision of the sense world thirsting for the spirit and striving toward it through beauty, a spiritual vision of the living world of truth hovered before my mind.

This was in the year 1888, just at the time when I was introduced into the home of the Protestant pastor, Alfred Formey, in Vienna. Once a week a group of artists and writers used to gather there. Alfred Formey himself had come out as a poet. Fritz Lemmermayer, speaking out of a friendly heart, described him thus: “Warm-hearted, intimate in his feeling for nature, enthusiastic, almost drunk with faith in God and blessedness, so does Alfred Formey write verse in mellow resounding harmonies. It is as if his tread did not rest upon the hard earth, but as if he mused and dreamed high in the clouds.” Such was Alfred Formey also as a man. One felt quite borne away from the earth, when one entered the rectory, and found at first only the host and hostess. The pastor was of a childlike piety; but this piety passed over in its warm disposition in the most obvious way into a lyric mood. One was, as it were, surrounded by an atmosphere of good-heartedness as soon as Formey had spoken a few words. The lady of the house had exchanged the theatre for the rectory. No one would, ever have discovered the former actress in the lovable wife of the pastor entertaining her guests with such delightful charm. Into the mood of this rectory, so other-worldly, the guests now brought “the world” from all directions of the spiritual compass. There from time to time appeared the widow of Friedrich Hebbel. Her appearance was always the signal for a festival. In high old age she developed a sort of art of declamation which took possession of one's heart with an inner fascination, and completely captivated one's artistic sensibilities. And when Christine Hebbel told a story, the whole room was permeated with the warmth of the soul. At these Formey evenings I became acquainted also with the actress Wilborn. An interesting

person with a brilliant voice in declamation. Lenau's *Drei Zigeuner*⁽²⁾ which one could hear from her lips with constantly renewed pleasure. It soon came about that the group which had assembled at the home of Formey would from time to time gather also at that of Frau Wilborn. But how different it was there! Fond of the world, lovers of life, thirsty for humour – such were then the same persons who at the rectory remained serious even when the “Vienna People's Poet,” Friederich Schlögel, read aloud his boisterous drolleries. He had, for instance, written a “skit” when the practice of cremation had been introduced among a small circle of the Viennese. In this he told how a husband who had loved his wife in a somewhat “coarse” manner had always shouted to her whenever anything did not please him: “Old woman, off to the crematorium.” At Formey's such things would call forth remarks which formed a sort of episode in cultural history throughout Vienna; at Wilborn's people laughed till the chairs rattled. At Wilborn's Formey looked like a man of the world; Wilborn at Formey's like an abbess. One could pursue the most penetrating reflections upon the metamorphosis of human beings even to the point of the facial expression.

To Formey's came also Emilie Mataja, who, under the name of Emil Marriot, wrote her romances marked by penetrating observation of life: a fascinating personality, who in the manner of her life revealed the cruelties of human existence clearly, with genius, and often charmingly. An artist who knew how to represent life when it mingles its riddles with everyday affairs, where it hurls the tragedy of fate ruinously among men.

We often had the opportunity to hear also the four women artists of the Austrian Tschamper quartette; there Fritz Lemmermayer melodramatically recited Heibel's Heideknabe, to a fiery piano accompaniment by Alfred Stross.

I loved this rectory, where one could find so much warmth. There the noblest humanity was actively manifest.

At the same period I realized that I must busy myself in a more serious manner with the situation of public affairs in Austria. For during a brief period in 1888 I was entrusted with the editorship of the *Deutsche Wochenschrift*⁽³⁾. This journal had been founded by the historian, Heinrich Friedjung. My brief editorial experience came during a time when the interrelationships between the races in Austria had reached a specially tense condition. It was not easy for me to write each week an article on public affairs; for at bottom I was at the farthest possible remove from all partisan conceptions of life. What interested me was the evolution of culture in the progress of humanity. And I had so to handle the point of view resulting from this fact that the complete justification of this view should not cause my article to seem the product of a person alien to the world. Besides, it happened that the “educational reform” then being introduced into Austria, especially by Minister Gautsch, seemed to me injurious to the interests of culture. In this field my comments seemed questionable to Schröer, who always felt a strong sympathy for partisan points of view. I praised the very suitable plans which the Catholic clerical Minister, Leo Thun, had brought about in the Austrian Gymnasium as early as the fifties, as opposed to the measures of Gautsch. When Schröer had read my article, he said, “Do you wish, then, to have again a clerical educational policy for Austria?”

This editorial activity, though brief, was for me very important. It turned my attention to the style in which public affairs were then discussed in Austria. To me this style was intensely antipathetic. Even in discussing such situations I desired to bring in something which should be marked by its comprehensive relation to the great spiritual and human objectives. This I missed in the style of the daily paper in those days. How to bring this characteristic into play was then my daily care. And it had to be a care, for at that time I did not possess the power which a rich life experience in this field would have given me. At bottom I was quite unprepared for this editorial work. I thought I could see whither we ought to steer in the most varied departments of life; but I had not the formulae so systematized as to be enlightening to newspaper readers. So the preparation of each week's issue was a difficult struggle for me.

Thus I felt as if I had been relieved of a great burden when this activity came to an end through the fact that the owner of the paper got into a controversy with the founder over the question of the price at which the property had been sold.

Yet this work brought me into a rather close relationship with persons whose activities had to do with the most diverse phases of public life. I became acquainted with Victor Adler, who was then the undisputed leader of the Socialists in Austria. In this slender, unassuming man, there resided an energetic will. When he talked over a cup of coffee I always had the feeling: "The content of what he says is unimportant, commonplace, but his way of speaking marks a will which can never be bent." I became acquainted with Pernerstorffer, who was then changing over from the German National to the Socialist camp. A strong personality possessed of comprehensive knowledge. A keen critic of misconduct in public life. He was then editing a monthly, *Deutsche Worte*. I found this stimulating reading. In company with these persons I met with others who either for scientific or for partisan reasons were advocates of Socialism. Through these I was led to take up Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Rodbertus, and other writers on social economics. To none of these could I gain any inner relationship. It was a personal distress to me to hear men say that the material economic forces in human history carried forward man's real evolution, and that the spiritual was only an ideal superstructure over this sub-structure of the "truly real." I knew the reality of the spiritual. The assertions of the theorizing Socialists meant to me the closing of men's eyes to true reality. In this connection, however, it became clear to me that the "social question" itself had an immeasurable importance. But it seemed to me the tragedy of the times that this question was treated by persons who were wholly possessed by the materialism of contemporary civilization. It was my conviction that just this question was one which could be rightly put only from the point of view of a spiritual world-conception. Thus as a young man of twenty-seven years I was filled with "questions" and "riddles" concerning the outer life of humanity, while the nature of the soul and its relationships to the spiritual world had taken on, in a self-contained conception, a more and more definite form within me. At first I could work only in a spiritual way from this perception. And this work took on more and more the direction which some years later led me to the conception of my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*.

Notes:

1. Goethe as the Founder of a New Science of Aesthetics.
 2. Three Gipsies.
 3. The German Weekly.
-

The Story of My Life

IX

It was at this time (1888) that I took my first journey into Germany. This was made possible through the invitation to participate in the Weimar edition of Goethe, which was to be prepared by the Goethe Institute under a commission from the Grand-duchess Sophie of Saxony. Some years earlier Goethe's grandson, Walther von Goethe, had died. He had left as a legacy to the Grand-duchess the manuscripts of Goethe. She had thereupon founded the Goethe Institute and, in conjunction with a number of Goethe specialists – chief among whom were Hermann Grimm, Gustav von Loeper, and William Scherer – had determined to prepare an edition of Goethe in which his already known works should be combined with the unpublished remains.

My publications concerning Goethe were the occasion of my being requested to prepare a part of Goethe's writings on natural science for this edition. I was called to Weimar to make a general survey of the natural-scientific part of the remains and to take the first steps required by my task.

My sojourn for some weeks in Goethe's city was a festival time in my life. For years I had lived in the thoughts of Goethe; now I was permitted to be in the places where these thoughts had arisen. I passed these weeks in the elevated impression arising from this feeling. I was able from day to day to have before my eyes the papers in which were contained the supplements to that which I had already prepared for the edition of Goethe for the Kürschner *National-Literatur*.

My work in connection with this edition had given me a mental picture of Goethe's world-conception. Now the question to be settled was how this picture would stand in view of the fact that hitherto unpublished material dealing with natural science was to be found in these literary remains. With the greatest intensity I worked at this portion of the Goethe legacy.

I soon thought I could recognize that the previously unpublished material afforded an important contribution toward the very task of more thoroughly understanding Goethe's form of cognition.

In my writings published up to that time I had conceived this form of cognition as consisting in the fact that Goethe perceived vitally. In the ordinary state of consciousness man is at first a stranger to the being of the world by which he is surrounded. Out of this

remoteness arises the impulse first to develop, before knowing the world, powers of knowledge which are not present in ordinary consciousness.

From this point of view it was highly significant for me when I came upon such directing thoughts as the following among Goethe's papers: –

“In order to get our bearings to some extent in these different sorts [Goethe here refers to the different sorts of knowledge in man and his different relationships to the outer world] we may classify these as: practising, knowing, perceiving, and comprehending.

“1. Practical, benefit-seeking, acquisitive persons are the first who, so to speak, sketch the field of science and lay hold upon practice. Consciousness gives a sort of certitude to these through experience, and necessity gives them a certain breadth.

“2. Knowledge-craving persons require a serene look free from personal ends, a restless curiosity, a clear understanding, and these stand always in relationship with the previous type. They likewise elaborate what they discover, only they do this in a scientific sense.

“3. The perceptive are in themselves productive; and knowledge, while itself progressing, calls for perception without intending this, and goes over into perception; and, no matter how much the knowers may make the sign of the cross to shield themselves from imagination, yet they must none the less, if they are not to deceive themselves, call in the aid of the imagination.

“4. The comprehending, whom one may call in a proud sense the creative, are in themselves in the highest sense productive; beginning as they do with the idea, they express thereby the unity of the whole, and it is in a certain sense in accord with the facts of nature thus to conform themselves with this idea.”

It becomes clear from such comment that Goethe considered man in his ordinary consciousness as standing *outside* the being of the external world. He must pass over into another form of consciousness if he desires knowingly to unite with this being. During my sojourn in Weimar the question arose within me in more and more decisive form: How must a man build further upon the foundations of knowledge laid by Goethe in order to be guided knowingly over from Goethe's sort of perceptions to that sort which can take up into itself actual experience in the spirit, as this has been given to me?

Goethe goes forward from that which is attained on the lower stages of knowledge, by “practical” persons and by those “craving knowledge.” Upon this he causes to shine in his mind whatever can shine in the “perceiving” and the “comprehending” through productive powers of the mind upon the content of the lower stages of knowledge. When he stands thus with the lower knowledge in the mind in the light of the higher perception and comprehension, then he feels that he is in union with the being of things. To live knowingly in the spirit is, to be sure, not yet attained in this way; but the road to this is pointed out from one side, from that side which results from the relation of man to the

outer world. It was clear to my mind that satisfaction could come only with a grasp upon the other side, which arises from man's relation to himself.

When consciousness becomes *productive*, and therefore brings forth from within itself something to add to the first pictures of reality, can it then remain within a reality, or does it float out of this to lose itself in the unreal? What stands against consciousness in its own "product" – it is this thing that we must look into. Human consciousness must first effect an understanding of itself; then can man find a confirmation of the experience of pure spirit. Such were the ways taken by my thoughts, repeating in clearer fashion their earlier forms, as I pored over Goethe's papers in Weimar.

It was summer. Little was to be seen of the contemporary art life of Weimar. One could yield oneself in complete serenity to the artistic, which represented, as it were, a memorial to Goethe's work. One did not live in the present; one was drawn back to the time of Goethe. At the moment it was the age of Liszt in Weimar. But the representatives of this age were not there.

The hours after work I passed with those who were connected with the Institute. In addition there were others sharing in the work who came from elsewhere for longer or shorter visits. I was received with extraordinary kindness by Bernhard Suphan, the director of the Goethe Institute; and in Julius Wahle, a permanent collaborator, I found a dear friend. All this, however, took on a definite form when I went there two years later for a longer period, and it must be narrated at the point where I shall tell about that period of my life.

More than anything else at that time I craved to know personally Eduard von Hartmann, with whom I had corresponded for years in regard to philosophical matters. This was to take place during a brief stay in Berlin which followed that in Weimar.

I had the privilege of a long conversation with the philosopher. He lay upon a sofa, his legs stretched out and his upper body erect. It was in such a posture that he passed by far the greater part of his life from the time when the suffering with his knee began. I saw before me a forehead which was an evident manifestation of a clear and keen understanding, and eyes which in their look revealed that assurance felt in the innermost being of the man as to that which he knew. A mighty beard framed in the face. He spoke with complete confidence, which showed how he had woven certain basic thoughts about the whole world-concept and thus in his way illuminated it. In these thoughts everything which came to him from other points of view was at once overwhelmed with criticism. So I sat facing him while he sharply passed, judgment upon me, but in reality never inwardly listened to me. For him the being of things lay in the unconscious, and must ever remain hidden there so far as concerned human consciousness; for me the unconscious was something which could more and more be raised up into consciousness through the strivings of the soul's life. During the course of the conversation about this, I said that one should not assume beforehand that a concept is something severed from reality and representing only an unreality in consciousness. Such a view could never be the starting-point for a theory of cognition. For by this means one shuts oneself off from

access to all reality in that one can then only believe that one is living in concepts and that one can never approach toward a reality except, through hypothetical concepts – that is, in an unreal manner. One should rather seek to prove beforehand whether this view of the concept as an unreality is tenable, or whether it rises out of a preconception. Eduard von Hartmann replied that there could be no argument as to this; in the very definition of the term “concept” lay the evidence that nothing real is to be found there. When I received such an answer I was chilled to the soul. Definitions to be the point of departure for conceptions of life! I realized how far removed I was from contemporary philosophy. While I sat in the train on my return journey, buried in thoughts and recollections of this visit, which was nevertheless so valuable to me, I felt again that chilling of the heart. It was something which affected me for a long time afterward.

Except for the visit to Eduard von Hartmann, the brief sojourns I made at Berlin and Munich, while passing through Germany after my stay at Weimar, were given over entirely to absorption in the art which these places afforded. The broadening of the scope of my perception in this direction seemed to me at that time especially enriching to my mental life. So this first long journey that I was able to take was of very comprehensive significance in the development of my conceptions as to art. A fullness of vital impressions remained with me when I spent some weeks just after this visit in the Salzkammergut with the family whose sons I had already been teaching for a number of years. I was further advised to find my vocation in private tutoring, and I was inwardly determined upon the same course because I desired to bring forward to a certain point in his life evolution the boy whose education had been entrusted to me some years before, and in whom I had succeeded in awakening the soul from a state of absolute sleep.

After this, when I had returned to Vienna, I had the opportunity to mingle a great deal in a group of persons bound together by a woman whose mystical, theosophical type of mind made a profound impression upon all the members of this group. The hours I spent in the home of this woman, Marie Lang, were in the highest degree useful to me. An earnest type of life-conception and life-experience was present in vital and nobly beautiful form in Marie Lang. Her profound inner experiences came to expression in a sonorous and penetrating voice. A life which struggled hard with itself and the world could find in her only in a mystical seeking a sort of satisfaction, even though one that was incomplete. So she almost seemed created to be the soul of a group of seeking men. Into this circle had penetrated theosophy initiated by H. P. Blavatsky at the close of the preceding century. Franz Hartmann, who by reason of his numerous theosophical works and his relations with H. P. Blavatsky, had become widely known, also introduced his theosophy into this circle – Marie Lang had accepted much out of this theosophy. The thought-content which is there to be found seemed in many respects to harmonize with the characteristics of her mind. Yet what she took from this source had attached itself to her in a merely external way. But within herself she had mystical possession which had been lifted into the realm consciousness in a quite elementary fashion out of a heart tested by life.

The architects, littérateurs, and other persons whom I met in the home of Marie Lang would scarcely have been interested in the theosophy offered by Franz Hartmann had not

Marie Lang to some extent participated in this. Least of all would I myself have been interested in it; for the way of relating oneself to the spiritual world which was evidenced in the writings of Franz Hartmann was absolutely opposite to the bent of my own mind. I could not concede that it was possessed of real and inner truth. I was less concerned with its content than with the manner in which it affected men who, nevertheless, were truly seekers.

Through Marie Lang I became acquainted with Frau Rosa Mayreder, who was a friend of hers. Rosa Mayreder was one of those persons to whom in the course of my life I have given the greatest reverence, and in whose development I have had the greatest interest. I can well imagine that what I have to say here will please her very little; but this is the way that I feel as to what came into my life by reason of her. Of the writings of Rosa Mayreder which since that time have justly made so great an impression upon so many persons, and which undoubtedly gave her a very conspicuous place in literature, nothing had at that time appeared. But what is revealed in these writings lived in Rosa Mayreder in a spiritual form of expression to which I had to respond with the strongest possible inner sympathy. This woman impressed me as if she possessed each of the gifts of the human mind in such measure that these in their harmonious interaction constituted the right expression of a human being. She united various artistic gifts with a free, penetrating power of observation. Her paintings are just as much marked by individual unfoldings of life as by absorption in the depths of the objective world. The stories with which she began her literary career are perfect harmonies made up of personal strivings and objective observations. Her later works show this character more and more. Most clearly of all does this come to light in her late two-volume work, *Kritik der Weiblichkeit*⁽¹⁾. I consider it a beautiful treasure of my life to have spent many hours during the time about which I am here writing together with Rosa Mayreder during the years of her seeking and mental strivings.

I must in this connection refer again to one of my human relationships which took its rise and reached a vital intensity above the sphere of thought-content, and, in a sense, quite independently of this. For my world-conception, and even more my emotional tendencies, were not those of Rosa Mayreder. The way by which I ascended from that which is in this respect recognized as scientific into an experience of the spiritual cannot possibly be congenial to her. She seeks to use the scientific as the foundation for ideas which have as their goal the complete development of human personality without permitting the knowledge of a world of pure spirit to find access into this personality. What is to me a necessity in this direction to her means almost nothing. She is wholly devoted to the furtherance of the present human individuality and pays no attention to the action of spiritual forces within these individualities. Through this method of hers she has achieved the most significant exposition yet produced of the nature of womanhood and the vital needs of woman.

Neither could I ever satisfy Rosa Mayreder in respect to the view she formed of my attitude toward art. She thought that I denied true art, because I sought to get a grasp upon specific examples of art by means of the view which entered my mind by reason of my experience of the spiritual. Because of this she maintained that I could not sufficiently

penetrate into the revelation of the sense-world and thus arrive at the reality of art, whereas I was seeking just this thing – to penetrate within the full truth of the sensible forms. But all this did not detract from the inner friendly interest in this personality which developed in me at the time, during which I owe to her some of the most valuable hours of my life – an interest which in truth remains undiminished even to the present day.

At the home of Rosa Mayreder I was often privileged to share in conversations for which gifted men gathered there. Very quiet, seemingly with his gaze inward upon himself rather than listening to those about him, sat Hugo Wolf, who was an intimate friend of Rosa Mayreder. One listened inwardly to him even though he spoke so little. For whatever entered into his life was communicated in mysterious fashion to those who might be with him. With heartfelt affection was I attached to the husband of Frau Rosa, Karl Mayreder, so fine a person both as man and as artist, and also to his brother, Julius Mayreder, so enthusiastic in regard to art. Marie Lang and her circle and Friedrich Eckstein, who was then wholly given over to the spiritual tendencies and world-conception of theosophy, were often present. This was the time when my Philosophy of Spiritual activity was taking more and more definite form in my mind. Rosa Mayreder is the person with whom I talked most concerning this form at the time when my book was thus coming into existence. She relieved me of a part of the inner loneliness in which I had lived. She was striving for a conception of the actual human personality; I toward a revelation of the world which might seek for this personality at the basis of the soul by means of spiritual eyes thus opened. Between the two there were many bridges. Often in later life has there arisen before my grateful spirit one or another picture from this experience, for example, memory pictures of a walk through the noble Alpine forests, during which Rosa Mayreder and I discussed the true meaning of human freedom.

Notes:

1. A survey of the Woman Problem.

The Story of My Life

X

WHEN I look back upon my life, the first three decades appeal to me as a chapter complete in itself. At the close of this period I removed to Weimar, to work for almost seven years at the Goethe and Schiller Institute. The time that I spent in Vienna between the first journey to Germany, which I have described, and my later settling down in the city of Goethe I look upon as the period which brought to a certain conclusion within me that toward which the mind had been striving. This conclusion found expression in the preparation for my book *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*. An essential part of the general ideas in which I then expressed my views consisted in the fact that the sense-world did not pass with me as true reality. In my writings and lectures at that time I

always expressed myself in such a way as to make the human mind appear as a true reality in the creation of a thought, which it does not form out of the sense world but unfolds in an activity above the region of sense perception. This sense-free thinking I conceived as that which places the soul within the spiritual being of the world. But I also emphasized strongly the fact that, while man lives within this sense-free thinking, he really finds himself consciously in the spiritual foundations of existence. All talk about limits of knowledge had for me no meaning. Knowing meant to me the rediscovery within the perceptual world of the spiritual content experienced in the soul. When anyone spoke of limits of knowledge, I saw therein the admission that he did not experience spiritually within himself the true reality, and for this reason could not rediscover this in the perceptual world.

The first consideration with me in advancing my own insight was the problem of refuting the conception of the limitation of knowledge. I wished to turn away from that road to knowledge which looked toward the sense-world, and which would then break through from the sense-world into true reality. I desired to make clear that true reality is to be sought, not by such a breaking through from without, but by sinking down into the inner life of man. Whoever seeks to break through from without and then discovers that this is impossible – such a person speaks of the limitation of knowledge. But this impossibility does not consist in a limitation of man's capacity for knowledge, but in the fact that one is seeking for something of which one cannot speak in true self-comprehension. While pressing on farther into the sense-world, one is there seeking in a certain sense a continuation of the sensible behind the perceptual. It is as if one living in illusions should seek in further illusions the causes of his illusions.

The sense of my conception at that time was as follows: While man is evolving from birth onward he stands consciously facing the world. He attains first to physical perception.

But this is at first an outpost of knowledge. In this perception there is not at once revealed all that is in the world. The world is real, but man does not at first attain to this reality. It remains at first closed to him. While he has not yet set his own being over against the world, he fashions for himself a world-conception which is void of being. This conception of the world is really an illusion. In sense-perception man faces a world of illusion. But when from within man sense-free thought comes forth to meet the sense-perception, then illusion is permeated with reality and ceases to be illusion.

Then the human spirit, living its own life within, meets the spirit of the world which is now no longer concealed from man behind the sense-world, but weaves and breathes within the sense-world.

I now saw that the finding of the spirit within the sense-world is not a question of logical inferences or of projection of sense perception, but something which comes to pass when man continues his evolution from perception to the experience of sense-free thinking.

What I wrote in 1888 in the second volume of my edition of Goethe's scientific writings is permeated with such views: "Whoever attributes to thinking his capacity for an awareness which goes beyond sense-perception must also attribute to thought objects which lie beyond mere sense reality. But these objects of thought are ideas. When this thinking of the idea grows strong enough, then it merges with the fundamental existence of the world; what is at work without enters into the spirit of man: he becomes one with objective reality at its highest potency. Becoming aware of the idea within reality is the true communion of man. Thinking has the same significance in relation to the idea as the eye has for light, the ear for sound. It is the **organ of perception.**"⁽¹⁾

I was then less concerned to represent the world as it is when sense-free thought advances beyond the experience of oneself to a spiritual perception, than I was to show that the being of nature as revealed to sense-perception is spiritual. I wished to express the truth that nature is in reality spiritual. It was inevitable from this that my fate should bring me into conflict with the contemporary formulators of theories of cognition. These conceived, to begin with, a nature void of spirit, and therefore their task was to show how far man is justified in conceiving in his own spirit a spiritual conception of nature. I wished to oppose to this an entirely different theory of cognition. I wished to show that man in thinking does not form conceptions in regard to nature while standing outside of her, but that knowing means experiencing, so that man while knowing is actually inside the being of things. Moreover, it was my fate to knit my own views to those of Goethe. In this union there were many opportunities to show how nature is spiritual, because Goethe had striven toward a spiritual nature; but one does not in the same way have the opportunity to speak of the world of pure spirit as such since Goethe did not carry his spiritual view of nature all the way to direct perception of spirit.

In a secondary degree I was then concerned to find expression for the idea of freedom. When man acts upon his instincts, impulses, passions, etc., he is not free. Then impulses of which he becomes conscious as he does of the impressions from the sense-world determine his action. But his true being is then not acting. He is then acting on a plane where his true being has not yet manifested itself. He then discloses himself as man just as little as the sense-world discloses its being to mere sense-observation. Now, the sense-world is not really an illusion, but is only made such by man. But man in his action can permit the sense-like impulses, desires, etc., really to become illusions; then he permits illusions to act upon him; it is not he himself that acts. He permits the unspiritual to act. His spiritual being acts only when he finds the impulses for action in the moral intuitions of his sense-free thought. Then he alone acts, nothing else. Then he is a free being acting from within. I desired to show that whoever rejects sense-free thought as something purely spiritual in man can never grasp the conception of freedom; but that such a conception comes about the moment one understands the reality of sense-free thinking.

In this field I was at that time less intent upon representing the world of pure spirit, in which man experiences his moral intuitions, than to emphasize the spiritual character of these moral intuitions. Had I been concerned with the former should have been obliged to begin the chapter in *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* on "Moral Imagination" in the following way: "The free spirit acts upon his impulses; these are intuitions which are

experienced by him apart from the existence of nature in the world of pure spirit without his being aware of this spiritual world in the ordinary state of consciousness.” But it was my concern then only to describe the purely spiritual character of moral intuitions. Therefore I referred to the existence of these intuitions within the totality of the world of human ideas, and said in regard to them: “The free spirit acts upon his impulses, which are intuitions that by means of thought are selected from the totality of his world of ideas.” – One who does not direct his gaze toward a world of pure spirit, and who could not, therefore, write the first statement, could also not entirely admit the second. But allusions to the first statement are to be found in plenty in my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*; for example: “The highest stage of the individual life is thinking in concepts without reference to a specific content of perception. We determine the content of a concept by means of pure intuition out of the sphere of ideas. Such a concept then shows no relation to definite perceptions.” Here sense-perceptions are intended. Had I then desired to write about the spiritual world, and not merely about the spiritual character of moral intuitions, I should have been forced to refer to the contrast between sense-perceptions and spiritual perceptions. But I was concerned only to emphasize the non-sensible character of moral intuitions.

My world of ideas was moving in this direction when the first chapter of my life ended with my thirtieth year, and my entrance upon the Weimar period.

Notes:

1. Cf. Einleitung zu Goethes naturwissenschaftlichen Schriften, in Kürschner's Deutsche National-Literatur, p. iv.

The Story of My Life

XI

AT the close of this first stage of my life it became a question of inner necessity for me to attain a clearly defined position in relation to certain tendencies of the human mind. One of these tendencies was mysticism. As this passed in review before my mind at the various epochs in the evolution of humanity – in Oriental Wisdom, in Neo-Platonism, in the Christian Middle Ages, in the endeavours of the Kabalists – it was only with the greatest difficulty that I, with my different temper of mind, could establish any relationship to it. The mystic seemed to me to be a man who failed to come into right relation to the world of ideas, in which for me the spiritual has its existence. I felt that it was a deficiency in real spirituality when, in order to attain satisfaction in one's ideas, one plunges into an inner world void of all ideas. In this I could see no road to light, but rather a way to spiritual darkness. It seemed to me a powerlessness in cognition when, the mind seeks to reach spiritual reality by an escape from ideas, which, indeed, the spirit does not actually reside, but through which it enters into human experience. And yet

something attracted me toward the mystical strivings of humanity. This was the character of the inner experience of the mystics. They desire living contact with the sources of human existence, not merely a view of these, as something external, by means of ideal observation. And yet it was also clear to me that one arrives at the same kind of inner experience when one sinks down into the depths of the soul accompanied by the full and clear content of the ideal world, instead of stripping off this content when thus sinking into one's depths. I desired to carry the light of the ideal world into the warmth of the inner experience. The mystic seemed to me to be a man who cannot perceive the spirit in ideas and who is therefore inwardly chilled by ideas. The coldness which he feels in ideas drives him to seek through an escape from ideas for the warmth of which the soul has need.

As for myself, the warmth of my soul's experience increased in proportion as I shaped into definite ideas the previously indefinite experience of the spiritual world. I often said to myself: "How these mystics fail to understand the warmth, the mental intimacy, which one experiences when one lives in association with ideas permeated by the spiritual!" To me this living association had always been like a personal intercourse with the spiritual world.

The mystics seemed to me to strengthen the position of the materialistically minded observer of nature instead of weakening it. The latter objects to the observation of the spiritual world, either because he does not admit the existence of such a world, or else because he considers human understanding adapted to the physically visible one. He sets up boundaries of knowledge at that point where lie the boundaries of the physically perceptible. The ordinary mystic is of the same opinion as the materialist as regards human ideal knowledge. He maintains that ideas do not extend to the spiritual, and therefore that in ideal knowledge man must always remain outside the spiritual. Since, however, he desires to attain to the spirit, he turns to an inner experience void of ideas. He thus yields to the materialistic observer of nature in that he restricts ideal knowledge to the knowledge of the merely natural.

But if anyone enters into the interior of his own soul without taking ideas with him, he thus arrives at the inner region of mere feeling. Such a person then says that the spiritual cannot be reached by a way which is called in ordinary life a way of knowledge, but that one must sink down from the sphere of knowledge into the sphere of the feelings in order to experience the spiritual.

With such a view a materialistic observer of nature can declare himself in perfect agreement unless he considers all talk about the spirit as a fantastic playing with words which signifies nothing real whatever. He then sees in his system of ideas directed toward the things of sense the sole justifiable basis for knowledge, and in the mystical relation ship of man to the spirit something purely personal, to which one is either inclined or not inclined according to one's temperament, but of which one can never speak in the same way as one speaks of the content of a "positive knowledge." Man's relation to the spiritual must be relegated entirely, he thinks, to sphere of "subjective feeling."

While I held this before my mind the forces within my soul which stood in opposition to the mystic grew steadily stronger. The perception of the spiritual in inner mental experience was to me far more certain than the perception of the things of sense; to place boundaries of knowledge before this mental experience was to me quite impossible. I objected with all positiveness to mere feeling as a way into the spiritual. And yet, when I thought of the nature of the mystic's experience, I felt once more a remote kinship between this and my own attitude toward the spiritual world. I sought association with the spirit by means of spirit-illuminated ideas, in the same way as the mystic seeks this through association with the non-ideal. I also could say that my view rests upon "mystical" ideal experience.

To achieve for this mental conflict within myself the clarification which at length came about was not a matter of great difficulty; for the real perception of the spiritual casts light upon the range of applicability of ideas, and this assigned proper limits to the personal. As an observer of the spiritual, one knows that the personal ceases to function in man when the very mind itself becomes an organ of perception of the spiritual world.

The difficulty, however, consisted in the fact that I had to find forms in which to express my perceptions in my writings. One can by no means easily find a new mode of expression for an observation which is unfamiliar to the reader. I had to choose between putting that which I found it needful to say either in those forms which are generally applied in the field of nature-observation, or in forms which are used by writers inclined toward mystical experiences. By the latter method the resultant difficulties seemed to me to be unavoidable.

I reached the conclusion that the form of expression in the sphere of the natural sciences consists in content-filled ideas, even though the content was materialistically thought out. I desired to form ideas which bore in the same way upon the spiritual as the natural-scientific ideas bore upon the physical. In this way I could preserve the ideal character for that which I had to say. This seemed to me impossible with the use of mystical forms; for these do not refer to the reality outside of man, but describe only subjective experiences within man. My purpose was, not to describe human experiences, but to show how a spiritual world is revealed in man through spiritual organs.

Out of such fundamental considerations I gave form to the ideas from which my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* later evolved. I did not, in the forming of these ideas, permit any mystical rhapsodies to become dominant within me, in spite of the fact that I perceived clearly that the ultimate experience of that which would manifest itself in ideas must be of the same character within the soul as the inner awareness of the mystic. Yet there was the difference that in my presentation of the matter man surrenders himself and the external spiritual world comes to objective manifestation, whereas the mystic strengthens his own inner life and in this way effaces the true form of the objective spiritual.

The Story of My Life

XII

THE time that I consumed in the setting forth of Goethe's natural-scientific ideas for the introduction to Kürschner's *Deutsche National-Literatur* was very protracted. I began this task in the year 1880, and I had not finished even when I entered upon the second phase of my life with the removal from Vienna to Weimar. The reason for this lay in the difficulties I have described in connection with the natural scientific and the mystical form of expression.

While I was labouring to reduce to correct forms of thought Goethe's attitude to the natural sciences, I had to advance also in the formulation of that which had taken shape before my mind as spiritual experience in my perception of the world process. I was thus constantly driven from Goethe to the representation of my own world-conception and back again to him, in order the better to interpret his thoughts by means of the thoughts to which I myself had attained. I felt that the most essential thing in Goethe was his refusal to be content with any sort of theoretically easily surveyed thought-pictures as contrasted with the knowledge of the illimitable richness of reality. Goethe becomes rationalistic when he wishes to describe the manifold forms of plants and animals. He struggles for ideas which manifest themselves as active in the evolution of the earth when he wishes to grasp the geologic building of the earth or the phenomena of meteorology. But his ideas are not abstract thoughts; they are images living in the form of thoughts within the mind.

When I grasped what he has set forth in such pictures in his natural-scientific works, I had before me something which satisfied me to the bottom of my soul. I looked upon a content of ideal images of which I could not but believe that this content – if followed further – represented a true reflection within the human spirit of that which happens in nature. It was clear to me that the form of thought in the natural sciences must be raised to this of Goethe's.

But at the same time, in this grasping of Goethe's knowledge of nature, there came the need for representing the content of ideal images in relation to spiritual reality itself. The ideal images are not justifiable unless they refer to a spiritual reality lying at the foundation of the things of sense. But Goethe, in his holy awe before the immeasurable richness of reality, refrains from entering upon a presentation of the spiritual world after having brought the sense-world to the form of a spiritual image in his mind.

I had now to show that Goethe really experienced the life of the soul in that he pressed forward from sense-nature to spirit-nature, but that anyone else can comprehend Goethe's soul-life only by going beyond him and carrying his own knowledge on to ideal conception of the spiritual world itself. When Goethe spoke of nature, he was standing within the spiritual. He feared that he would become abstract if he proceeded further beyond this vital standing-within to a living in thoughts concerning this standing-within. He desired the experience of being within the spirit; but he did not desire to think himself within the spirit.

I often felt that I should be false to Goethe's way of thinking if I only gave expression to thoughts concerning his world conception. And in regard to every detail which I had to interpret concerning Goethe I had again and again to master the method of speaking about Goethe in Goethe's own way. My setting forth of Goethe's ideas consisted in the struggle, lasting for years, gradually to achieve a better understanding of him with the help of his own ideas. When I look back upon this endeavour I have to say to myself that I owe to this in large measure the evolution of my spiritual experience of knowledge. This evolution proceeded far more slowly than would have been the case if the Goethe task had not been set by destiny on the pathway of my life. I should then have followed my spiritual experiences and have set these forth as they came to light. I should have broken through into the spiritual world more quickly; but I should have had no inducement to sink down by actual striving into my own inner self.

Thus by means of my Goethe task I experienced the difference between a state of soul in which the spiritual world manifests itself, so to speak, as an act of grace, and one in which step by step the soul first makes its own inner self like the spirit, in order that, when the soul experiences itself as true spirit, it may then stand within the spiritual of the world. But in this standing-within man first realizes that the human spirit and the spiritual world may come into union one with the other within the human soul.

During the time that I was working at my interpretation of Goethe, I had Goethe always beside me as an admonisher who called inaudibly to me: "Whoever too rashly moves forward on the spiritual way may attain to a narrowly restricted experience of the spirit, but he enters into a content of reality impoverished of all the richness of life."

In my relation to the Goethe work I could observe clearly "how Karma works in human life." Destiny is made of two forms of fact-complexes which grow into unity in human life. The one streams from the struggle of the soul outward; the other comes from the outer world into man. My own mental impulses moved toward the perception of the spiritual; the outer spiritual life of the world brought the Goethe work to me. I had to reduce to a harmony within my consciousness the two currents which there met. I occupied the last year of the first phase of my life in justifying myself alternately in the eyes of Goethe and then in my own eyes.

The task I set myself in my doctor's dissertation was an inner experience: that of bringing about an "understanding of man's consciousness with itself." For I saw that man can understand what the genuine reality in the outer world is only when he has perceived this genuine reality within himself.

This bringing together of the genuine reality of the outer world and the genuine reality of the inner life of the soul must be achieved for the knowing consciousness through tireless spiritual activity; for the willing and the acting consciousness it is always present when man in action experiences his own freedom.

That freedom exists as a matter of fact for the unprejudiced consciousness and yet becomes a riddle for the understanding is due to the fundamental fact that man does not

possess his own true being, his genuine self-consciousness, as something given from the beginning, but must first achieve this through an understanding of his consciousness with itself.

That which makes man of the highest worth-freedom can be won only after appropriate preparation.

My *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* is based upon an experience which consists in the understanding of human consciousness with itself. In willing, freedom is practised; in feeling, it is experienced; in thinking, it is known. Only, in order to attain this last, one must not lose the life out of thinking.

While I was working at my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, it was my constant endeavour in the statement of my thoughts to keep my inner experience fully awake within the very thoughts. This gives to thoughts the mystical character of inner perception, but makes the perception like the perception of the outer physical world. If one forces oneself through to such an inner experience, then one no longer finds any contradiction between knowledge of nature and knowledge of spirit. It becomes clear to one that the second is only a metamorphosed continuation of the first. Since this appeared thus to me, I could later place on the title-page of my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* the motto: **Seelische Beobachtungsergebnisse nach naturwissenschaftliche Methode⁽¹⁾**. For, when the natural-scientific methods are truly followed in the spiritual sphere, then these lead one in knowledge into this sphere.

There was great significance for me at that time in my thorough-going work upon Goethe's fairy-tale of *The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*, which forms the conclusion of his *Entertainments of the German Wanderers*. These "riddle tales" have had many interpreters. I was not at all interested in the "interpretation" of the content. I wished simply to take that in its poetic, artistic form. I always had an antipathy to shattering the dominant fantasy with intellectual interpretation.

I saw that these poems of Goethe's had arisen out of his spiritual intercourse with Schiller. When Schiller wrote his **Briefe zur Förderung der ästhetischen Erziehung des Menschen⁽²⁾**, his mind was passing through the philosophical phase of its evolution. The "understanding of human consciousness with itself" was a mental task which occupied him most intensely. He saw the human mind on the one side wholly absorbed in intellectual activity. He felt that the mind dominant in the purely intellectual was not dependent upon the bodily and sensible. And yet he found in this form of supersensible activity something unsatisfying. The mind is "in the spirit" when it is given over to the "logical necessity" of the reason, but in this activity it is neither free nor inwardly spiritually alive. It is given over to an abstract shadow-image of the spirit, but is not weaving and ruling in the life and existence of the spirit. On the other side, Schiller observed that, in an opposite sort of activity, the mind is wholly given over to the bodily – the sense-perceptions and the instinctive impulses. Then the influence out of the spiritual shadow-images is lost from the mind, but it is given over to natural law, which does not constitute its being. Schiller came to the conclusion that man is not "true man"

in either of these activities. But he can produce through himself that which is not given to him by nature or by the rational shadows of the spiritual coming to existence without his effort. He can take his reason into his sense-activities; and he can elevate the sensible into a higher realm of consciousness so that it acts like the spiritual. Thus he attains to a mood midway between the logical and the natural compulsion.

Schiller sees man in such a mood when he is living in the artistic. The aesthetic conception of the world directs its look upon the sensible, but in such a way that it perceives therein the spirit. It lives in shadows of the spirit, but in its creating or its enjoying it gives to the spirit a sensible form so that it loses the shadow existence.

Years before had this endeavour of Schiller's to reach a conception of the "true man" attracted my attention; now, when Goethe's "riddle fairy-tale" became itself a riddle to me, Schiller's endeavour occurred to me again. I saw how Goethe had taken hold of Schiller's conception of the "true man." For him no less than for his friend this was a vital question: "How does the shadowy spiritual find in the mind the sensible-corporeal, and how does the natural in physical bodies work itself upward to the spiritual?"

The correspondence between the two friends and all that can be learned otherwise about their spiritual relationship indicates that Schiller's solution was too abstract, too one-sidedly philosophical for Goethe. He created the charming picture of the stream which separates two worlds; of the will-o'-the-wisps who seek the way from one world to the other; of the snake which must sacrifice itself in order to form a bridge between the two worlds; of the beautiful lily who can only be surmised as wandering in the spirit on the "far side" of the stream by those who live on "this side," and of much more. Over against Schiller's philosophical solution he places a poetic vision in fairy-tale form. He had the feeling that, if one attacked with philosophical conceptions the riddle of the soul which Schiller perceived, such a person impoverished himself while seeking for his true being. He desired to approach the riddle in all the wealth of the soul's experience.

The Goethe fairy-tale images hark back to imaginations which had often been set forth before the time of Goethe by seekers for the spiritual experience of the soul. The three kings of fairy-lore are found in some resemblance in the *Chymische Hochzeit*⁽³⁾, by Christian Rosenkreutz. Other forms are revivals of those which had appeared earlier in pictures of the way of knowledge. Only in Goethe these pictures appear in a more beautiful, noble, artistic form of fantasy, whereas they had until his time borne a less artistic character.

In these fairy-tales Goethe carried this fanciful creation near to the point at which it passes over into the inner process of the soul which is a knowing experience of the real world of spirit. I felt that one could see to the utmost depths of Goethe's nature when one sank down into this poetry. Not the interpretation, but the stimulus to the experience of the soul, was the important result that came to me from my work upon the fairy-tales. This stimulus later influenced my mental life even in the shaping of the mystery dramas which I afterward wrote. As to that part of my work which related directly to Goethe, I could gain but little from these fairy-tales. For it seemed to me that Goethe in their

composition had grown beyond himself in his world-conception, as if impelled by a half-conscious life of the soul. In this way there came about for me a serious difficulty. I could set forth my interpretation of Goethe for *Kürschner's Deutsche National-Literatur* only in the style in which I had commenced this; but this in itself did not suffice me at all. For I said to myself that, while Goethe was writing the "fairy-tales," he had, as it were, looked across the boundary and had seen into the spiritual world. But nevertheless what he wrote about natural processes gave no attention to this glimpse. Therefore he could not be interpreted on the basis of this insight.

But even though I obtained nothing at once for my Goethe writings from sinking down into the fairy-tale, yet I gained much mental stimulus from it. What came to me as mental content in connection with the fairy-tale became most important material for meditation. I returned to this again and again. By this activity I prepared myself beforehand for the temper of mind into which I entered later during my Weimar work.

Notes:

1. The Results of Spiritual Observation According to the Methods of Natural Science.
2. Letters on the Advancement of the Aesthetic Education of man.
3. Chemical Marriage.

The Story of My Life

XIII

JUST at this time my outward life was altogether happy. I was frequently with my old friends. Few as were the opportunities I had to speak of the things I am here discussing, yet the spiritual and mental ties that bound me to these friends were none the less strong. How often must I think over again the conversations, sometimes unending, which occurred at that time in a well-known coffee house on Michaelerplatz in Vienna. I had cause to think of these especially during that period following the World War when old Austria went to pieces. For the causes of this crumbling to pieces were at that time already present everywhere. But no one was willing to recognize this. Everyone had thoughts that would be the means of a cure, always according to his own special national or cultural leanings. And if ideals which manifest themselves at times of the ebbing tide are stimulating, yet they are ideals born out of the decadence itself, out of the desire to prevent this-themselves being no less tragic. Such tragic ideals worked in the hearts of the best Viennese and Austrians.

I frequently caused misunderstandings with these idealists when I expressed a conviction which had been borne in upon me through my absorption in the period of Goethe. I said that a culmination in Occidental cultural evolution had been reached during that period.

This had not been continued. The period of the natural sciences, with its effects upon the lives of men and of peoples, denoted a decadence. For any further advance there was needed an entirely new attack from the side of the spirit. There could be no further progress into the spiritual by those roads which had previously been laid out, except after a previous turning back.

Goethe is a climax, but therefore not a point of departure; on the contrary, an end. He develops the results of an evolution which goes as far as himself and finds in him its most complete embodiment, but which cannot be further advanced without first resorting to far more primal springs of spiritual experience than exist in this evolution. In this mood I wrote the last part of my Goethe exposition.

It was in this mood that I first became acquainted with Nietzsche's writings. *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*⁽¹⁾ I was the first of his books that I read. I was fascinated by his way of viewing things and yet at the same time repelled. I found it hard to get a right attitude toward Nietzsche. I loved his style; I loved his keenness; but I did not love at all the way in which Nietzsche spoke of the most profound problems without immersing himself in these with fully conscious thought in spiritual experience. Only I then observed that he said many things with which I stood in the closest intimacy in my spiritual experience. And thus I felt myself close to his struggle and felt that I must find an expression for this proximity. Nietzsche seemed to me one of the most tragic figures of that time. And this tragedy, I believed, must be the effect of the spiritual attitude characterizing the natural-scientific age upon human souls of more than ordinary depth. I passed my last years in Vienna with such feelings as these.

Before the close of the first phase of my life, I had the opportunity of visiting also Budapest and Siebenbürgen (Transylvania). The friend I have previously mentioned whose family belonged to Transylvania, who had remained bound to me with rare loyalty through all these years, had introduced me to a good many of the people from his district who were in Vienna. Thus it happened that, in addition to my other extensive social relationships, I had also this with persons from Transylvania. Among them were Herr and Frau Breitenstein, who became friends of mine at that time and who have remained such in the most heartfelt fashion. For a long time they have taken a leading part in the Anthroposophical Society in Vienna. This human relationship with "Siebenbürgers" led me to make a journey to Budapest. The capital of Hungary, in character so entirely unlike Vienna, made a deep impression upon me. One went there from Vienna through a region brilliant in the beauty of its scenery, its highly temperamental humanity, and the intensity of its musical interest. When one looked from the windows of the train, one had the impression that nature herself had become poetic in a special way, and that human beings, paying little heed to the poetic nature so familiar to them, plunged down within themselves in an often profoundly inward music of the heart. And, when one reached Budapest, there came to expression a world which may be viewed with the greatest interest from the point of view of the relationships to other European peoples, but which can from this point of view never be wholly understood. A dark undertone over which gleams a light playing amid colours. This character seemed to me as if it were forced together into visible unity when I stood before the Franz Drak monument. In this head of

the maker of that Hungary which existed from the year 1867 to 1918 there lived a strong, proud will which laid hold with all its might, which forced itself through without cunning but with elemental mercilessness. I felt how true subjectively for every Hungarian was the proverb I had often heard: "Outside of Hungary there is no life; and, if there is a life, it is by no means such as this."

As a child I had seen on the western borders of Hungary how Germans were made to feel this strong, proud will; now I learned in the midst of Hungary how this will brings the Magyar people into an isolation from humanity which clothes them, as they rather naïvely think, in a certain glamour obvious to themselves which values much the showing of itself to the hidden eyes of nature but not to the open eyes of men.

Half a year after this visit, my Transylvanian friends arranged for me to deliver a lecture at Hermannstadt. It was Christmas time. I traveled over the wide plains in the midst of which lies Arad. The melancholy poetry of Lenau sounded in my heart as I looked out over these plains where all is one expanse to which the eye can find no limit. I had to spend the night in a little border village between Hungary and Transylvania.

I sat in a little guest-room half the night. Besides myself there was only a group of card-players sitting round a table. In this group there were all the nationalities to be found at that time in Hungary and Transylvania. The men were playing with a vehemence which constantly broke loose at half-hour intervals, so that it took the form of soul-clouds which rose above the table, struggled together like demons, and wreathed the men about completely as if in the folds of serpents. What differences in vehement existence were there manifested by these different national types!

I reached Hermannstadt on Christmas Day. Here I was introduced into "Siebenburger Saxondom." This existed there in the midst of a Rumanian and Magyar environment. A noble folk which, in the midst of a decline that it could not perceive, desired to prove its gallantry. A Germanism which, like a memory of the transfer of its life centuries ago to the East, wished to show its loyalty to its origins, but which in this temper of soul showed a trait of alienation from the world manifesting itself as an elevated universal joy in life. I passed happy days among the German ministers of the Evangelical Church, among the teachers of the German schools, and among other German Siebenburgers. My heart warmed to these people who, in the concern for their folk life and in their duty to this, evolved a culture of the heart which spoke first of all likewise to the heart. This vital warmth filled my soul as I sat in a sleigh, wrapped close in heavy furs, and travelled with these old and new friends through icy-cold and crackling snow to the Carpathians (the Transylvanian Alps). A dark, forested mountain country when one moves toward it from the distance; a wild, precipitous, often frightful mountain landscape when one is close at hand.

The centre in all which I then experienced was my friend of many years. He was always thinking out something new whereby I might learn thoroughly Siebenburger Saxondom. He was still dividing his time between Vienna and Hermannstadt. At that time he owned a weekly paper at Hermannstadt founded for the purpose of fostering Siebenburger

Saxondom. An undertaking it was which arose entirely out of idealism, utterly devoid of practical experience, but at which almost all representatives of Saxondom laboured together. After a few weeks it came to grief.

Such experiences as this journey were brought me by destiny; and through them I was enabled to educate my perception for the outer world, a thing which had not been easy for me, whereas in the element of the spiritual I lived as in something self-evident.

It was with sad memories that I made the journey back to Vienna. There fell into my hands just then a book of whose "spiritual richness" men of all sorts were speaking: *Rembrandt als Erzieher*⁽²⁾. In conversations about this book, which were then going on wherever one went, one could hear about the coming of an entirely new spirit. I was forced to become aware, by reason of this very phenomenon, of the great loneliness in which I stood with my temper of mind amid the spiritual life of that period.

In regard to a book which was prized in the highest degree by all the world my own feeling was as if someone had sat for several months at a table in one of the better hotels and listened to what the "outstanding" personalities in the genealogical tables said by way of "brilliant" remarks, and had then written these down in the form of aphorisms. After this continuous "preliminary work" he could have thrown his slips of paper with these remarks into a vessel, shaken them thoroughly together, and then taken them out again. After drawing out the slips, he could have made a series of these and so produced a book. Of course, this criticism is exaggerated. But my inner vital mood forced me into such revulsion from that which the "spirit of the times" then praised as a work of the highest merit. I considered *Rembrandt as Teacher* a book which dealt wholly with the surface of thoughts that have to do with the realm of the spiritual, and which did not harmonize in a single sentence with the real depths of the human soul. It grieved me to know that my contemporaries considered such a book as coming from a profound personality, whereas I was forced to believe that such dealers in the small change of thought moving in the shallows of the spirit would drive all that is deeply human out of man's soul.

When I was fourteen years old I had to begin tutoring; for fifteen years, up to the beginning of the second phase of my life, that spent at Weimar, my destiny kept me engaged in this work. The unfolding of the minds of many persons, both in childhood and in youth, was in this way bound up with my own evolution. Through this means I was able to observe how different were the ways in which the two sexes grow into life. For, along with the giving of instruction to boys and young men, it fell to my lot to teach also a number of young girls. Indeed, for a long time the mother of the boy whose instruction I had taken over because of his pathological condition was a pupil of mine in geometry; and at another time I taught this lady and her sister aesthetics.

In the family of these children I found for a number of years a sort of home, from which I went out to other families as tutor or instructor. Through the intimate friendship between the mother of the children and myself, it came about that I shared fully in the joys and sorrows of this family. In this woman I perceived a uniquely beautiful human soul. She

was wholly devoted to the development of her four boys according to their destiny. In her one could study mother love in its larger manifestation. To co-operate with her in problems of education formed a beautiful content of life. For the musical part of the artistic she possessed both talent and enthusiasm. At times she took charge of the musical practice of her boys, as long as they were still young. She discussed intelligently with me the most varied life problems, sharing in everything with the deepest interest. She gave the greatest attention to my scientific and other tasks. There was a time when I had the greatest need to discuss with her everything which intimately concerned me. When I spoke of my spiritual experiences, she listened in a peculiar way. To her intelligence the thing was entirely congenial, but it maintained a certain marked reserve; yet her mind absorbed everything. At the same time she maintained in reference to man's being a certain naturalistic view. She believed the moral temper to be entirely bound up with the health or sickness of the bodily constitution. I mean to say that she thought instinctively about man in a medical fashion, whereby her thinking tended to be somewhat naturalistic. To discuss things in this way with her was in the highest degree stimulating. Besides, her attitude toward all outer life was that of a woman who attended with the strongest sense of duty to everything which fell to her lot, but who looked upon most inner things as not belonging to her sphere. She looked upon her fate in many aspects as something burdensome. But still she made no claims upon life; she accepted this as it took form so far as it did not concern her sons. In relation to these she felt every experience with the deepest emotion of her soul.

All this I shared vitally – the soul-life of a woman, her beautiful devotion to her sons, the life of the family within a wide circle of kinsmen and acquaintances. But for this reason things did not move without difficulty. The family was Jewish. In their views they were quite free from any sectarian or racial narrowness, but the head of the family, to whom I was deeply attached, felt a certain sensitiveness to any expression by a Gentile in regard to the Jews. The flame of anti-Semitism which had sprung up at that time had caused this feeling.

Now, I took an active part in the struggle which the Germans in Austria were then carrying on in behalf of their national existence. I was also led to occupy myself with the historical and the social position of the Jews. Especially earnest did this activity of mine become after the appearance of Hamerling's *Homunculus*. This eminent German poet was considered by a great part of the journalists as an anti-Semite on account of this work; indeed, he was claimed by the German national anti-Semites as one of their own. This disturbed me very little; but I wrote a paper on the *Homunculus* in which, as I thought, I expressed myself quite objectively in regard to the Jews. The man in whose home I lived, and who was my friend, took this to be a special form of anti-Semitism. Not in the least did his friendly feeling for me suffer on that account, but he was affected with a profound distress. When he had read the paper, he faced me, his heart torn by innermost sorrow, and said to me: "What you wrote in this in regard to the Jews cannot be explained in a friendly sense; but this is not what hurts me, but the fact that you could have had the experiences in regard to us which induced you to write thus only through your close relationship with us and our friends." He was mistaken: for I had formed my opinions altogether from a spiritual and historic survey; nothing personal had entered into my

judgment. He could not see the thing in this way. His reply to my explanations was: "No, the man who teaches my children is, after this paper, no 'friend of the Jews.'" He could not be induced to change. Not for a moment did he think that my relation ship to the family ought to be altered. This he looked upon as something necessary. Still less could I make this matter the occasion for a change; for I looked upon the teaching of his sons as a task which destiny had brought to me. But neither of us could do otherwise than think that a tragic thread had been woven into this relationship. To all this was added the fact that many of my friends had taken on from their national struggle a tinge of anti-Semitism in their view of the Jews. They did not view sympathetically my holding a post in a Jewish family; and the head of this family saw in my friendly mingling with such persons only a confirmation of the impression which he had received from my paper.

To the family circle in which I so intimately shared belonged the composer of *Das Goldene Kreuz*, Ignatius Brüll. A sensitive person he was, of whom I was extraordinarily fond. Ignatius Brüll was something of an alien to the world, buried in himself. His interests were not exclusively musical; they were directed toward many aspects of the spiritual life. These interests he could enter into only as a "darling of destiny" against the background of a family circle which never permitted him to be disturbed by attention to everyday affairs but permitted his creative work to grow out of a certain prosperity. And thus he did not grow in life but only in music. To what degree his musical creations were or were not meritorious is not the question just here. But it was stimulating in the most beautiful sense to meet the man in the street and see him awaken out of his world of tones when one addressed him. Generally he did not have his waistcoat buttons in the right button-holes. His eye spoke in a mild thoughtfulness; his walk was not fast but very expressive. One could talk with him about many things; for these he had a sensitive understanding; but one saw how the content of the conversation slipped, as it were, for him into the sphere of music.

In the family in which I thus lived I became acquainted also with the distinguished physician, Dr. Breuer, who was associated with Dr. Freud at the birth of psycho-analysis. Only in the beginning, however, did he share in this sort of view, and he was not in agreement with Freud in its later development. Dr. Breuer was to me a very attractive personality. I admired the way in which he was related to his medical profession. Besides, he was a man of many interests in other fields. He spoke of Shakespeare in such a way as to stimulate one very strongly. It was interesting also to hear him in his purely medical way of thinking speak of Ibsen or even of Tolstoi's *Kreuzer Sonata*. When he spoke with the friend I have here described, the mother of the children whom I had to teach, I was often present and deeply interested. Psycho-analysis was not yet born; but the problems which looked toward this goal were already there. The phenomena of hypnotism had given a special colouring to medical thought. My friend had been a friend of Dr. Breuer from her youth. There I faced a fact which gave me much food for thought. This woman thought in a certain direction more medically than the distinguished physician. They were once discussing a morphine addict. Dr. Breuer was treating him. The woman once said to me: "Think what Breuer has done! He has taken the promise of the morphine addict on his word of honour that he will take no more morphine. He expected to attain something by this, and he was deluded, since the patient did not keep

his promise. He even said: 'How can I treat a man who does not keep his promise?' Would one have believed," she said, "that so distinguished a physician could be so naïve? How can one try to cure 'by a promise' something so deeply rooted 'in a man's nature'?" The woman may not, however, have been entirely right; the opinion of the physician regarding the therapy of suggestion may have entered then into his attempt at a cure; but no one can deny that my friend's statement indicated the extraordinary energy with which she spoke in a noteworthy fashion out of the spirit which lived in the Viennese school of medicine up to the time when this new school blossomed forth.

This woman was in her own way a significant person; and she is a significant phenomenon in my life. She has long been dead; among the things which made it hard for me to leave Vienna was this also, that I had to part from her.

When I reflect in retrospect upon the content of the first phase of my life, while I seek to characterize it as if from without, the feeling forces itself upon me that destiny so led me that I was not fettered by any external "calling" during my first thirty years. I entered the Goethe and Schiller Institute in Weimar also, not to take a life position, but as a free collaborator in the edition of Goethe which would be published by the Institute under a commission from the Grand-duchess Sophie. In the report which the Director of the Institute published in the twelfth volume of the Goethe Year Book occurs this statement: "The permanent workers have associated with themselves since 1890 Rudolf Steiner from Vienna. To him has been assigned the general field of 'morphology' (with the exception of the osteological part): five or probably six volumes of the 'second division,' to which important material is added from the manuscript, remains."

Notes:

1. Beyond Good and Evil.
2. Rembrandt as Teacher.

The Story of My Life

XIV

FOR an indeterminate length of time I again faced a task that was given me, not through any external circumstance, but through the inner processes of development of my views of life and the world. To the same cause was due the fact that I used for my doctor's examination at the University of Rostock my dissertation on the endeavour after "an understanding of human consciousness with itself." External circumstances merely prevented me from taking the examination in Vienna. I had official credit for the work of the Realschule, not of the Gymnasium, though I had completed privately the Gymnasium course of study, even tutoring also in these courses. This fact barred me from obtaining the doctor's degree in Austria. I had grounded myself thoroughly in philosophy, but I was

credited officially with a course of study which excluded me from everything to which the study of philosophy gives a man access.

Now at the close of the first phase of my life a philosophical work had fallen into my hands which fascinated me extraordinarily – the *Sieben Bücher Platonismus*⁽¹⁾ of Heinrich von Stein, who was then teaching philosophy at Rostock. This fact led me to submit my dissertation to the lovable old philosopher, whom I valued highly because of his book, and whom I saw for the first time in connection with the examination.

The personality of Heinrich von Stein still lives in my memory – almost as if I had spent much of my life with him. For the *Seven Books of Platonism* is the expression of a sharply stamped philosophical individuality. Philosophy as thought-content is not taken in this work as something which stands upon its own feet. Plato is viewed from all angles as the philosopher who sought for such a self-supporting philosophy. What he found in this direction is carefully set forth by Heinrich von Stein. In the first chapters of the book one enters vitally and wholly into the Platonic world conception. Then, however, Stein passes on to the breaking into human evolution of the Christ revelation. This actual breaking in of the spiritual life he sets forth as something higher than the elaboration of thought-content through mere philosophy.

From Plato to Christ as to the fulfilment of that for which men have striven – such we may designate the exposition of von Stein. Then he traces further the influence of world conceptions of Platonism in the Christian evolution.

Stein is of the opinion that revelation gave content from without to human strivings after a world-conception. There I could not agree with him. I knew from experience that the human being, when he comes to an understanding with himself in vital spiritual consciousness, can possess the revelation, and that this revelation can then attain to an existence in the ideal experience of man. But I felt something in the book which drew me on. The real life of the spirit behind the ideal life, even though in a form which was not my own, had set in motion an impulse toward a comprehensive exposition of the history of philosophy. Plato, the great representative of an ideal world which was fixed through its fulfilment by the Christ impulse – it is the setting forth of this which forms the content of Stein's book. In spite of the opposition I felt toward the book, it came closer to me than any of the philosophies which merely elaborate a content out of concepts and sense-experiences.

I missed in Stein also the consciousness that Plato's ideal world had its source in a primal revelation of the spiritual world. This (pre-Christian) revelation, which has been sympathetically set forth, for example, in Otto Willmann's *Geschichte des Idealismus*⁽²⁾ does not appear in Stein's view. He sets forth Platonism, not as the residue of ideas from the primal revelation, which then recovers in Christianity and on a higher level its lost spiritual form; he represents the Platonic ideas as a content of concepts self-woven which then attained life through Christ.

Yet the book is one of those written with philosophical warmth, and its author a personality penetrated by a deep religious feeling who sought in philosophy the expression of the religious life. On every page of the three-volume work one is aware of the personality in the background. After I had read this book, and especially the parts dealing with the relation of Platonism to Christianity, over and over again, it was a significant experience to meet the author face to face.

A personality serene in his whole bearing, in advanced age, with mild eyes that looked as if they were made to survey kindly but penetratingly the process of evolution of his students; speech which in every sentence carried the reflection of the philosopher in the tone of the words – just so did Stein stand before me when I visited him before the examination. He said to me: “Your dissertation is not such as is required; one can perceive from it that you have not produced it under the guidance of a professor; but what it contains makes it possible that I can very gladly accept you.” I should now have been extremely glad to be questioned orally on something which was related to the *Seven Books of Platonism*; but no question related to this; all were drawn from the philosophy of Kant.

I have always kept the image of Heinrich von Stein deeply imprinted on my heart; and it would have given me immeasurable pleasure to have met the man again. Destiny never again brought us together. My doctor's examination is one of my pleasant memories, because the impression of Stein's personality shines out beyond everything else pertaining to it.

The mood in which I came to Weimar was tinged by previous thorough-going work in Platonism. I think that mood helped me greatly to take the right attitude toward my task on the Goethe and Schiller archives. How did Plato live in the ideal world, and how Goethe? This occupied my thoughts on my walk to and from the archives; it occupied me also as I went over the manuscripts of the Goethe legacy.

This question was in the background when at the beginning of 1891 I expressed in some such words as the following my impression of Goethe's knowledge of nature “It is impossible for the majority of men to grasp the fact that something for whose appearance subjective conditions are necessary may still have objective significance and being. And of this very sort is the ‘archetypal plant.’ It is the essential of all plants, objectively contained within them; but if it is to attain to phenomenal existence the human spirit must freely construct it.” Or these other words: that a correct understanding of Goethe's way of thinking “admits of the possibility of asking whether it is in keeping with the conception of Goethe to identify the ‘archetypal plant’ or ‘archetypal animal’ with any physically real organic form which has appeared or will appear at any definite time. To this question the only possible answer is a decisive ‘No.’ The ‘archetypal’ plant is contained in every plant; it may be won from the plant world by the constructive power of the spirit; but no single individual form can be said to be **typical**.”⁽³⁾

I now entered the Goethe-Schiller Institute as a collaborator. This was the place into which the philology of the end of the nineteenth century had taken over Goethe's literary

remains. At the head of the Institute was Bernhard Suphan. With him also, I may say, I had a personal relationship from the very first day of the Weimar phase of my life. I had frequent opportunities to be in his home. That Bernhard Suphan had succeeded Erich Schmidt, the first director of the Institute, was due to his friendship with Herman Grimm.

The last descendant of Goethe, Walther von Goethe, had left Goethe's literary remains as a legacy to the Grand-duchess Sophie. She had founded the archives in order that the legacy might be introduced in appropriate manner into the spiritual life of the times. She naturally turned to those personalities of whom she had to assume that they might know what was to be done with the Goethe literary remains.

First of all, there was Herr von Loeper. He was, so to speak, foreordained to become the intermediary between Goethe scholars and the Court at Weimar to which the control of the Goethe legacy had been entrusted. For he had attained to high rank in the Prussian household administration, and thus stood in close relation with the Queen of Prussia, sister of the Grand-duchess of Saxe-Weimar; and, besides, he was a collaborator in the most famous edition of Goethe of that time, that of Hempel.

Loeper was an unique personality, a very congenial mixture of the man of the world and the recluse. As an amateur, not as a professional, had he come to be interested in "Goethe research." But he had attained to high distinction in this. In his opinions concerning Goethe, which appear in such beautiful form in his edition of Faust, he was entirely independent. What he advanced he had learned from Goethe himself. Since he had now to advise how Goethe's literary remains could best be administered, he had to turn to those with whom he had become familiar as Goethe scholars through his own work with Goethe.

The first to be considered was Herman Grimm. It was as an historian of art that Herman Grimm had become concerned with Goethe; as such he had delivered lectures on Goethe at the University of Berlin, which he then published as a book. But he might well look upon himself as a sort of spiritual descendant of Goethe. He was rooted in those circles of the German spiritual life which had always been conscious of a living tradition of Goethe, and which might in a sense consider themselves bound in a personal way with him. The wife of Herman Grimm was Gisela von Arnim, the daughter of Bettina, author of the book, *Goethe's Correspondence with a Child*.

Herman Grimm's judgments about Goethe were those of an historian of art. Moreover, as an historian of art he had grown into scholarship only so far as this was possible to him under the standards of a personally coloured relationship to art as a connoisseur.

I think that Herman Grimm could readily come to an understanding with Loeper, with whom he was naturally on friendly terms by reason of their common interest in Goethe. I imagine that, when these two discussed Goethe, the human interest in the genius came strongly to the fore and scholarly considerations fell into the background.

This scholarly way of looking at Goethe was the vital thing in William Scherer, professor of German literature at the University of Berlin. In him both Loeper and Grimm had to recognize the official Goethe scholar. Loeper did so in a childlike, harmless fashion; Herman Grimm with a certain inner opposition. For to him the philological point of view which characterized Scherer was really uncongenial. With these three persons rested the actual direction in the administration of the Goethe legacy. But it nevertheless really slipped entirely into the hands of Scherer. Loeper really thought nothing about this further than to advise and to share from without as a collaborator in the task; he had his fixed social relationships through his position in the household of the Prussian King. Herman Grimm thought just as little about it. He could only contribute points of view and right directions for the work by reason of his position in the spiritual life; for the directing of details he could not take responsibility.

Quite different was the thing for William Scherer. For him Goethe was an important chapter in the history of German literature. In the Goethe archives new sources had come to light of immeasurable value for this chapter. Therefore, the work in the Goethe archives must be systematically united with the general work of the history of literature. The plan arose for an edition of Goethe which should take a philologically correct form. Scherer took over the intellectual supervision; the direction of the archives was left to his student Erich Schmidt, who then occupied the chair of modern German literature at Vienna.

Thus the work of the Goethe Institute received its stamp. Not only so, but also everything that happened at the Institute or by reason of this. All bore the mark of the contemporary philological character of thought and work.

In William Scherer literary-historical philology strove for an imitation of contemporary natural-scientific methods. Men took the current ideas of the natural sciences and sought to form philological and literary-historical ideas on these as models. Whence had a poet derived something? How had this something been modified in him? These were the questions which were placed at the foundations of a history of the evolution of the spiritual life. The poetic personalities disappeared from view; instead there came forward views as to how "material" and "motif" were evolved by the personalities. The climax of this sort of view was reached in Erich Schmidt's extended monograph on Lessing. In this Lessing's personality is not the main fact but an extremely painstaking consideration of the motifs of *Minna von Barnhelm*, *Nathan*, and the like.

Scherer died young, shortly after the Goethe Institute was established. His students were numerous. Erich Schmidt was called from the Goethe Institute to Scherer's position in Berlin. Herman Grimm then arranged so that not one of the numerous students of Scherer should have the direction of the Institute, but instead Bernhard Suphan.

As to his post before this time, he had been teaching in a Gymnasium in Berlin. At the same time he had undertaken the editing of Herder's works. Through this he seemed marked as the person to take direction also of the edition of Goethe. Erich Schmidt still exercised a certain influence; through this fact Scherer's spirit still continued to rule over

the Goethe task. But the ideas of Herman Grimm came forward in stronger fashion, if not in the manner of work yet in the personal relationships within the Goethe Institute.

When I came to Weimar, and entered into a close relationship with Bernhard Suphan, he was a man sorely tried in his personal life. His first and second wives, who were sisters, he had seen buried at an early age. He lived now with his two children in Weimar, grieving over those who had left him, and not feeling any happiness in life. His sole satisfaction lay in the good will which the Grand-duchess Sophie, his profoundly honoured lady, bore to him. In this respect for her there was nothing servile: Suphan loved and admired the Grand-duchess in an entirely personal way.

In loyal dependence was Suphan devoted to Herman Grimm. He had previously been honoured as a member of the household of Grimm in Berlin, and had breathed with satisfaction the spiritual atmosphere of that home. But there was something in him which prevented him from getting adjusted to life. One could speak freely with him about the highest spiritual matters, yet something bitter would easily come into the conversation, something arising from his experiences. Most of all did this melancholy dominate in his own mind; then he would help himself past these experiences by means of a dry humour. So one could not feel warm in his company. He could in a moment grasp some great idea quite sympathetically, and then, without any transition, fall immediately into the petty and trivial. He always showed good will toward me. In the spiritual interests vital within my own soul he could take no part, and at times treated them from the view-point of his dry humour; but in the direction of my work in the Goethe Institute and in my personal life he felt the warmest interest. I cannot deny that I was often painfully disturbed by what Suphan did, the way in which he conducted himself in the management of the Institute, and the direction of the editing of Goethe; I never made any secret of this fact. Yet, when I look back upon the years which I passed with him, this is outweighed by a strong inner interest in the fate and the personality of the sorely tried man. He suffered in his life, and he suffered in himself. I saw how in a certain way, with all the good aspects of his character and all his capacities, he sank more and more into a bottomless brooding which rose up in his soul. When the Goethe and Schiller archives were moved to the new building erected in Ilm, Suphan said that he looked upon himself in relation to the opening of this building like one of those human victims who in primitive times were walled up before the doors of sacred buildings to sanctify the thing. He had really come gradually to fancy himself altogether in the role of one sacrificed on behalf of something with which he did not feel that he was wholly united. He felt that he was a beast of burden working at this Goethe task with which others with higher intellectual gifts might have been occupied. In this mood I always found him later whenever I met him after I had left Weimar. He ended his life by suicide in a mood of depression.

Besides Bernhard Suphan, there was engaged at the Goethe and Schiller Institute at the time of my entrance Julius Wahle. He was one of those called by Erich Schmidt. Wahle and I were intimates from the time of my first sojourn at Weimar; a heartfelt friendship grew up between us. Wahle was working at the editing of Goethe's journals. Eduard von der Hellen worked as Keeper of the Records, and also had the responsibility of editing Goethe's letters.

On Goethe's works a great part of the German "world of Germanists" was engaged. There was a constant coming and going of professors and instructors in philology. One was then much in company with them during their longer or shorter visits. One could get vitally into the circle of interests of these persons.

Besides these actual collaborators in the Goethe task the archives were visited by numbers of persons who were interested in one way or another in the rich collections of manuscripts of other German poets. For the Institute gradually became the place for collecting the literary remains of many poets. And other interested persons came also who at first were less interested in manuscripts than in simply studying in the library contained within the rooms of the Institute. There were, moreover, many visitors who merely wished to see the treasures there.

Everybody who worked at the Institute was happy when Loeper appeared. He entered with sympathetic and amiable remarks. He requested the material he needed for his work, sat down, and worked for hours with a concentration seldom to be seen in anyone. No matter what was going on around him, he did not look up. If I were seeking for a personification of amiability, I should choose Herr von Loeper. Amiable was his Goethe research, amiable every word he uttered to anyone. Especially amiable was the stamp his whole inner life had taken from the fact that he seemed to be thinking of one thing only: how to bring the world to a true understanding of Goethe. I once sat by him during the presentation of *Faust* in the theatre. I began to discuss the manner of presentation, the dramatic qualities. He did not hear at all what I said. But he replied: "Yes, this actor often uses words and phrases that do not agree with those of Goethe." Still more lovable did Loeper appear to me in his "absentmindedness." When in a pause I chanced to speak of something which required a reckoning of duration of time, Loeper said: "Therefore the hours to 100 minutes; the minutes to 100 seconds ..." I stared at him, and said: "Your Excellency, 60." He took out his watch, tested it, laughed heartily, counted, and said: "Yes, yes, 60 minutes, 60 seconds." I often observed in him such instances of absent-mindedness. But over such proofs of Loeper's unique temper of mind I myself could not laugh, for they seemed to me a significant by-product – and also charming in their effect – of the personality so utterly free from pose, unsentimental, I might say gracious, in its earnestness. He spoke in rather sprawling sentences, almost without modulation; but one heard through the colourless speech a firm articulation of thought.

Spiritual purpose entered the Institute when Herman Grimm appeared. From the standpoint from which I had read – while still in Vienna – his book on Goethe, I felt the deepest sympathy with his type of mind. And when I was able to meet him for the first time in the Institute, I had read almost everything that had come from his pen. Through Suphan I was soon afterwards brought into much more intimate acquaintance with him. Then, while Suphan was once absent from Weimar and he came for a visit to the Institute, he invited me to luncheon at his hotel. I was alone with him. It was plainly agreeable to him to see how I could enter into his way of viewing the world and life. He became communicative. He spoke to me of his idea of a *Geschichte der Deutsche Phantasie*⁽⁴⁾ which he had in mind. I then received the impression that he would write such a book. This did not come to pass. But he explained to me beautifully how the

contemporary stream of historic evolution has its impulse in the creative fantasy of the folk, which in its temper takes on the character of a living, working supersensible genius. During this luncheon I was wholly filled with the expositions of Herman Grimm. I believed that I knew how the supersensible spiritual works through man. I had before me a man whose spiritual vision reached as far as the creative spiritual, but who would not lay hold upon the actual life of this spiritual, but remained in the region where the spiritual expresses its life in man in the form of fantasy.

Herman Grimm had a special gift for surveying greater or lesser epochs of the history of the mind and of setting forth the period surveyed in precise, brilliant, epigrammatic characterization. When he described a single personality – Michelangelo, Raphael, Goethe, Homer – his representation always appeared against the background of such a survey.

How often have I read his essays in which he characterized in his striking glances the Greek and Roman cultures and the Middle Ages. The whole man was the revelation of unified style. When he fashioned his beautiful sentences in oral speech I had the feeling: “This may appear just so in one of his essays”; and, when I read an essay of his after having become acquainted with him, I felt as if I were listening to him. He permitted himself no laxity in oral speech, but he had the feeling that in artistic or literary presentation one must remain the same person who moved about in everyday life. But Herman Grimm did not roam around like other men even in everyday life. It was inevitable for him to lead a life possessed of style. When Herman Grimm appeared in Weimar, and in the Institute, then one felt that the plan of the legacy was, so to speak, united with Goethe by secret spiritual threads. Not so when Erich Schmidt came. He was bound to these papers that were preserved in the Institute, not by ideas, but by the historic-philological methods. I could never attain to a human relation with Erich Schmidt. And so all the great respect shown him by all those who worked at the Institute as Scherer philologists made practically no impression upon me.

Those were always pleasant moments when the Grand-duke Karl Alexander appeared in the Institute. An inwardly true enthusiasm – though manifested in a fashionable bearing – for everything pertaining to Goethe was a part of the nature of this man. Because of his age, his long connection with much that was important in the spiritual life of Germany, and because of his attractive loveliness he made a satisfying impression. It was a pleasing thought to know that he was the protector of the Goethe work in the Institute.

The Grand-duchess Sophie, owner of the Institute, one saw there only on special festival occasions. When she had anything to say, she caused Suphan to be summoned. The collaborating workers were taken to her to be presented. But her solicitude for the Institute was extraordinary. She herself personally made all the preliminary preparations for the erection of a public building in which the poetic legacies might be worthily housed.

The heir of the Grand-duke also, Carl August, who died before he became Grand-duke, came often to the Institute. His interest in everything there going on was not profound,

but he liked to mingle with us collaborators. This interesting himself in the requirements of the spiritual life he viewed rather as a duty. But the interest of the heiress, Pauline, was full of warmth. I was able many times to converse with her about things which pertained to Goethe, poetry, and the like. As regards its social intercourse the Institute was between the scientific and artistic circles and the courtly circle of Weimar. From both sides it received its own colouring. Scarcely would the door have closed after a professor when it would reopen to admit some princely personage who came for a visit. Many men of all social positions shared in what went on in the Institute. At bottom it was a stirring life, stimulating in many relationships.

Immediately beside the Institute was the Weimar library. In this resided as chief librarian a man of a childlike temperament and unlimited scholarship, Reinhold Köhle. The collaborators at the Institute often had occasion to resort there. For what they had in the Institute as literary aid to their work was here greatly augmented. Reinhold Köhle had roved around with unique comprehensiveness in the myths, fairy-tales, and sagas; his knowledge in the field of linguistic scholarship was of the most admirable universality. He knew where to turn for the most out-of-the-way literary material. His modesty was most touching, and he received one with great cordiality. He never permitted anyone to bring the books he needed from their resting-places into the work-room of the archives where we did our work. I came in once and asked for a book that Goethe used in connection with his studies in botany, in order to look into it. Reinhold Köhle went to get the old book which had rested somewhere on the topmost shelves unused for decades. He did not come back for a long time. Someone went to see where he was. He had fallen from the ladder on which he had to climb to attend to the books. He had broken his thigh. The noble and lovable person never recovered from the effect of the accident. After a lingering illness this widely known man died. I grieved over the painful thought that his misfortune had happened while he was attending to a book for me.

Notes:

1. Seven Books of Platonism.
2. History of Idealism.
3. In the essay on "The Gain to Our View of Goethe's Natural-Scientific Works through the Publications of the Goethe Institute," in the twelfth volume of the *Goethe Year Book*.
4. History of the German Imagination.

The Story of My Life

XV

Two lectures which I had to deliver shortly after the beginning of the Weimar phase of my life are associated for me with important memories. One took place in Weimar, and

was entitled, "Fancy as the Creatress of Culture"; it preceded the conversation I have described with Herman Grimm concerning his views on the history of the evolution of fantasy.

Before I delivered the lecture, I summarized in my own mind what I could say on the basis of my spiritual experience concerning the streaming of the real spiritual world into the human fantasy. What lives in the imagination seemed to me to be stimulated by human sense-experiences only as regards its material form. That which is truly creative in the genuine forms of fantasy seemed to me a reflection of the spiritual world existing outside of man. I desired to show that fantasy is the gateway through which the Beings of the spiritual world work creatively indirectly through man in the evolution of civilizations.

Because I had arranged my ideas for such a lecture toward this objective, Herman Grimm's exposition made a deep impression upon me. He felt no need whatever to seek for the supersensible sources of fantasy; what enters the human mind as fantasy he took as matter of fact and proposed to observe this in the course of its evolution

I first set forth one pole of the fantasy – dream-life. I showed how external sense-experiences are perceived, because of the subdued life of the consciousness, not as in waking life, but transformed into symbolic pictures; how inner bodily processes are experienced through the same symbolization; how experiences rise in consciousness, not in sober memories, but in a way that indicates a powerful elaboration of the thing experienced in the depths of the soul-life.

In dreams consciousness is subdued; it sinks down into the sensible physical reality and perceives the control within the sensible existence of something spiritual which during ordinary awareness remains concealed, and which even to the half-sleeping consciousness appears only as a play of colours from the shallows of the sensible.

In fantasy the mind rises as far above the ordinary state of consciousness as it sinks below this in dream-life. The spiritual which is concealed within the sense-existence does not appear, yet the spiritual influences man; but he cannot grasp this in its very own form but pictures it unconsciously to himself by means of a soul-content which he borrows from the sense-world. The consciousness does not penetrate all the way to the perception of the spiritual; but it experiences this in pictures which draw their material from the sense-world. In this way the genuine creations of fantasy are evidences of the spiritual world even though this does not penetrate into human consciousness.

By means of this lecture I wished to show one of the ways in which the Beings of the spiritual world influence the evolution of life. It was thus that I strove to discover means by which I might bring to expression the spiritual world I experienced and yet in some way connect it with what is adapted to the ordinary consciousness. I was of the opinion that it was necessary to speak of the spirit, but that the forms in which one is accustomed to express oneself in this scientific age must be respected.

The other lecture I gave in Vienna at the invitation of the Scientific Club. It dealt with the possibility of a monistic conception of the world on the basis of a real knowledge of the spiritual. There I set forth that man by means of his senses grasps the physical side of reality “from without” and by means of his spiritual awareness grasps its spiritual side “from within,” so that all which is experienced appears as an unified world in which the sensible manifests the spirit and the spirit reveals itself creatively in the sensible.

This occurred at the time when Haeckel had formulated his own monistic philosophy through his lecture on *Monismus als Band Zwischen Religion und Wissenschaft*⁽¹⁾. Haeckel, who knew of my being in Weimar, sent me a copy of his speech. I reciprocated his courtesy by sending him the issue of the newspaper in which my lecture at Vienna was printed. Whoever reads this lecture must see how opposed I then was to the monism advanced by Haeckel when occasion rose for me to express what a man has to say about this monism for whom the spiritual world is something into which he sees.

But there was at that time another occasion for me to give thought to monism in the colouring given it by Haeckel. He seemed to me a phenomenon of the scientific age. Philosophers saw in Haeckel the philosophical dilettante, who really knew nothing except the forms of living creatures to which he applied the ideas of Darwin in the order in which he had rightly arranged them, and who explained boldly that nothing further is required for the forming of a world-conception than what can be grasped by a Darwinian observer of nature. Students of nature saw in Haeckel a fantastic person who drew from natural-scientific observations conclusions which were arbitrary.

Since my work required that I should realize what was the inner temper of thought about the world and man, about nature and spirit, as this had been dominant a hundred years earlier in Jena, when Goethe interjected his natural-scientific ideas into this thought, I saw in Haeckel an illustration of what was then thought in this direction. Goethe's relation to the views of nature belonging to his period I had to visualize inwardly in all its details during my work. At the place in Jena from which came the important stimulations to Goethe to formulate his ideas on natural phenomena and the being of nature, Haeckel was at work a century later with the assertion that he could draw from a knowledge of nature the standard for a conception of the world.

In addition it happened that, at one of the first meetings of the Goethe Society in which I participated during my work at Weimar, Helmholtz read a paper on *Goethes Vorahnungen kommender naturwissenschaftlicher Ideen*⁽²⁾. I was then informed of much in later natural-scientific ideas which Goethe had “previsioned” by reason of fortunate inspirations; but it was also pointed out how Goethe's errors in this field bore upon his theory of colour.

When I turned my attention to Haeckel, I wished always to set before my mind Goethe's own judgment of the evolution of natural-scientific views in the century following that which saw the development of his own; as I listened to Helmholtz I had before my mind the judgment of Goethe by this evolution.

I could not then do otherwise than say to myself that, if one thought of the being of nature in the dominant spiritual temper of that time, that must necessarily result which Haeckel thought in utter philosophical naïveté; those who opposed him showed everywhere that they restricted themselves to mere sense-perception and would avoid the further evolution of this perception by means of thinking.

I had at first no occasion to become personally acquainted with Haeckel, about whom I was impelled to think very much. Then his sixtieth birthday came. I was invited to share in the brilliant festival which was being arranged in Jena. The human element in this festival attracted me. During the banquet Haeckel's son, whom I had come to know at Weimar, where he was attending the school of painting, came to me and said that his father wished to have me presented to him. The son then did this.

Thus I became personally acquainted with Haeckel. He was a fascinating personality. A pair of eyes which looked naïvely into the world, so mild that one had the feeling that this look must break when the sharpness of thought penetrated through. This look could endure only sense-impressions, not thoughts which reveal themselves in things and occurrences. Every movement of Haeckel's was directed to the purpose of admitting what the senses expressed, not to permit the ruling thoughts to reveal themselves in the senses. I understood why Haeckel liked so much to paint. He surrendered himself to physical vision. Where he ought to have begun to think, there he ceased to unfold the activity of his mind and preferred to fix by means of his brush what he had seen.

Such was the very being of Haeckel. Had he merely unfolded this, something human unusually stimulating would have been thus revealed.

But in one corner of his soul something stirred which was wilfully determined to enforce itself as a definite thought content – something derived from quite another attitude toward the world than his sense for nature. The tendency of a previous earthly life, with a fanatical turn directed toward something quite other than nature, craved the satisfaction of its passion. Religious politics vitally manifested itself from the lower part of the soul and made use of ideas of nature for its self-expression.

In such contradictory fashion lived two beings in Haeckel. A man with mild love-filled sense for nature and in the background something like a shadowy being with incompletely thought-out, narrowly limited ideas breathing out fanaticism. When Haeckel spoke, it was with difficulty that he permitted the fanaticism to pour forth into his words; it was as if the softness which he naturally desired blunted in speech a hidden demonic something. A human riddle which one could but love when one beheld it, but about which one could often speak in wrath when it expressed opinions. Thus I saw Haeckel before me as he was then preparing in the nineties of the last century what led later to the furious spiritual battle that raged over his tendency of thought at the turning-point between the centuries.

Among the visitors to Weimar was Heinrich von Treitschke. I had the opportunity of meeting him when Suphan included me among the guests invited to meet Treitschke at

luncheon. I received a deep impression from this very comprehensive personality. Treitschke was quite deaf. Others conversed with him by writing whatever they wished to say on a little tablet which Treitschke would hand them. The effect of this was that in any company where he chanced to be his person became the central point. When one had written down something, he then talked about this without the development of a real conversation. He was present in a far more intensive way for the others than were these for him. This had passed over into his whole attitude of mind. He spoke without having to reckon upon objections such as meet another when imparting his thoughts in a group of men. It could clearly be seen how this fact had fixed its roots in his self-consciousness. Since he could not hear any opposition to his thoughts, he was strongly impressed with the worth of what he himself thought.

The first question that Treitschke addressed to me was to ask where I came from. I replied that I was an Austrian. Treitschke responded: "The Austrians are either entirely good and gifted men, or else rascals." He said such things as this, and one became aware that the loneliness in which his mind dwelt because of the deafness drove him to paradoxes, and found in these a satisfaction. Luncheon guests usually remained at Suphan's the whole afternoon. So it was this time also when Treitschke was among them. One could see this personality unfold itself. The broad-shouldered man had something in his spiritual personality also through which he impressed himself upon a wide circle of his fellow-men. One could not say that Treitschke lectured. For everything he said bore a personal character. An earnest craving to express himself was manifest in every word. How commanding was his tone even when he was only narrating something! He wished his words to lay hold upon the emotions of the other person also. An unusual fire which sparkled from his eyes accompanied his assertions. The conversation touched upon Moltke's conception of the world as this had found expression in his memoirs. Treitschke objected to the impersonal way – suggestive of mathematical thinking – in which Moltke conceived world-phenomena. He could not judge things otherwise than with a ground-tone of strongly personal sympathies and antipathies. Men like Treitschke, who stick so fast in their own personalities, can make an impression on other men only when the personal element is at the same time both significant and also interwoven deeply with the things they are setting forth. This was true of Treitschke. When he spoke of something historical, he discoursed as if everything were in the present and he were at hand with all his pleasure and all his displeasure. One listened to the man, one received the impression of the personal in unmitigated strength; but one gained no relation to the content of what he said.

With another visitor to Weimar I came into a friendly intimacy. This was Ludwig Laistner. A fine personality he was, in harmony with himself, living in the spiritual in the most beautiful way. He was at the time literary adviser to the Cotta publishing house, and as such he had to work at the Goethe Institute. I was able to spend with him almost all the leisure time we had. His chief work, *Das Rätzel des Sphinx*⁽³⁾ was then already before the world. It is a sort of history of myths. He follows his own road in the interpretation of myths. Our conversation dealt very much with the field which is treated in that very important book. Laistner rejected all interpretation of fairy-lore, of the mythical, which maintains the more or less consciously symbolizing fantasy. He sees in dreams, and

especially in nightmares, the original source of the myth-making conception of nature formed by the folk. The oppressive nightmare which appears to the dreamer as a tormenting questioning spirit becomes the incubus, the elf, the demonic tormentor; the whole troop of the spirits arise for Ludwig Laistner out of the dreaming man. The riddling sphinx is only another metamorphosed form of the simple midday-woman who appears to the sleeper in the fields at midday and puts questions to him which he has to answer. All that the dream creates by way of strange and fanciful and meaningful, tormenting and delightful shapes – all this Ludwig Laistner traces out in order to point to it again in the images of fairy-lore and myths. In every conversation I had the feeling: “The man could so easily find the way from the creative subconscious in man, which works in the dream-world, to the super-conscious which touches the real world of spirit.” He listened to my explanations of this sort with the utmost good will; opposed nothing against these, but gained no inner relationship to them. In this matter he, too, was hindered by the fear belonging to that time of losing the “scientific” ground from under him the moment he should enter into the spiritual as such. But Ludwig Laistner stood in a special relationship to art and poetry by reason of the fact that he traced the mythical into the real experiences of dreams and not into the abstraction-creating imagination. Everything creative in man thus took on, according to his view, a world-significance. In his rare inner serenity and mental self-sufficiency he was a discriminating poetic personality. His utterances in regard to every sort of thing had a certain poetic quality. Conceptions which are unpoetic he simply did not know at all. In Weimar, and later during a visit in Stuttgart, when I had the pleasure of living near him, I spent the most delightful hours in his company. Beside him stood his wife, who entered completely into his spiritual nature. For her Ludwig Laistner was really all that bound her to the world. He lived only a short while after his sojourn at Weimar. The wife followed her vanished husband after an exceedingly brief interval; the world was empty for her when Ludwig Laistner was no longer in it. An altogether lovable woman, in the true sense of that word. She always knew how to be absent when she feared she might disturb; she never failed when there was anything requiring her care. Like a mother she stood by the side of Ludwig Laistner, whose refined spirituality was contained in a very delicate body.

With Ludwig Laistner I could talk as with few other persons regarding the idealism of the German philosophers-Fichte, Hegel, Schelling. He had a vital sense for the reality of the ideal that lived in these philosophers. When I spoke to him once of my solicitude regarding the one-sidedness of the natural-scientific world-conception, he said: “Those people have no sense of the significance of the creative in the human soul. They do not know that in this creative within man there lives a cosmic content just as in the phenomena of nature.”

In dealing with the literary and the artistic, Ludwig Laistner did not lose touch with the directly human. Very distinctive were his bearing and approach; whoever possessed an understanding for such things felt the significant element in his personality very quickly after forming his acquaintance. The official researchers in mythology were opposed to his view; they scarcely paid any attention to it. Thus there remained scarcely observed at all in the spiritual life of the time a man to whom by reason of his inner worth belonged the very first place. From his book *The Riddle of the Sphinx* the science of mythology might

have received entirely fresh impulses; it remained almost wholly without influence. Ludwig Laistner had at that time to undertake for the Cotta *Bibliothek der Weltliteratur* editions of the complete works of Schopenhauer and of selections from Jean Paul. He entrusted both of these to me. And thus I had to unite with my Weimar tasks the thorough working through of the pessimistic philosopher and of the paradoxical genius, Jean Paul. I devoted myself to both undertakings with the deepest interest, because I loved to transplant myself into attitudes of mind utterly opposed to my own. Ludwig Laistner had no ulterior motive in making me the editor of Schopenhauer and of Jean Paul; the assignment was due entirely to the conversations we had held about the two persons. Indeed, the thought of entrusting these tasks to me came to him during a conversation.

There were then living in Weimar Hans Olden and Frau Grete Olden. They gathered about them a special group of those who desired to live in “the present” in contrast with everything which considered the very central point in a spiritual existence to consist in the furtherance, through the Goethe Institute and the Goethe Society, of a life that was past. Into this group I was admitted; and I look back upon all that I experienced there with great appreciation. However fixed one's idea might have become in the Institute through association with the “philological method,” they must again become free and fluid when one entered the home of the Oldens, where every one was received with interest who had the idea in his head that a new way of thinking must find place among men, but likewise every one who in the depths of his soul found painful many an old cultural prejudice and was thinking about future ideals. Hans Olden was known to the world as the author of slight theatrical pieces such as *Die Offizielle Frau*⁽⁴⁾; in his Weimar circle at that time his life expressed itself quite otherwise.

He had a heart receptive to the highest interests which were manifest in the spiritual life of that time. What lived in the plays of Ibsen, in what thundered in the spirit of Nietzsche – in regard to these things there were endless discussions in his house, but always stimulating.

Gabrielle Reuter, who was then writing the novel, *Aus guter Familie*⁽⁵⁾ which soon afterward won for her by storm her literary place, was a member of Olden's circle, and filled it with earnest questions of all sorts which were then stirring men in reference to the life of woman.

Hans Olden could be captivating when, with his rather sceptical way of thinking, he instantly put an end to a conversation which was about to lose itself in sentimentality; but he himself could become sentimental when others fell into easy-going ways. The desire in this circle was to evolve the deepest “understanding” for everything “human”; but criticism was unsparing of whatever did not suit one in this or that human thing. Hans Olden was penetrated through and through with the idea that it was the only sensible course for a man to apply himself through literature or art to the great ideals about which there was a good deal of talk in his circle; but he was too scornful of men to realize his ideals in his own productions. He thought that ideals could live in a social circle of select men, but that any one would be “childish” who should think that he could bring forth such ideals before a greater public. At that very time he was making a beginning toward

the artistic realization of wider interests by means of his *Klüge Käte*⁽⁶⁾. This play had only a moderate success in Weimar. This confirmed him in the view that one should give to the public that to which it has now attained, and should keep one's higher interests for the small circle which has an understanding for these.

To a far greater degree than Hans Olden was Frau Grete Olden filled with this idea. She was the most complete feminine sceptic in her estimation of the world's capacity for receiving things spiritual. What she wrote was plainly derived from a certain form of misanthropy.

What Hans Olden and Grete Olden offered to their circle out of such a temper of mind breathed in the atmosphere of an aestheticizing world-feeling, which was capable of reaching up to the most earnest matters, but which did not hesitate to pass by many of the most serious questions with a vein of light humour.

Notes:

1. Monism as a Bond between Religion and Science.
2. Goethe's Previsions of Coming Scientific Ideas.
3. The Riddle of the Sphinx.
4. The Official Wife.
5. Of a Good Family.
6. Clever Kate.

The Story of My Life

XVI

I MUST number among the happiest hours of my life those which I passed with Gabrielle Reuter, with whom I had the privilege of intimate friendship by reason of this circle. A personality she was who bore within her profound quest of humanity, and who laid hold of them with a certain radicalism of the heart and the sensibilities. In regard to everything which seemed to her a contradiction in the social life she stood with her whole soul half-way between traditional prejudices and the primal claims of human nature. She looked upon woman, who both by life and by education is forced from without into subjection to this traditional prejudice, and who must experience in sorrow that which from the depths of the soul would fain come forth in life as "truth". Radicalism of the heart expressed in a manner serene and sagacious suffused with artistic feeling and marked by an impressive gift for form – this revealed itself as some thing great in Gabrielle Reuter. Extraordinarily delightful were the conversations one could have with her while she was working at her book *Of a Good Family*. As I reflect upon the past I see myself standing with her at a street corner, in the blazing heat of the sun, discussing for more than an hour questions by which she was stirred. Gabrielle Reuter could talk in the finest manner, never for a

moment losing her serene bearing, about things over which other persons become at once visibly excited. "Exulting to heaven, grieved even to death" – this, indeed, was her feeling within, but it remained in the soul and did not find its way into her words. Gabrielle Reuter laid strong emphasis upon what ever she had to say, but she did so not by means of the voice but only through the soul. I believe that this art of keeping the articulation entirely a matter of the soul, while the audible conversation flows evenly along, was peculiar to her, and it seems to me that in writing she has developed this unique art into her very charming style.

The admiration felt for Gabrielle Reuter in the Olden circle was something inexpressibly beautiful. Hans Olden said to me many times very solemnly: "This woman is great. Would that I also," he added, "could rise to such a height and place before the outer world that which moves in the depths of my soul!"

This circle shared in its own way in the Weimar Goethe affairs. It was in a tone of irony, but never of frivolous scoffing, and yet often aesthetically angry, that the "present" here passed judgment on the "past." A whole day long would Olden work at his typewriter after a Goethe gathering in order to write an account of the experience, which, according to his feeling, would give the judgment of a man of the world concerning the Goethe prophets.

Into this tone soon fell also the one other man of the world, Otto Erich Hartleben. He seldom ever missed a Goethe meeting. Yet at first I could never discover why he came.

It was in the circle of journalists, theatre people, and writers who gathered on the evenings of the Goethe festivals at the Hotel Chemnitz, apart from the learned celebrities, that I became acquainted with Otto Erich Hartleben. Why he was sitting there I could at once perceive. For he was in his element when he could live himself out in conversations such as were then customary. There he would remain for a long while. He could not go away. In this way I once chanced to be with him and others. The rest of us were "of necessity" the next morning at the Goethe meeting; Hartleben was not there. But I had already become fond of him and was concerned at his absence. So at the close of the meeting I looked for him at his hotel room. He was still sleeping. I woke him, and told him that the principal meeting of the Goethe Society was already at an end. I did not understand why he had wished to participate in the Goethe festival in this fashion. But he answered in such a way that I saw it was entirely natural to him to come to Weimar to attend a Goethe gathering in order to sleep during the programme – for he slept away the chief thing for which the others had come.

I got close to Otto Erich Hartleben in a peculiar fashion. At one of the suppers to which I have referred there was a prolonged conversation regarding Schopenhauer. Many words of admiration and of disapproval had been uttered concerning the philosopher. Hartleben had for a long while been silent. Then he entered into the tumultuous revelations of the conversation: "People are aroused by him, but he means nothing for life." Meanwhile he was looking at me with a childish helplessness; he wished me to say something, for he

had heard that I was then occupied with Schopenhauer. I said “Schopenhauer I must consider a narrow-minded genius!”

Hartleben's eyes sparkled; he became restless; he emptied his glass and filled another. In this moment he had locked me up in his heart; his friendship for me was fixed. “Narrow minded genius!” – that suited him. I might just as well have used the expression about some other personality, and it would have been the same thing to him. It interested him deeply to think that one could hold the opinion that even a genius could be narrow-minded.

For me the Goethe gatherings were fatiguing. For most persons in Weimar during these meetings were either in one circle or the other according to their interests – either in that of the discoursing or dining philologists or in that of the Olden and Hartleben colouring. I had to take part in both.

My interests impelled me in both directions. That went very well since the sessions of one came at night and of the other during the day. But I was not privileged to live after the manner of Otto Erich. I could not sleep during the day sessions. I loved the many-sidedness of life, and was really just as happy at midday in the Institute circle with Suphan, with whom Hartleben had never become acquainted – since this did not appeal to him – as I was in the evenings with Hartleben and his like-minded companions.

The philosophical tendencies of a succession of men revealed themselves to my mind during my Weimar days. For in the case of each one with whom it was possible to converse about questions of the world and of life, such conversations developed in the intimate relationships of that time. And many persons interested in such discussions came through Weimar.

I passed through these experiences during that period of life in which the soul is inclined to turn strongly to the outer life; when it must find its firm union with that life. To me the philosophies there expressing themselves were a fragment of the outer world. And I was forced to realize that even until that time I had really lived but very little in touch with an external world. When I withdrew from some living intercourse, then I always became aware at once that up to that time the only trustworthy world for me had been the spiritual world, which I saw in inner vision. With that world I could readily unite myself. So my thoughts often took the direction of saying to myself how hard had been the way for me through the senses to the outer world during all my childhood and youth. It was always difficult for me to fix in my memory such external data, for example, as one must assimilate in the realm of science. I had to look at a natural object again and again in order to know what it was called, in what scientific class of objects it was listed, and the like. I might even say that the sense-world was for me somewhat like a shadow or a picture. It passed before my soul in pictures, whereas my relationship to the spiritual bore always the character of reality.

All this I experienced in the highest degree during the 'nineties in Weimar. I was then giving the final touches to my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*. I wrote down – so it

seemed to me – the thoughts which the spiritual world had given me up to my thirtieth year. All that had come to me from the outer world was only in the nature of a stimulus.

This I experienced especially when in vital intercourse with men in Weimar. I discussed questions of philosophy. I had to enter into them, into their way of thinking and emotional inclinations; they by no means entered into that which I had inwardly experienced and was still experiencing. I entered with vital intensity into that which others perceived and thought; but I could not cause my own inner spiritual activity to flow over into this world of experience. In my own being I had always to remain behind, within myself. Indeed, my world was separated, as if by a thin partition, from all the outer world.

In my own soul I lived in a world that bordered on the outer world, but it was always necessary for me to step across a boundary if I wished to have anything to do with the outer world. I was in the most vital intercourse with others, but in every instance I had to pass from my world, as if through a door, in order to engage in this intercourse. This made it seem to me as if each time that I entered into the outer world I was making a visit. Yet this did not hinder me from giving myself up to the most vital participation with one whom I was thus visiting; indeed, I felt entirely at home while on such a visit.

Thus it was with persons, and thus also with world-concepts. I liked to go to Suphan; I liked to go to Hartleben. Suphan never went to Hartleben; Hartleben never went to Suphan. Neither could enter into the characteristic ways of thinking and feeling of the other. With Suphan, and equally with Hartleben, I was as if at home. But neither Suphan nor Hartleben really came to me. Even when they came to me, they still remained by themselves. To my spiritual world they could, in actual experience, make no visit. I perceived the most varied world-concepts before my mind – the natural-scientific, the idealistic, and many shades of each. I felt the impulse to enter into these, to move about in them; but into my spiritual world they cast no light. To me they were phenomena standing before me, not realities in which I could truly have lived.

Thus it was in my soul when life thrust me into immediate contact with such world-concepts as those of Haeckel and Nietzsche. I realized their relative correctness. With my attitude of mind I could never so deal with them as to say “This is right; that is wrong.” In that case I should have felt what was vital in them to be something alien to me. But I found one no more alien than the other; for I felt at home only in the spiritual world of my perception, and I could feel as if at home in every other.

When I describe the thing thus it may seem as if everything were to me fundamentally a matter of indifference. But such was by no means the case. In this matter I had an entirely different feeling. I was conscious of a full participation in the other because I did not alienate myself from it by reason of the fact that I bore my own along with me both in judgment and feeling.

I had, for instance, innumerable conversations with Otto Harnach, the gifted author of *Goethe in der Epoch seiner Vollendung*⁽¹⁾ who often came at that time to Weimar as he

was working at Goethe's art studies. This man, who later became involved in a terrible tragedy, I really loved. I could be wholly Otto Harnach while I was talking with him. I received his thoughts, entered into them as a visitor – in the sense I have indicated – and yet as if at home. It did not even occur to me to invite him to visit me. He could only live alone. He was so woven into his own thought that he felt as something alien to himself everything that was not his own. He would have been able to listen to talk about my world only in such a way that he would have treated it as the Kantian “thing in itself” which lies on the other side of human consciousness. I felt spiritually obliged to deal with his world as such that I did not have to relate myself to it in Kantian fashion but must carry my consciousness over into it.

I lived thus not without spiritual perils and difficulties. Whoever turns away from everything that does not accord with his way of thinking will not be imposed upon by the relative correctness of the various world-concepts. He can without reserve experience the fascination of that which is thought out in a certain direction. Indeed, this fascination of intellectualism is now in the life of very many persons. They easily adapt themselves to thought which is quite unlike their own. But whoever possesses a world of vision, such as the spiritual world must be, such a person sees the correctness of various “standpoints”; and he must be constantly on guard within his soul not to be too strongly drawn to the one side or the other.

But one becomes conscious of the “being of the outer world” if one can with love yield oneself up to it and yet must always turn back to the inner world of the spirit. But one also learns in this process really to live in the spiritual. The various intellectual “standpoints” repudiate one another; spiritual vision sees in them simply “standpoints.” Seen from each of these the world appears differently. It is as if one should photograph a house from various sides. The pictures are different; the house is the same. If one walks around the actual house one receives a comprehensive impression. If one stands really within the spiritual world one allows for the “correctness” of a standpoint. One looks upon a photographic impression from one “standpoint” as some thing “correct.” Then one asks about the correctness and the significance of the standpoint.

It was in this way that I had to approach Nietzsche, and likewise Haeckel. Nietzsche, I felt, photographs the world from one standpoint to which a profound human personality was driven in the second half of the nineteenth century if he had to live upon the spiritual content of that age alone, if the perception of the spiritual would not break into his consciousness, and yet his will in the subconscious strove with unusual force toward the spiritual. Such was the picture of Nietzsche that lived in my soul; it showed me the personality that did not perceive the spiritual but in which the spirit battled against the unspiritual views of the time.

Notes:

1. Goethe at the Time of His Maturity.
-

The Story of My Life

XVII

AT this time there was established in Germany a branch of the Ethical Culture Society which had originated in America. It seems obvious that in a materialistic age one ought only to approve an effort in the direction of a deepening of ethical life. But this effort arose from a fundamental conception that aroused in me the profoundest objections.

The leader of this movement said to himself: "One stands to-day in the midst of the many opposing conceptions of the world and of life as regards the life of thought and the religious and social feelings. In the realm of these conceptions men cannot be brought to understand one another. It is a bad thing when the moral feelings which men ought to have for one another are drawn into the sphere of these opposing opinions. Where will it lead if those who feel differently in matters religious and social, or who differ from one another in the life of thought, shall also express their diversity in such a way as thus to determine also their moral relationships with respect to those who think and feel differently. Therefore one must seek for a foundation for purely human ethics which shall be independent of every world-concept, which each one can recognize no matter how he may think in reference to the various spheres of existence."

This ethical movement made upon me a profound impression. It had to do with views of mine which I held to be most important. For I saw before me the deep abyss which the way of thinking characteristic of the most recent times had created between that which occurs in nature and the content of the moral and spiritual world.

Men have come to a conception of nature which would represent the evolution of the world as being without moral or spiritual content. They think hypothetically of a purely material primal state of the world. They seek for the laws according to which from this primal state there could gradually have been formed the living, that which is endued with soul, that which is permeated with spirit in the form characteristic of this present age. If one is logical in such a way of thinking – so I then said to myself – then the spiritual and moral cannot be conceived as anything other than a result of the work of nature. Then one faces facts of nature which are from the spiritual and moral point of view quite indifferent, which in their own process of evolution have brought forth the moral as a by-product, and which finally with moral indifference likewise bury it.

I could, of course, perceive clearly that the sagacious thinkers did not draw these conclusions; that they simply accepted what the facts of nature seemed to say to them, and thought in regard to these matters that one ought simply to allow the world-significance of the spiritual and moral to rest upon its own foundation. But this view seemed to me of little force. It made no difference to me that people said: "In the field of natural occurrences one must think in a way that has no relation to morality, and what one thus thinks constitutes hypotheses; but in regard to the moral each man may form his

own ideas.” I said to myself that whoever thinks in regard to nature even in the least detail in the manner then customary, such a person cannot ascribe to the spiritual-moral any self-existent, self-supporting reality. If physics, chemistry, biology remain as they are – and to all they seem to be unassailable – then the entities which men in these spheres consider to be reality will absorb all reality; and the spiritual-moral could be nothing more than the foam arising from this reality.

I looked into another reality – a reality which is spiritual and moral as well as natural. It seemed to me a weakness in the effort to attain knowledge not to be willing to press through to that reality. I was forced to say to myself according to my spiritual perception: “Above the natural occurrences, and also the spiritual-moral, there is a veritable reality, which reveals itself morally but which in moral activity has at the same time the power to embody itself as an occurrence which attains to equal validity with an occurrence in nature.” I thought that this seemed indifferent to the spiritual-moral only because the latter had lost its original unity of being with this reality, as the corpse of a man has lost its unity of being with that in man which is endued with soul and with life. To me this was certain; for I did not merely think it: I perceived it as truth in the spiritual facts and beings of the world. In the so-called “ethicists” there seemed to me to have been born men to whom such an insight appeared to be a matter of indifference; they revealed more or less unconsciously the opinion that one can do nothing with conflicting philosophies; let us save the principles of ethics, in regard to which there is no need to inquire how they are rooted in the world-reality. Undisguised scepticism as to all endeavour after a world-concept seemed to me to manifest itself in this phenomenon of the times. Unconsciously frivolous did any one seem to me who maintained that, if we let world-concepts rest on their own foundations, we shall thus be able to spread morality again among men. I took many a walk with Hans and Grete Olden through the Weimar parks, during which I expressed myself in radical fashion on the theme of this frivolity. “Whoever presses forward with his perception as far as is possible for man,” I said, “will find a world-event out of which there appears before him the reality of the moral just as of the natural.” In the recently founded *Zukunft* I wrote a trenchant article against what I called ethics uprooted from all world-reality, which could not possess any force. The article met with a distinctly unfriendly reception. How, indeed, could it be otherwise, when these “ethicists” themselves had been obliged to come forward as the saviours of civilization?

To me this matter was of immeasurable importance. I wished to do battle at a critical point for the confirmation of a world-concept which revealed ethics as firmly rooted along with all other reality. Therefore, I was forced to battle against this ethics which had no philosophical basis. I went from Weimar to Berlin in order to seek for opportunities to present my view through the press.

I called on Herman Grimm, whom I held in high honour. I was received with the greatest possible friendliness. But it seemed to Herman Grimm very strange that I, who was full of zeal for my cause, should bring this zeal into his house. He listened to me rather unresponsively, as I talked to him of my view regarding the ethicists. I thought I could interest him in this matter which to me seemed so vital. But I did not in the least succeed. When, however, he heard me say “I wish to do something,” he replied, “Well, go to these

people; I am more or less acquainted with the majority of them; they are all quite amiable men.” I felt as if cold water had been thrown over me. The man whom I so highly honoured felt nothing of what I desired; he thought I would “think quite sensibly” when I had convinced myself by a call on the “ethicists” that they were all quite congenial persons. I found in others no greater interest than in Herman Grimm. So it was at that time for me. In all that pertained to my perceptions of the spiritual I had to work entirely alone. I lived in the spiritual world; no one in my circle of acquaintances followed me there. My intercourse consisted in excursions into the worlds of others. I loved these excursions. Moreover, my reverence for Herman Grimm was not in the least diminished. But I had a good schooling in the art of understanding in love that which made no move toward understanding what I carried in my own soul.

This was then the nature of my loneliness in Weimar, where I had such an extensive social relationship. But I did not ascribe to these persons the fact that they condemned me to such loneliness. Indeed, I perceived that unconsciously striving in many people was the impulse toward a world-concept which would penetrate to the very roots of existence. I perceived how a manner of thinking which could move securely while it had to do only with that which lies immediately at hand yet weighed heavily upon their souls. “Nature is the whole world” – such was that manner of thinking. In regard to this way of thinking men believed that they must find it to be correct, and they suppressed in their souls everything which seemed to say one could not find this to be correct. It was in this light that much revealed itself to me in my spiritual surroundings at that time. It was the time in which my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, whose essential content I had long borne within me, was receiving its final form.

As soon as it was off the press, I sent a copy to Eduard von Hartmann. He read it with close attention, for I soon received back his copy of the book with his detailed marginal comments from beginning to end. Besides, he wrote me, among other things, that the book ought to bear the title: *Erkenntnistheoretischer Phänomenalismus und ethischer Individualismus*⁽¹⁾. I He had utterly misunderstood the sources of the ideas and my objective. He thought of the sense-world after the Kantian fashion even though he modified this. He considered this world to be the effect produced by reality upon the soul through the senses. This reality, according to his view, can never enter into the field of perception which the soul embraces through consciousness. It must remain beyond consciousness. Only by means of logical inferences can man form hypothetical conceptions regarding it. The sense-world, therefore, does not constitute in itself an objective existence, but is merely a subjective phenomenon existing in the soul only so long as this embraces the phenomenon within consciousness.

I had sought to prove in my book that no unknown lies behind the sense-world, but that within it lies the spiritual. And concerning the world of human ideas, I sought to show that these have their existence in that spiritual world. Therefore the reality of the sense-world is hidden from human consciousness only so long as the soul perceives by means of the senses alone. When, in addition to the sense-perceptions, the ideas are also experienced, then the sense-world in its objective reality is embraced within consciousness. Knowing does not consist in a copying of a real but the soul's living

entrance into that real. Within the consciousness occurs that advance from the still unreal sense-world to the reality of this world.

In truth is the sense-world also a spiritual world; and the soul lives together with this known spiritual world while it extends its consciousness over it. The goal of the process of consciousness is the conscious experience of the spiritual world, in the visible presence of which everything is resolved into spirit. I placed the world of spiritual reality over against phenomenalism. Eduard von Hartmann thought that I intended to remain within the phenomena and abandon the thought of arriving from these at any sort of objective reality. He conceived the thing as if by my way of thinking I were condemning the human mind to permanent incapacity to reach any sort of reality, to the necessity of moving always within a world of appearances having existence only in the conception of the mind (as a phenomenon).

Thus my endeavour to reach the spirit through the expansion of consciousness was set over against the view that "spirit" exists solely in the human conception and apart from this can only be "thought." This was fundamentally the view of the age to which I had to introduce my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*. The experience of the spiritual had in this view of the matter shriveled up to a mere experience of human conceptions, and from these no way could be discovered to a real (objective) spiritual world. I desired to show how in that which is subjectively experienced the objective spiritual shines and becomes the true content of consciousness; Eduard von Hartmann opposed me with the opinion that whoever maintains this view remains fixed in the sensibly apparent and is not dealing at all with an objective reality. It was inevitable, therefore, that Eduard von Hartmann must consider my "ethical individualism" dubious.

For what was this based upon in my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*? I saw at the centre of the soul's life its complete union with the spiritual world. I sought so to express this fact that an imaginary difficulty which disturbed many persons might resolve itself into nothing. That is, it is supposed that, in order to know, the soul – or the ego – must differentiate itself from that which is known, and therefore must not merge itself with this. But this differentiation is also possible when the soul swings, like a pendulum, as it were, between the union of itself with the spiritual real on the one hand and the sense of itself on the other. The soul becomes "unconscious" in sinking down into the objective spirit, but with the sense of itself it brings the completely spiritual into consciousness. If, now, it is possible that the personal individuality of men can sink down into the spiritual reality of the world, then in this reality it is possible to experience also the world of moral impulses. Morality becomes a content which reveals itself out of the spiritual world within the human individuality; and the consciousness expanded into the spiritual presses forward to the perception of this revelation. What impels man to moral behaviour is a revelation of the spiritual world in the experiencing of the spiritual world through the soul. And this experience takes place within the individuality of man. If man perceives himself in moral behaviour as acting in reciprocal relation with the spiritual world, he is then experiencing his freedom. For the spiritual world works within the soul, not by way of compulsion, but in such a way that man must develop freely the activity which enables him to receive the spiritual.

In pointing out that the sense-world is in reality a world of spiritual being and that man, as a soul, by means of a true knowledge of the sense-world is weaving and living in a world of spirit – herein lies the first objective of my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*. In characterizing the moral world as one whose being shines into the world of spirit experienced by the soul and thereby enables man to arrive at this moral world freely – herein lies the second objective. The moral being of man is thus sought in its completely individual unity with the ethical impulses of the spiritual world. I had the feeling that the first part of *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* and the second part form a spiritual organism, a genuine unity. Eduard von Hartmann was forced, however, to feel that they were coupled together quite arbitrarily as phenomenalism in the theory of knowledge and individualism in ethics.

The form taken by the ideas of the book was determined by my own state of soul at that time. Through my experience of the spiritual world in direct perception, nature revealed itself to me as spirit; I desired to create a spiritual natural science. In the self-knowledge of the human soul through direct perception, the moral world entered into the soul as its entirely individual experience.

In the experience of spirit lay the source of the form which I gave to my book. It is, first of all, the presentation of an anthroposophy which receives its direction from nature and from the place of man in nature with his own individual moral being.

In a certain sense *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* released from me and introduced into the external world that which the first period of my life had brought before me in the form of ideas through the destiny which led me to experience the natural-scientific riddles of existence. The further way could now consist in nothing else than a struggle to arrive at ideal forms for the spiritual world itself. The forms of knowledge which man receives through sense-perception I represented as inner anthroposophical experience of the spirit on the part of the human soul. The fact that I had not yet used the term anthroposophic was done to the circumstance that my mind was always striving first to attain perception and scarcely at all after a terminology. My task was to form ideas which could express the human soul's experience of the spiritual world.

An inner wrestling after the formation of such ideas comprises the content of that episode of my life which I passed through between my thirtieth and fortieth years of age. At that time fate placed me usually in an outer life-activity which did not so correspond with my inner life that it could have served to bring this to expression.

Notes:

1 Phenomenalism in the Theory of Knowledge and Individualism in Ethics.

The Story of My Life

XVIII

To this time belongs my entrance into that circle of spiritual experience in which Nietzsche lingered.

My first acquaintance with Nietzsche's writings belongs to the year 1889. Previous to that I had never read a line of his. Upon the substance of my ideas as these find expression in *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, Nietzsche's thought had not the least influence. I read what he had written with the feeling of being drawn on by the style which he had developed out of his relation to life. I felt that his soul was a being that was impelled by reason of inheritance and attraction to give attention to everything which the spiritual life of his age had brought forth, but which always felt within: "What has this spiritual life to do with me? There must be another world in which I can live; so much does life in this world jar upon me." This feeling made him a spiritually incensed critic of his time; but a critic who was by his own criticism reduced to illness – who had to experience illness and could only dream of health – of his own health. At first he sought for means to make his dream of health the content of his own life; and thus he sought with Richard Wagner, with Schopenhauer, with modern positivism to dream as if he wished to make the dream in his soul into a reality. One day he discovered that he had only dreamed. Then he began with every power belonging to his spirit to seek for realities – realities which must lie "somewhere or other." He found no roads to these realities, but only yearnings. Then these yearnings became to him realities. He dreamed again, but the mighty power of his soul created out of these dreams realities of the inner man which, without that heaviness which had so long characterized the ideas of humanity, floated within him in a mood of soul joyful but resting upon foundations contrary to the spirit of the age, the "Zeitgeist."

It was thus that I viewed Nietzsche. The freely floating weightless character of his ideas attracted me. I found that this free-floating element in him had brought to maturity many thoughts that bore a resemblance to those which had shaped themselves in me by ways quite unlike those of Nietzsche's mind.

Thus it was possible for me to write in 1895 in the preface to my book *Nietzsche, ein Kämpfer gegen seine Zeit*⁽¹⁾, "As early as 1886 in my little volume, *The Theory of Knowledge in Goethe's World-Conception*, the same sentiment is expressed" – that is, the same as appears in certain works of Nietzsche. But what attracted me particularly was that one could read Nietzsche without coming upon anything which strove to make the reader a "dependant" of Nietzsche's. One could gladly experience without reserve his spiritual illumination; in this experience one felt oneself to be wholly free; for one had the impression that his words began to laugh if one had attributed to them the intention of being assented to, as is the case when one reads Haeckel or Spencer.

Thus I ventured to explain my relationship to Nietzsche in the book mentioned above by using the words which he himself had used in his book on Schopenhauer: "I belong among those readers of Nietzsche, who, after having read their first page from him, know for a certainty that they will read every page and listen to every word which he has ever uttered. My confidence in him continued from that time on ... I understood him as if he

had written for me, in order to express me intelligibly, but immodestly, foolishly.” Shortly before I began the actual writing of that book, Nietzsche's sister, Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, appeared one day at the Goethe and Schiller Institute. She was taking the preliminary steps toward the establishment of a Nietzsche Institute, and wished to learn how the Goethe and Schiller Institute was managed. Soon afterward there came to Weimar the editor of Nietzsche's works, Fritz Koegel, and I made his acquaintance.

Later I got into a serious disagreement with Frau Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche. Her emotional and lovable spirit claimed at that time my deepest sympathy. I suffered inexpressibly by reason of the disagreement. A complicated situation had brought this to pass; I was compelled to defend myself against accusations; I know that it was all necessary, that the happy hours I was permitted to spend among the Nietzsche archives in Naumburg and Weimar should now lie under a veil of bitter memories; yet I am grateful to Frau Förster-Nietzsche for having taken me, on the first of many visits I made to her, into the chamber of Friedrich Nietzsche. There he lay on a lounge enveloped in darkness, with his beautiful forehead-artist's and thinker's forehead in one. It was early afternoon. Those eyes which in their blindness yet revealed the soul, now merely mirrored a reflection of the surroundings which could find no longer any way to reach the soul. One stood there and Nietzsche knew it not. And yet one could have believed, looking upon that brow permeated by the spirit, that this was the expression of a soul which had all the forenoon long been shaping thoughts within, and which now would fain rest a while. An inner shudder which seized my soul may have signified that this also underwent a change in sympathy with the genius whose gaze was directed toward me and yet failed to rest upon me. The passivity of my gaze so long fixed won in return a comprehension of his own gaze: his longing always in vain to enable the soul-forces of the eye to work.

And so there appeared before my soul the soul of Nietzsche, hovering above his head, boundless in its spiritual light; surrendered wholly to the spiritual worlds, longing after its environment but failing to discover it; and yet chained to the body, which would have to do with the soul only so long as the soul longed for this present world. Nietzsche's soul was still there, but only from without could it hold to the body, that body which so long as the soul remained within it had offered resistance to the full unfolding of its light.

I had ere this read the Nietzsche who had written; now I perceived the Nietzsche who bore within his body ideas drawn from widely extended spiritual regions – ideas which still sparkled in their beauty even though they had lost on the way their primal illuminating powers. A soul which from previous earthly lives bore rich wealth of light, but which could not in this life cause all its light to shine. I had admired what Nietzsche wrote; but now I saw a luminous form behind that which I had admired.

In my thoughts I could only stammer over what I then beheld; and this stammering is in effect my book, *Nietzsche as the Adversary of His Age*. That the book is no more than a stammering conceals what is none the less true, that the form of Nietzsche I beheld inspired the book. Frau Förster-Nietzsche then requested me to set Nietzsche's library in order. In this way I was enabled to spend several weeks in the Nietzsche archives at Naumburg. In this way also I formed an intimate friendship with Fritz Koegel. It was a

beautiful task which placed before my eyes the books in which Nietzsche himself had read. His spirit lived in the impressions which these volumes made upon me – a volume of Emerson's filled throughout with marginal comments showing all the signs of an absorbing study; Guyau's writing bearing the same indications; books containing violent critical comments from his hand – a great number of marginal comments in which one could see his ideas in germinal form. A penetrating conception of Nietzsche's final creative period shone clearly before me as I read his marginal comments on Eugen Dühring's chief philosophical work. Dühring there develops the thought that one can conceive the cosmos at a single moment as a combination of elementary parts. Thus the history of the world would be the series of all such possible combinations. When once these should have been formed, then the first would have to return, and the whole series would be repeated. If anything thus exists in reality, it must have occurred innumerable times in the past, and must occur again innumerable times in future. Thus we should arrive at the conception of the eternal repetition of similar states of the cosmos. Dühring rejects this thought as an impossibility Nietzsche reads this; he receives from it an impression, which works further in the depths of his soul and finally take form within him as “the return of the similar,” which, together with the idea of the “superman,” dominates his final creative period.

I was profoundly impressed – indeed shocked – by the impression which I received from thus following Nietzsche in his reading. For I saw what an opposition there was between the character of Nietzsche's spirit and that of his contemporaries. Dühring, the extreme positivist, who rejects everything which is not the result of a system of reasoning directed with cold and mathematical regularity, considers “the eternal repetition of the similar” as an absurdity, and sets up the idea only to show its impossibility; but Nietzsche must take this up as his solution of the world-riddle, as an intuition, arising from the depths of his own soul.

Thus Nietzsche stands in absolute opposition to much which pressed in upon him as the content of the thought and feeling of his age. This driving pressure he so receives that it pains him deeply, and it is in grief, in inexpressible sorrow of spirit, that he shapes the content of his own soul. This was the tragedy of his creative work.

This reached its climax while he was sketching the outlines for his last work, *Willen zur Macht, eine Umwertung aller Werte*⁽²⁾. Nietzsche was impelled to bring up in purely spiritual fashion everything which he thought or experienced in the depth of his soul. To create a world-concept from the spiritual events in which the soul itself participates – this was the tendency of his thought. But the positivistic world conception of his age, the age of natural science, swept in upon him. In this conception there was nothing but the purely materialistic world, void of spirit. What remained of the spiritual way of thought in the conception was only the remains of ancient ways of thinking, and these no longer found him. Nietzsche's unlimited sense for truth would expunge all this. In this way he came to think as an extreme positivist. A spiritual world behind the material became to him a lie. But he could create only out of his own soul – so create that true creation seemed to him to have meaning only when it holds before itself in idea the content of the spiritual world. Yet this content he rejected. The natural-scientific world-content had so firmly gripped

his soul he would create this as if in spiritual fashion. Lyrically, in dionysiac rush of soul, does his mind soar aloft in *Zarathustra*. In wonderful fashion does the spiritual hover there, but it is a wonderful spiritual dream woven out of the stuff of material reality. The spirit strews this about in its effort to escape because it does not find itself but can only live in a seeming reality in that dream reflected from the material.

In my own mind I dwelt much during those Weimar days in the contemplation of Nietzsche's type of mind. In my own spiritual experience this type of mind had also its place. My spiritual experience could enter sympathetically into Nietzsche's struggles, into his tragedy. What had this to do with the positivistic forms in which Nietzsche proclaimed the conclusions of his thought?

Others looked upon me as a "Nietzschean," merely because I could unreservedly admire what was entirely opposed to my own way of thinking. I was impressed by the way in which Nietzsche's mind revealed itself; in just this aspect I felt myself close to him, for in the content of his thought he was close to no one; as to the experience of the spiritual way of thought he felt himself isolated both from men and from his age.

For a long time I was in frequent intercourse with the editor of Nietzsche's works, Fritz Koegel. We discussed in detail many things pertaining to the publication of Nietzsche's works. I never had any official relation to the Nietzsche archives or the publication of his works. When Frau Förster Nietzsche wished to offer me such a relationship, this led to a conflict with Fritz Koegel which at once rendered it impossible that I should have any share in the Nietzsche archives. My connection with the Nietzsche archives constituted a very stimulating episode in my life at Weimar, and the final rupture of this relationship caused me deep regret. Out of the various activities in connection with Nietzsche, there remained with me a view of his personality – that of one whose fate it was to share tragically in the life of the age of natural science covering the latter half of the nineteenth century and finally to be shattered by his impact with that age. He sought in that age, but nothing could he find. As to myself, I was only confirmed by my experience with him in the conviction that all seeking for reality in the data of natural science would be vain except as it directed its view, not within these data, but through them into the world of spirit.

It was thus that Nietzsche's work brought the problem of natural science before my mind in a new form. Goethe and Nietzsche stood in perspective before me. Goethe's strong sense for reality directed him toward the essential being and processes of nature. He desired to remain within nature. He restricted himself to pure perceptions of the plant, animal, and human forms. But, while he kept his mind moving among these forms, he came everywhere upon spirit. For within the material he found everywhere dominant the spirit. All the way to the actual perception of the spirit living and controlling he would not advance. A spiritual sort of natural science was what he constructed, but he paused before arriving at the knowledge of pure spirit lest he should lose his hold upon reality.

Nietzsche proceeded from the vision of the spiritual after the manner of myths. Apollo and Dionysos were spiritual forms which he experienced in vital fashion. The history of

the human spiritual seemed to him to have been a history of co-operation and also of conflict between Dionysos and Apollo. But he got only as far as the mythical conception of such spiritual forms. He did not press forward to the perception of real spiritual being. Beginning with the spiritual in myth, he made a path for himself to nature. In Nietzsche's thought Apollo had to represent the material after the manner of natural science; Dionysos had to be conceived as symbolizing the forces of nature. But thus was Apollo's beauty dimmed; thus was the world-emotion of Dionysos paralysed into the regularity of natural law.

Goethe found the spirit in the reality of nature; Nietzsche lost the spirit-myth in the dream of nature in which he lived.

I stood between these two opposites. The experiences of soul through which I had passed in writing my book *Nietzsche as the Adversary of His Age* could at first make no advance; on the contrary, in the last period of my life in Weimar, Goethe became once more dominant in my reflections. I wished to indicate the road by which the life of humanity had expressed itself in philosophy up to the time of Goethe, in order to conceive the philosophy of Goethe as proceeding out of this life. This endeavour I made in the book *Goethes Weltanschauung*⁽³⁾ which was published in 1897. In this book it was my purpose to bring to light how Goethe, wherever he directed his eyes to the understanding of nature, saw shining forth everywhere the spiritual; but I did not touch upon the manner in which Goethe related himself to spirit as such. My purpose was to characterize that part of Goethe's philosophy which expressed itself vitally in a spiritual view of nature.

Nietzsche's ideas of the "eternal repetition" and of "supermen" remained long in my mind. For in these was reflected that which a personality must feel concerning the evolution and essential being of humanity when this personality is kept back from grasping the spiritual world by the restricted thought in the philosophy of nature characterizing the end of the nineteenth century. Nietzsche perceived the evolution of humanity in such a way that whatever happened at any moment has already happened innumerable times in precisely the same form, and will happen again innumerable times in future. The atomistic conception of the cosmos makes the present moment seem a certain definite combination of the smallest entities; this must be followed by another, and this in turn by yet another – until, when all possible combinations have been formed, the first must again appear. A human life with all its individual details has been present innumerable times; it will return with all its details in innumerable times.

The "repeated earth-lives" of humanity shone darkly in Nietzsche's subconsciousness. These lead the individual human life through human evolution to life-stages at which overruling destiny causes men to pass, not to a repetition of the earth-life, but by ways spiritually determined to a traversing in many forms through the course of the world. Nietzsche was fettered by the natural-scientific conception. What this conception could make of repeated earth-lives – this exercised a fascination upon his mind. This he vitally experienced; for he felt his own life to be a tragedy filled with the bitterest experiences, weighed down by grief. To live such a life countless times – this was what he dwelt upon

instead of the liberating experience which is to follow upon such a tragedy in the further unfolding of future lives.

Nietzsche felt also that in the man who is living through one earthly existence another man is revealed, a superman, who is able to form but a fragment of his whole life in a bodily existence on earth. The natural-scientific conception of evolution caused him to view this superman, not as the spirit dominant within the sense-physical, but as that which is shaping itself through a merely natural process of evolution. As man has evolved out of the animal, so will the “superman” evolve out of man. The natural scientific view drew Nietzsche's eyes away from the spiritual man to the natural man, and dazzled him with the thought of a higher “natural man.”

What Nietzsche had experienced in this way of thought was present in the utmost vividness in my mind during the summer of 1896. At that time Fritz Koegel gave me his collection of Nietzsche's aphorisms concerning the “eternal repetition” to look through. The opinions I formed at that time of this process of Nietzsche's thought were expressed in an article published in 1900 in the *Magazin für Literatur*. Certain statements occurring in that article fix definitely my reactions at that time to Nietzsche and to natural science. I will transcribe those thoughts of mine here, freed from the polemics with which they were there associated.

“There is no doubt that Nietzsche wrote these single aphorisms in a series without any order ... I still maintain the conviction I then expressed, that Nietzsche grasped this idea when reading *Eugen Dühring's Kursus der Philosophie als streng Wissenschaftlicher Weltanschauung und Lebensgestaltung*⁽⁴⁾ (Leipzig, 1875) and under the influence of this book. On page 84 of this work the thought is quite clearly expressed; but it is there as energetically opposed as Nietzsche defends it. This book is in Nietzsche's library. It was read very eagerly by Nietzsche, as is evident from numerous pencil marks on the margins ... Dühring says: ‘The profound’ logical basis of all conscious life demands in the strongest sense of the word an *inexhaustibleness* of forms. Is this endlessness, by virtue of which ever new forms will appear, a possibility? The mere number of the parts and of the force elements would in itself preclude the unending multiplication of combinations but for the fact that the perpetual medium of space and time promises a limitlessness in variations. Moreover, of that which can be counted only a limited number of combinations is possible. But from that which cannot according to its nature be conceived as enumerable it must be possible for a limitless number of states and relationships to come to pass. This limitlessness, which we are considering with reference to the destiny of forms in the universe, is compatible with any sort of change and even with intervals of approximation to fixity or *precise repetitions* (italics are mine) but not with the cessation of all variation. Whoever would cherish the conception of an existence which contradicts the primal state of things ought to reflect that the evolution in time has but a single true tendency, and that causality is always in line with this tendency. It is easier to abandon the distinction than to maintain it, and it then requires but little effort to leap over the chasm and imagine the end as analogous with the beginning. But we ought to guard against such superficial haste; for the once given existence of the universe is not merely an unimportant episode between two states of night, but rather the sole firm and

illuminated ground from which we may infer the past and forecast the future ... 'Dühring feels also that an everlasting repetition of states holds no incentive for living.' He says: 'Now it is self-evident that the principle of an incentive for living is incompatible with the eternal repetition of the same form ...'”

Nietzsche was forced by the logic of the natural-scientific conception to a conclusion from which Dühring turned back because of mathematical considerations and the repellent prospect which these represented for human life.

To quote further from my article: “... if we set up the postulate that with the material parts and the force-elements a limited number of combinations is possible, then we have the Nietzschean ideal of the ‘return of the similar.’

“Nothing less than a defence of a contradictory idea taken from Dühring's view of the matter occurs in Aphorism 203 (Vol. XII in Koegel's edition, and Aphorism in Horneffer's work, *Nietzsche's Lehre von der ewigen Wiederkunft*⁽⁵⁾). The amount of the all-force is definite, not something endless: we must beware of such prodigality in conceptions! Accordingly the number of stages, modifications, combinations, and evolutions of this force, though vast and practically immeasurable, is yet always definite and not endless: that is, the force is eternally the same and eternally active – even to this very moment already an endlessness has passed, which means that all possible evolutions must already have occurred. Therefore, the momentary evolution must be a repetition, and likewise that which brought it forth and that which arises from it, and so on both forwards and backwards! Everything has been innumerable times insofar as the sum total of the stages of all forces is repeated ...’ And Nietzsche's feeling in regard to these thoughts is precisely the opposite of that which Dühring experienced. To Nietzsche this thought is the loftiest formula in which life can be affirmed. Aphorism 43 (in Horneffer; 234 in Koegel's edition) runs: ‘Future history will ever more combat this thought, and never believe it, for according to its nature it must die forever! Only he remains who considers his existence capable of endless repetitions: among such, however, a state is possible to which no Utopian has ever attained.’ It can be proven that many of Nietzsche's thoughts originated in a manner similar to that of the eternal repetition. Nietzsche formed an idea opposite to any idea then present before him. At length this same tendency led to the production of his masterpiece, *Umwertung aller Werte*.”⁽⁶⁾

It was then clear to me that in certain of his thoughts which strove to reach the world of spirit Nietzsche was a prisoner of his conception of nature. For this reason I was strongly opposed to the mystical interpretation of his thought of repetition. I agreed with Peter Gast, who wrote in his edition of Nietzsche's work: “The doctrine – to be understood in a purely mechanical sense – of limitedness and consequent repetition in cosmic molecular combinations.” Nietzsche believed that a lofty thought must be brought up from the foundations of natural science. That was the way in which he had to sorrow because of his age. Thus in my glimpse of Nietzsche's soul in 1896 there appeared before me what one who looked toward the spirit had to suffer from the conception of nature prevailing at the end of the nineteenth century.

Notes:

1. Nietzsche as the Adversary of His Age.
 2. The Will to Power, a Transvaluation of all Values.
 3. Goethe's World-Conception.
 4. The Course of Philosophy as a Strictly Scientific World-Conception and Shaping of Life
 5. Nietzsche's Doctrine of the Eternal Repetition.
 6. The Will to Power, a Transvaluation of all Values.
-

The Story of My Life

XIX

THE loneliness I then experienced in respect to that which I bore in silence within me as my world-conception, while my thoughts were linked to Goethe on one side and to Nietzsche on the other – this loneliness was my experience also in relation to many other personalities with whom I felt myself united by bonds of friendship but who none the less energetically opposed my spiritual life.

The friend whom I had gained in early years but whose ideas and my own had become mutually so divergent that I had to say to him: “Were that true which you think concerning the essential reality of life, then I had rather be the block of wood under my feet than a man” – this friend still continued bound to me in love and loyalty. His welcome letters from Vienna always carried me back to the place which was so dear to me, especially because of the human relationships in which I was there privileged to live.

But if this friend undertook in his letters to speak about my spiritual life, a gulf then opened between us. He often wrote me that I was alienating myself from what is primal in human nature, that I was “rationalizing the impulses of my soul.” He had the feeling that in me the life of feeling was changed into a life of mere thought, and this he sensed as a certain coldness proceeding from me. Nothing which I could bring to bear against this view of his could do any good. I could not avoid seeing that the warmth of his friendship gradually diminished because he could not free himself of the belief that I must grow cold as to what was human since I passed my soul-life in the region of thought.

That, instead of being chilled in this life of thought, I had to take with me into this life my full humanity in order by this means to lay hold upon reality in the spiritual sphere – this he would never grasp.

He failed to see that the purely human persists, even when it is raised to the realm of the spirit; nor could he see how it is possible to live in the sphere of thought; it was his

opinion that one can there merely think and must lose oneself in the cold region of abstractions.

Thus he made me out a “rationalist.” In this view of his I felt there was the grossest misunderstanding of what was reached by my spiritual paths. All thinking which turns away from reality and spends itself in the abstract – for this I felt the innermost antipathy. I was in a condition of mind in which I would develop thought drawn from the sense world only to that stage at which thought tends to veer off into the abstract; at that point, I said to myself, it ought to lay hold upon the spirit. My friend saw that I moved in thought out of the physical world; but he failed to realize that in that very moment I stepped over into the spiritual. Therefore, when I spoke of the really spiritual, this was to him quite non-existent, and he received from my words merely a web of abstract thoughts.

I was deeply grieved by the fact that, when I was really uttering that which had for me the profoundest import, yet to my friend I was talking of a “nothing.” Such was my relationship to many persons.

What so entered into my life I had to perceive also in my conception of the understanding of nature. I could recognize as right only that method of nature-research in which one applies one's thought to the task of looking through the objective relationships of sense-phenomena; but I could not admit that one should by means of thought elaborate concerning the region of sense-perception hypotheses which then are to be referred to a supersensible reality but which, in fact, constitute a mere web of abstract thoughts. At that moment in which thought has completed its work in fixing that which is rendered clear by the sense-phenomena themselves, when rightly viewed, I did not desire to begin with the framing of hypotheses, but in perception, in the experiencing of the spiritual which in reality lives, not behind the sense world, but within it.

What I then held firmly as my own view in the middle of the 'nineties I later set down briefly as follows in an article I published in 1900 in No. 16 of the *Magazin für Literatur*: “A scientific analysis of our activity in cognition leads ... to the conviction that the questions which we have to address to nature are a result of the peculiar relationship in which we stand to the world. We are limited individualities, and for this reason we can become aware of the world only in fragments. Each piece, of and for itself, is a riddle; or, otherwise expressed, it is a problem for our understanding. But the more we come to know the details, the clearer does the world become to us. One act of becoming aware makes clear the others. Questions which the world puts to us and which cannot be answered with the means which the world gives us – these do not exist. For monism, therefore, there are on general principles no limits to knowledge. At one time this or that may not be clarified, because we are not yet in position, as to either space or time, to find the things which are there concerned. But what is not found to-day may be found to-morrow. Limits determined in this manner are only accidental, such as will vanish with the progress of experience and of thought. In such cases the formation of hypotheses legitimately comes into play. Hypotheses should not be formed in regard to anything which by its nature is inaccessible to our understanding. The atomic hypothesis is utterly without foundation when it is considered, not merely as an aid to abstract thought, but as

a declaration regarding real being beyond the reach of our qualitative experience. A hypothesis must be merely an opinion regarding a group of facts which, for accidental reasons, is inaccessible to us but which belongs by nature to the world given to us.”

I stated this view regarding the forming of hypotheses because I wished to show that “limitations of knowledge” were not proven, and that the limitations of natural science were a necessity. At that time I did this as to the understanding of nature only in a side reference. But this way of forming thoughts had always laid down the road for me to advance farther by means of the knowledge of spirit beyond that point at which one dependent upon the knowledge of nature reached the inevitable “limitation.” A contentment of soul and profound inner satisfaction were mine at Weimar by reason of the artistic element brought into the city by the art school and the theatre, and the musical people associated with these.

In the teachers and students of painting in the art school there was revealed what was then struggling out of the ancient traditions toward a new and direct perception and reflection of nature and life. A good many among these painters might properly have been considered “seekers.” How that which the painter had as colour on his palette or in his colour-pot could be applied to the surface in such a way that what the artist created should bear a right relationship to Nature as she lives and becomes visible to man's eyes in creating – this was the question which was constantly heard in the most varied forms, in a manner stimulating, often pleasantly fanciful, and from the artistic experience of which there originated the numerous paintings that were displayed by Weimar artists in the frequent art exhibitions.

My artistic experience was not then so broad as my relation to experiences in the realm of knowledge. Yet I sought in the stimulating intercourse with the Weimar artists for a spiritual conception of the artistic. To retrospective memory, that which I then experienced in my own mind seems very chaotic – when the modern painter who sensed the mood of light and atmosphere and wished to give these back took up arms against the “ancients” who knew from tradition how this or that was handled. There was in many of them a spiritualized striving – derived from the most primitive forces of the soul – to be “true” in the reproduction of nature.

Not thus chaotic, however, but in most significant forms appeared to my mind the life of a young painter whose artistic way of revealing himself harmonized with my own evolution in the direction of artistic fantasy. This artist, then in the bloom of youth, was for some time in the closest intimacy with me. Him also life has borne far away from me; but I have often recalled in memory the hours we spent together. The soul-life of this young man was all light and colour.

What others expressed in ideas he uttered by means of “colours in light.” Indeed, his understanding worked in such a way that he combined things and events of life as one combines colours, not as mere thoughts combine which the ordinary man shapes from the world.

This young artist was once at a wedding festival to which I also had been invited. The usual festival speeches were being made. The pastor took as content of his talk the meaning of the words bride and groom. I endeavoured to discharge the duty of speaking – which rested upon me because I was a frequent visitor at the friendly home from which the bride came – by talking of the delightful experiences which the guests were permitted to enjoy at that home. I spoke because I was expected to speak. And I was expected to make the sort of speech “belonging to” a wedding feast. So I took little pleasure in “the role” I had to play. After me arose the young painter, who also had long been a friend of the family. From him no one expected anything; for everybody knew that such ideas as are embodied in toasts simply did not belong to him. He began somewhat as follows: “Over the glimmering red crest of the hill the glance of the sun poured lovingly. Clouds breathing above the hill and in the gleam of the sun; glowing red slopes facing the sunlight, blending into triumphal arches of spiritual colours giving a pathway to earth for the downward striving light. Flower surfaces far and wide; above these the air, gleaming yellow, slips into the flowers awakening the life in them ...” He spoke in this way for a long while. He had suddenly forgotten all the wedding merriment about him and begun “in the spirit” to paint. I do not know why he ceased thus to speak in painter fashion; I suppose his coat-tail was pulled by someone who was very fond of him, but who also wished equally that the guests should come to a peaceful enjoyment of the wedding roast meat.

The young painter's name was Otto Fröhlich. He often sat with me in my room, and we took walks and excursions together. While Otto Fröhlich was with me, he was always painting “in the spirit.” In his company one could forget that the world has any other content than light and colour. Such was my feeling about this young friend. I know that whatever I had to say to him I placed before his mind clothed in colours in order to make myself intelligible to him. And the young painter really succeeded in so guiding his brush and so laying on the colours that his pictures were in a high degree a reflection of his own luxuriant, living colour fantasies. When he painted the trunk of a tree, there appeared on the canvas, not the delineated shapes of a picture, but rather that which light and colour reveal from within themselves when the tree-trunk gives them the opportunity to manifest their life.

In my own way I was seeking for the spiritual substance of colour in light. In him I was forced to see the secret of the being of colour. In Otto Fröhlich there stood beside me a man who individually bore instinctively within him as his experience that which I was seeking for the taking up of the colour-world through the human soul.

It gave me pleasure to be able through this very search of mine to give the young friend many a stimulus. The following was an instance. I myself experienced in a high degree the intensive colours which Nietzsche describes in the *Zarathustra* chapter on “the most hateful man.” This “Valley of Death,” described like a painting by Nietzsche, held for me much of the secret of the life of colour.

I gave Otto Fröhlich the advice to paint poetically the picture done by Nietzsche in word colours of Zarathustra and the most hateful man. He did this. And now something really

remarkable came to pass. The colours concentrated themselves, glowing and very expressive, in the figure of Zarathustra. But this figure as such did not come out fully, since in Fröhlich the colours themselves could not yet unfold themselves to the extent of creating Zarathustra. But so much the more living did the colour variations boil up into the “green snakes” in the valley of the most hateful man. In this part of the picture all of Fröhlich lived. But now the “most hateful man” There it would have required the line, the characteristic of painting. This Fröhlich refused. He did not yet know how there actually lives in colour the secret of causing the spiritual to take on form through the very handling of the colour itself. So “the most hateful man” became a reproduction of the model called by the Weimar painters “Füllsack.” I do not know whether this was really the name of the man always used by the painters when they wished to deal with the characteristically hateful; but I know that “Füllsack's” hatefulness was no longer merely conventional, but had something of genius in it. But to place him thus unchanged as a copy in the picture where Zarathustra's soul revealed itself shining in countenance and in apparel, when the light conjures forth true colour-being out of its intercourse with the green snakes – this ruined the painting of Fröhlich. Thus the picture failed to become what I had hoped might come to pass through Otto Fröhlich.

Although I could not but realize the sociability in my nature, yet at Weimar I never felt in overwhelming measure the impulse to betake myself where the artists, and all who felt socially bound up with them, spent the evenings.

This was in a romantic “Artists' Club” remodeled out of an old smithy opposite the theatre. There, united together in a dim-coloured light, sat the teachers and students of the Academy of Painting; there sat actors and musicians. Whoever sought for sociability must feel himself impelled to go to this place in the evenings. And I did not feel so impelled just for the reason that I did not seek companionship, but thankfully accepted it when circumstances brought it to me.

In this way I became acquainted with individual artists in other social groups, but did not come to know the artistic world.

To know certain artists at Weimar in those days was of vital value. For the tradition of the Court and the extraordinarily sympathetic personality of the Grand-duke Carl Alexander gave to the city an artistic standing which drew to Weimar, in one relation or another, everything artistic which was active in that period.

There, first of all, was the theatre with the good old traditions – disinclined in its leading representatives to allow a naturalistic flavour to come into evidence. And where the modern would fain show itself and expunge many a pedantry, which nevertheless was always associated with good traditions, there modernity was kept far away from that which Brahm propagated on the stage and Paul Schlenther through the press as the “modern conception.” Among these “Weimar moderns” the chief of all was that wholly artistic noble fire-spirit, Paul Wiecke. To see such men take in Weimar the first steps of their artistic career gave one an ineradicable impression, and was a comprehensive school of life. Paul Wiecke used the basement of a theatre which, because of its traditions,

annoyed the elemental artist. Very stimulating hours have I spent at the home of Paul Wiecke. He was on terms of intimate friendship with my friend Julius Wahle, and because of this I came very close to him. It was often delightful to hear Wiecke grumbling over almost everything that he must endure when he had to do the dress rehearsals for a new performance. Then, with this in mind, to see him play the role that he had so abused, and which nevertheless, through his noble endeavour after style and through his beautiful spiritualizing fire, afforded one a rare enjoyment.

Richard Strauss was then making his beginning in Weimar. He was second director along with Lassen. The first compositions of Richard Strauss were performed in Weimar. The musical craving of this personality revealed itself as a piece of the very spiritual life of Weimar. Such a joyful unreserved acceptance of something which in the act of its acceptance became an exciting problem of art was then possible at Weimar alone. Round about one the peace of the traditional – a highly prized and worthy mood; now enters amid this Richard Strauss with his *Zarathustra Symphony* or even his music for the buffoon. Everything wakes up in tradition, reverence, worth; but it wakes up in such a way that the assent is lovable, the dissent harmless – and the artist can find in the most beautiful way the reaction to his own creation.

How many hours long we sat at the first performance of Richard Strauss's music drama *Guntram*, in which the lovable and humanly so distinguished Heinrich Zeller played the leading rôle and almost sang himself out of voice!

Indeed, this profoundly sympathetic man, Heinrich Zeller – even he had to leave Weimar in order to become what he did become. He had the most beautiful elemental gift of song. He needed for his unfolding an environment which, with the utmost patience, permitted that such a gift should in developing itself experiment over and over again. And so the evolution of Heinrich Zeller is to be numbered among the most human and beautiful things which one could ever experience. Besides, Zeller was such a lovable personality that one must count the hours one could spend with him among the most stimulating possible. And thus it came about that, although I did not often think of going in the evening to the Artists' Club, yet, if Heinrich Zeller met me and said I must go with him, I always yielded gladly to this demand.

The state of things at Weimar had also its dark side. That which is traditional and peace-loving often held the artist back as if in a sort of seclusion. Heinrich Zeller became very little known to the world outside of Weimar. What was at first suited to enable him to spread his wings later crippled these wings. And so it was always with my dear friend Otto Fröhlich. He needed, like Zeller, the artistic soil of Weimar, but the dim spiritual atmosphere absorbed him too much in its artistic comfort.

And one felt this “artistic comfort” in the pressure of Ibsen's spirit and that of other moderns. There one shared with everything – the battle waged by the dramatist, for example, in order to find the style for a *Nora*. Such a seeking as one could there observe occurs only where, through the propagation of the old stage traditions, one meets with

difficulties in the effort to represent what comes from poets who have begun, not like Schiller with the stage, but like Ibsen with life.

But one also shares in this reflection of this modernism out of the “artistic comfort” of the theatrical public. One ought to find a middle way between the two circumstances: first, that one is a dweller in “classical Weimar,” and, on the other hand, that what has made Weimar great has been its constant understanding for the new.

It is with great happiness that I remember the productions of Wagner's music dramas at which I was present in Weimar. The Director von Bronsart developed a specially understanding devotion to this type of theatrical productions.

Heinrich Zeller's voice then reached its most exquisite value. A remarkable gift as a singer belonged to Frau Agnes Stavenhagen, wife of the pianist Bernhard Stavenhagen, who was also for a long time director at the theatre. Frequent music festivals brought the representative artists of the time and their works to Weimar. One saw there, for example, Mahler as director at a music festival when he was just getting his start. Ineradicable was the impression of the way in which he used the baton – not aiding music in the flood of forms, but as the experience of a supersensible hidden something visibly pointing amid the forms.

What came before my mind from these Weimar events – seemingly quite unrelated to me – is really deeply united with my life. For these were excitations and states which I experienced as pertaining in the deepest manner to me. Often afterwards, when I have encountered a person, or the work of a person, with whom I have shared experiences at his beginning at Weimar, I have recalled with gratitude this Weimar period through which so much became intelligible because so much had gathered from elsewhere there to pass through its germinal stage. Thus I then experienced in Weimar the artistic strivings in such a way that in regard to most of these I had my own opinion, often very little in harmony with those of other persons. But at the same time I was just as intensely interested in everything which others felt as in my own feelings. Here also there came to pass within me a twofold mental life.

This was a genuine discipline of the mind, brought to me by life itself in the course of destiny, in order that I might find my way out from the “either or” of abstract intellectual judgment. This sort of judgment erects barriers separating the mind from the spiritual world. In this there are not beings and occurrences which admit of such an “either or” judgment. In the presence of the supersensible one must become many-sided. One must not merely learn theoretically, but must take everything to dwell in the innermost emotions of the soul's life, in order to view everything from the most manifold points of view. Such standpoints as materialism, realism, idealism, spiritualism, as these have been elaborated in the physical world by personalities with abstract ways of thinking into comprehensive theories in order that they may signify something for things in themselves, – these lose all interest for one who knows the supersensible. He knows, for example, that materialism cannot be anything else but the view of the world from that point from which it reveals itself in material phenomena.

It is a practical training in this direction when one finds oneself in the midst of an existence which brings the life whose waves beat outside of one's own so inward as to become as close as one's own judgments and feelings. But for me this was true of much in Weimar. It seems to me that at the close of the century this ceased to be true there. Until then the spirit of Goethe and of Schiller still rested upon everything. And the lovable old Grand-duke, who moved about with such distinction in Weimar and its vicinity, had as a boy seen Goethe. He truly felt very strongly his "Your Highness," but he always showed that he felt himself a second time ennobled through the work that Goethe did for Weimar.

It was the spirit of Goethe which worked so powerfully from all directions at Weimar that to me a certain side of the experience of what was happening there became the practical mental discipline in the right conception of the supersensible worlds.

The Story of My Life

XX

THE hospitable welcome I met in the family of the Keeper of the Records at the Goethe-Schiller Institute, Eduard von der Hellen, was of the most delightful character. This man stood in a peculiar relationship to the other collaborators at the archives. He had an extraordinary reputation among the philological specialists because of his remarkably successful initial work on Goethe's *Anteil an Lavaters Physiognomischen Fragmenten*⁽¹⁾. Von der Hellen had in this work produced something which every contemporary philologist accepted forthwith as "complete." Only the author himself did not think so. He looked upon the work as a methodical achievement whose principles "could be learned" by anyone, whereas his own endeavour was to fill himself with inner spiritual content.

When there were no visitors, we sat for long spells together in the old collaborators' room of the Institute while this was still at the castle: three of us – von der Hellen, who was working at an edition of Goethe's letters; Julius Wahle, occupied with the journals; and I, with the natural-scientific writings. But the very requirements of von der Hellen's mental life gave rise to conversations in the midst of the work touching upon the most manifold aspects of public life, spiritual or other. In this connection, however, those interests which are bound up with Goethe always received their due. The notes written by Goethe in his journals, and letters of Goethe's revealing a standpoint so elevated and such comprehensive vision, -these gave rise to reflections which led into the very depths of existence and the breadth of life. Eduard von der Hellen was friendly enough to introduce me into his family, in order further to develop the relationship growing out of these meetings in the Institute, often so stimulating. A still further extension of the delightful companionship came about by reason of the fact that von der Hellen's family likewise

mingled in the circles I have already described – such as those grouped about Olden, Gabrielle Reuter, and others.

Especially has the profoundly congenial personality of Frau von der Hellen always remained fixed in my memory. Hers was a nature wholly artistic. One of those persons who, but for other duties intervening in her life, possessed the capacity for achieving something beautiful in art. Such was her destiny that, so far as I am aware, the artistic side of this woman came to expression only in the early part of her life. But every word about art that one could exchange with her was a satisfaction. She showed a basic quality, as it were, of reserve; always cautious in judgment, and yet profoundly sympathetic in a purely human way. I seldom went away from such a conversation without carrying with me in long continued reflection what Frau von der Hellen had suggested rather than spoken.

Very lovable also were the father of Frau von der Hellen and his two daughters – the father a lieutenant-general who had fought through the war of the 'seventies as a major. While one was in this group of persons, one experienced vitally the most beautiful aspect of German spiritual life: that spiritual life which had flowed into all circles of the social life out of those religious, aesthetic, or popular-scientific impulses that for so long constituted the real nature of German spirituality.

Eduard von der Hellen's interests for some time brought me into touch with the political life of the times. Discontent with things philological drove von der Hellen into the lively political affairs of Weimar. There he seemed to find a broader perspective of life. And my friendly personal interest in him led me also – although without active participation in politics – to become interested in the movements of public life.

Much of that which has been found to be impracticable in our present-day life, or else, in a terrible metamorphosis, has given rise to absurd social forms, -much of this was to be seen at that time in its genesis, associated with all the hopes of a working class taught by trained and forceful leaders to believe that a new time must come for men in the forms of social life. The cautious and the altogether radical elements among the workers were enforcing their views. To observe them was all the more impressive since what there appeared was like a boiling up of the lower levels of the social life. In the upper levels there was something vital which could have expressed itself only in a worthy sort of conservatism bound up with a hope for everything that is human – a hope marked by capable and profound thinking and by vigorous activity. In the atmosphere then present there sprang up a reactionary party which considered itself as indispensable, and in addition the so-called National-Liberty Party.

So to adjust himself to all this that he might gain effective leadership and bring men out of this chaos – such was the interpretation one had to place upon the feeling of Eduard von der Hellen at that time. And one had to share in the experience through which he passed in this respect. He discussed among his circle of friends every detail of a brochure he was preparing. One was forced to take as deep an interest as Eduard von der Hellen himself in the conceptions – at that time accompanied by feelings quite unlike those of

the present – of the materialistic interpretation of history, the class struggle, “surplus value.” One could not refrain from attending the numerous gatherings at which he appeared as lecturer. Over against the theoretically formulated Marxian programme he proposed to set up another which should grow out of a good will toward social progress on the part of all friendly working men of every party. He was thinking of a sort of revival of the middle parties by the incorporation into their platforms of those impulses which would enable them to solve the social problem.

The effort proved futile. Only I am confident that I could not have participated in the public life of that period so intensely as I did had I not shared in this struggle of von der Hellen's.

Yet public life had its influence upon me from another direction also, though far less intensely. Indeed, it always seemed that a mild repugnance arose within me – which was not true in relation to von der Hellen – in the very proximity of anything political. There lived in Weimar at that time Dr. Heinrich Fränkel, a liberal politician, an adherent of Eugen Richter and also active in politics in the same spirit. We became acquainted. A brief acquaintance which was later brought to an end by reason of a misunderstanding, but to which I often look back with pleasure; for the man was, in his way, extraordinarily lovable, had a strong political will, and was led by his good purpose and far-sighted-views to the belief that it was necessary to create an enthusiasm among men on behalf of a right way of progress in public affairs. His life became a succession of disillusionments. Unluckily, I myself had to be the occasion of one of those for him. He was working just at the time that I knew him at a brochure which he hoped to circulate in very great numbers. What concerned him was the desire to oppose the establishment of a combination between big industry and the agrarians, which was already beginning to take form in Germany and which, according to his view, would certainly bring devastating results in the train of its later development. His brochure bore the title, *Kaiser, werde hart!*⁽²⁾ He thought he could dissuade the entourage of the Kaiser from what he believed to be harmful. The man accomplished not the slightest result by this effort. He saw that the party to which he belonged and for which he laboured could not bring to birth those forces which were needed to lay down a foundation for the policies thought out by him.

This led him to conceive the idea of exerting himself to revive the *Deutsche Wochenschrift*, which I had edited for a short time a few years before in Vienna. By means of this he wished to set up a political current which would have enabled him to move forward from the “liberalism” of that time into a more national-liberal activity. It occurred to him that I could do something along with him in this direction. That was impossible; even for the mere revival of the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* I could do nothing. The manner in which I informed him of this led to misunderstandings which in a short time put an end to our friendship.

But another friendship grew out of this one. The man had a very dear wife and a dear sister-in-law, and he had introduced me into his family. This in turn brought me in touch with another family. And then something came to pass that seemed like a repetition of the remarkable relationship which destiny had brought me once in Vienna. I was intimately

associated with a family there, but in such a way that the head of the family remained always unseen, and yet he came so close to me in soul and spirit that after his death I delivered the address at his funeral as if he had been my best friend. The whole spiritual being of this man stood before my mind by means of his family.

And now I entered into almost the same relationship with the head of the family into which I was brought in a roundabout way by the liberal politician. The head of this family had died a short while before; the widow's life was filled with pious thoughts about her dead husband. It came about that I left the home in Weimar in which I had lived till then, and took up my residence with the family. There was the library of the dead man. A man of interesting spirit in many ways, but living just like that one in Vienna, refusing all relationships with men; living like that one in his own "mental world"; considered by the world to be a recluse, as the other had been.

I felt this man like that one-though I had never met him in the flesh-entering into my destiny "from behind the veils of existence." In Vienna there came about a beautiful relationship between the family of the "unknown" thus known and myself; and in Weimar there came about between the second "unknown" and myself a relationship even more significant.

When I must speak in this way of the two "unknown known" I am aware that what I have to say will be called by most men "mad fantasy." For this has to do with the way in which I was able to draw near to the two men in that sphere of the world in which they were after they had passed through the portal of death.

Everyone has the inner right to exclude from the group of subjects which interest him all statements in regard to this sphere; but to characterize such statements as merely fantastic is something quite different. When anyone does this, then I must emphasize the fact that I have always sought in such exact branches of science as mathematics and analytical mechanics for the sources of that temper of soul which qualifies one to make assertions concerning things spiritual. When, therefore, I assert what here follows I cannot justly be accused of mere careless talk unsupported by the requisite knowledge.

The power of the spiritual vision which I then bore in my soul made it possible for me to enter into a close union with these two souls after their earthly death. They were unlike other dead persons. These immediately after their earthly death go through a life which, in essence, is in close relationship with the earthly life, and which only gradually comes to resemble the life one experiences in that purely spiritual world where one's existence continues till the next earthly life.

The two "unknown known" had been rather familiar with the thinking of this materialistic age. They had elaborated in concepts within themselves the natural-scientific way of thinking. The second, whom Weimar brought to me, was indeed well acquainted with Billroth and other natural scientific thinkers. On the other hand, during their earthly lives both had remained aloof from a spiritual conception of the world. The spiritual conception which they might have encountered at that time would have repelled

them, since they were forced to believe that “natural-scientific thinking,” according to the habits of thought of the time, was demanded by the facts.

But this union with the materialism of the time remained wholly in the world of ideas of the two persons. They did not share in the habits of life which followed from the materialism of this thinking, and which were predominant in the case of all other men. They became “recluses from the world”; lived in more primitive ways than were then customary and would have been natural to men of their means. Thus they did not carry over into the spiritual world that which a union with the materialistic “will-evaluations” would have given to their individualities, but only that which the materialistic “thought-evaluations” had planted in these individualities. Naturally this worked itself out for the souls mostly in the unconscious. And now I could see how these materialistic thought-evaluations are not something which alienates man after death from the world of the divine and spiritual, but that this alienation comes about only through materialistic will-evaluations. Both the soul which had come close to me in Vienna and also the one which I came to know spiritually in Weimar were, after death, noble shining spiritual forms whose soul-content was filled with conceptions of those spiritual beings who are at the foundation of the world. And the only result of their acquaintance with those ideas by means of which they mastered the material in thought during their previous earthly life was that after death also they were able to develop such a relationship with the world as included a capacity for judgment. This would not have been the case if the corresponding ideas had remained unknown to them.

In these two souls there had crossed my predestined path beings through whom the significance of the natural-scientific way of thought was revealed to me directly from the spiritual world. I could see that this way of thought in itself need not lead away from a spiritual perception. In the case of these two personalities this had happened during their earthly life because they found no opportunity there to elevate the natural-scientific way of thinking into the sphere where spiritual experience begins. After death they accomplished this in the most complete fashion. I saw that one can achieve this elevation of thought if one brings inner mood and force to the task during the earthly life. I saw also, through my participation in that which is significant in the spiritual world, that humanity had of necessity to evolve to the scientific way of thinking. Earlier ways of thinking could unite humanity with the supersensible world; they could lead man, especially if he entered into self-knowledge (the foundation of all knowledge), to know himself as a copy, or even a member, of the spiritual world; but they could not bring him to the point where he could feel himself to be a self-sufficient, self-enclosed spiritual being. Therefore the advance had to be made to the grasp of an ideal world which is not kindled from the spirit itself, but is stimulated out of matter – which is, indeed, spiritual, but not derived from the spirit.

Such a world of ideas cannot be generated in man in that spiritual world where he has his vital relationships after death and before a new birth, but only in the earthly existence, because only there does he stand face to face with materialist forms.

I could realize, therefore, through these two human souls what man wins for the totality of his life, including his spiritual life after death, by reason of his being woven into the natural-scientific way of thinking. But in the case of others who had taken into themselves during their earthly lives the effects of the crass natural-scientific way of thinking upon the will, could see that these estranged themselves from the spiritual world; that they had, so to speak, arrived at a totality of life in which man is less man in his full humanity with the natural-scientific way of thinking than without it.

Both these souls had been recluses from the world because they did not wish to lose their humanity during the earthly life; they had accepted the natural-scientific way of thinking in its full comprehensiveness because they wished to reach that stage of the spiritual man which cannot be attained without this.

It might well have been impossible for me to attain to these perceptions in the case of these two souls if I had encountered them within the earthly existence as physical personalities. In order to perceive the two individualities in the spiritual world in which they were to reveal to me their being, and through this also many other things, I needed that sensitiveness of the soul's perception in relationship to them which is easily lost when that which has been experienced in the physical world conceals what is to be experienced spiritually, or at least interferes with this.

I was forced, therefore, to perceive that the manner in which both souls entered into my earthly life was something ordained by way of destiny along my path to knowledge. But nothing whatever of a spiritistic sort can be associated with this way of relating oneself to souls in the spiritual world. Nothing could ever count with me in the relationship to the spiritual world except the genuine spiritual perception which later discussed publicly in my anthroposophic writings. Moreover, the Viennese family and all its members, as well as that of Weimar, were far too sane for a communion with the dead by the help of mediums.

Wherever such things have been under discussion, I have always taken an interest also in such a seeking on the part of human souls as is manifested in spiritualism. Modern spiritualism is a way toward the spirit for such souls as would seek for the spirit in external – almost experimental – ways because they cannot any longer experience the real, the true, the genuine in a spiritual manner. It is just the sort of person who interests himself in an entirely objective manner in spiritualism, without himself having the desire to investigate something by means of it, who can see through to correct conceptions of the purpose and the errors of spiritualism. My own research moves always by a different path from that of spiritualism in any of its forms. Indeed, there were opportunities in Weimar for interesting intercourse with spiritualists; for there was an intense interest for a long time among the artists in this way of seeking to relate oneself to the spiritual. But there came to me from my intercourse with the two souls – he of Weimar was named Eunike – an access of strength for the writing of my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*. What I aspired to do in that book was this: First, the book is the product of my way of philosophical thinking during the eighties; in the second place, it is the product also of my general concrete perception in the spiritual world; but in the third place, it was

reinforced through my participation in the spiritual experiences of those two souls. In these I had before me the ascent which man owes to this natural-scientific world-conception. But I had in them also the fear which noble souls feel of entering vitally into the will-element of this world-conception. These souls shrank back from the moral effects of such a world-conception.

Now I sought in my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* for that force which leads from the ethically neutral ideal world of natural science into the world of moral impulse. I sought to show how the man who knows himself as a self-enclosed being of a spiritual sort because he lives in ideas which are no longer streaming out from the spirit but are stimulated by material being, can nevertheless evolve out of his own being an intuition for the moral. In this way the moral shines in the individuality now made free as individual impulsion toward the moral, just as ideas arise from the perception of nature.

The two souls had not pressed on to this moral intuition. Hence they shrank back (unconsciously) from life because this could have been maintained only in the sense of natural-scientific ideas not as yet extended further. I spoke at that time of “moral fantasy” as the source of the moral in the isolated human individuality. I was far from any intention of referring to this source as to something not wholly real. On the contrary, I wished to point out in fantasy the force which helps the spiritual world in all its aspects to break through into the individual man. Of course, if one is to attain to a real experience of the spiritual, then it is necessary that the spiritual forces of knowledge should enter into one – imagination, inspiration, intuition. But to a man conscious of himself as an individual the first ray of a spiritual revelation comes by means of fantasy; and we observe, indeed, in Goethe the way in which fantasy holds aloof from everything fantastic, and becomes a picture of the spiritually real.

In the family left behind by the Weimar “unknown known,” I lived for much the greater part of the time that I remained in Weimar. I had a part of the house for myself; Frau Anna Eunicke, with whom I was soon on terms of intimate friendship, watched over all my needs in the most devoted fashion. She valued greatly the fact that I stood beside her in her heavy responsibilities for the education of the children. She had been left after Eunicke's death a widow with four daughters and a son.

The children I saw only when there was some occasion for me to do so. That happened frequently, since I was looked upon just as if I belonged to the family. My meals, however, except the morning coffee and supper, I took [elsewhere](#)⁽³⁾.

In this place where I had formed so delightful a family connection it was not only I who felt at home. When young visitors from Berlin who had formed intimate ties with me, attending the meetings of the Goethe Society, wished for once to be quite “cozy” together, they came to me at the Eunicke home. And I have every reason to assume from the way in which they acted that they felt very much at ease there.

Otto Erich Hartleben also was happy to be there whenever he was in Weimar. The *Goethe Breviary* that he published was there put together by us two in the space of a few

days. Of my own larger works, *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* and *Nietzsche as the Adversary of His Age* there took form.

And I think that numbers of Weimar friends also spent many a happy hour – or several hours – with me at the Eunicke home. In this connection I think most of all about the man to whom I was bound in intimate love and friendship – Dr. August Fresenius. He had become a permanent collaborator at the Museum. Before that he had been editor of the *Deutsche Literaturzeit.*⁽⁴⁾ His editorial work was universally considered as the standard of excellence. I had many things in my heart against philology, especially as the science was then pursued by the adherents of Scherer. August Fresenius armed me over and over again by the way in which he was a philologist. And he never for a moment made any secret of the fact that he wished to be a philologist, and only a true philologist. But with him philology was really the love of words, which filled the whole man with its vital force; and the word was to him that human revelation in which all the laws of the universe are mirrored. Whoever wishes to see into the mysteries of words must possess an insight into all the mysteries of existence. The philologist, therefore, must do nothing less than pursue an universal knowledge. True philological methods rightly applied can move outward from the utterly simple until they cast a powerful illumination upon extensive and important spheres of life. Fresenius showed this at that time in an example which took a strong hold upon my interest. We had discussed the matter a great deal before he published it in a brief but weighty article in the *Goethe Year Book*.

Until the discovery by Fresenius, everyone who had busied himself with the interpretation of Goethe's Faust had misunderstood a statement made by Goethe five days before his death to Wilhelm von Humboldt. Goethe made this statement: **“Es sind über sechzig Jahre, dass die Konzeption des Faust bei mir, jugendlich von vornherein klar, die weitere Reihenfolge hingegen weniger ausführlich, vorlag.”**⁽⁵⁾ The commentators had understood *von vornherein* to mean that from the beginning Goethe had had an idea, a plan, of the entire Faust drama in which he had at that time more or less elaborated the details. Even my beloved teacher and friend, Karl Julius Schröer, was of this opinion. Consider: If this were correct, then we should have in Goethe's Faust a work which Goethe had conceived in main outline as a young man. We should have to assume that it was possible for such a temper of soul as Goethe's so to work outward from a general idea that the work of elaboration could go on for sixty years and yet the idea remain fixed. That this is not so was proved irrefutably by Fresenius's discovery. He maintained that Goethe never used the expression *von vornherein* in the way ascribed to him by the commentators. He said, for example, that he had read a book **“von vornherein, das weitere nicht mehr.”**⁽⁶⁾ He used the expression *von vornherein* only in a spatial sense. It was thus shown that all Faust commentators were wrong, and that Goethe had said nothing about a plan of the Faust existing *von vornherein* – from the first – but only that the first parts were clear to him as a young man, and that here and there he had developed something in the latter parts.

Thus an important light was cast upon the whole psychology of Goethe by the correct application of the philological method. At that time I only marveled that something which ought to have had the most far-reaching effects upon the conception of Goethe's mind

really produced very little impression, after it was published in the *Goethe Year Book*, among those who ought to have been chiefly interested in it.

But other things than mere philology were the topics of conversations with August Fresenius. Everything that stirred the men of that time, everything interesting to us which happened in Weimar or elsewhere, became the subject of long conversations between us; for we spent much time together. At times we grew excited in conversations about many things; but they all ended in complete harmony, for we were convinced of the earnestness with which our respective views were held even though opposed. So much the more distressing must it be to me to reflect upon the fact that even my friendship with August Fresenius sustained a rupture in connection with the misunderstandings associated with my relationship to the Nietzsche Archives and to Frau Dr. Förster-Nietzsche. These friends could form no conception of that which really had happened. I could do nothing to satisfy them. For the truth is that nothing at all had happened. Everything rested upon misconceptions and illusions which had become fixed in the Nietzsche Archives. What I was able to say is contained in my article published later in the *Magazin für Literatur*. I felt this misunderstanding deeply, for the friendship with August Fresenius was firmly rooted in my heart.

Another friendship to which I have often looked back was that which I formed with Franz Ferdinand Heitmüller, who had just then – later than Wahle, von der Hellen, and I – become a collaborator at the Institute. Heitmüller's life was that of a fine soul with the sensibilities of an artist. He made all his discriminations through his artistic sense. Intellectualism was remote from him. Through him something artistic entered into the whole tone of our conversations in the Institute. He had already published stories marked by a delicate refinement. He was by no means a bad philologist, and he did no worse than others in what he had to work at as a philologist for the Institute. But he always maintained a sort of inner opposition to what was worked out in the Institute – especially to the way in which this work was conceived. Through him it came about that for a long time we felt very deeply the fact that Weimar had once been the place giving birth to the most inspired and famous productions but that men now contented themselves with going back to the things once produced, “fixing the readings,” and giving the best interpretations with superstitious care. Heitmüller published anonymously what he had to say about this in S. Fischer's *Neue Deutsche Rundschau* in the form of a story – *Die Versunkene Vineta*⁽⁷⁾. How men then tried to discover who had made of the once spiritually flourishing Weimar a drowned city! Heitmüller lived in Weimar with his mother, a wonderfully lovable woman. She became a friend of Frau Anna Eunicke, and enjoyed coming to her home. And so I then had the happiness of frequently seeing the Heitmüllers also in the house in which I lived.

One friend I have to recall who came into my circle rather early during my stay in Weimar, and with whom I was associated in intimate friendship until I left, and, indeed, even after that, when I went backwards and forwards on visits to Weimar. This was the painter Joseph Rolletscheck. He was a German Bohemian, and had been attracted to Weimar by the art school. A personality he was who impressed one as altogether lovable, and to whom one gladly laid open one's heart. Rolletscheck was sentimental and slightly

cynical at the same time; he was a pessimist on one side, and inclined on the other side to value life so little that it did not seem to him worth the trouble to lay so much stress upon those things which give ground for pessimism. When he was present, the talk had to deal much with the injustices of life; and he could storm endlessly over the injustice which the world had done to poor Schiller in contrast with Goethe, the chosen of destiny before his birth.

Although daily contact with such persons kept up a constant and stimulating exchange of thought and feeling, yet it was impossible for me to speak directly during this Weimar period about my experience of the spiritual world even to those with whom I was otherwise on terms of intimacy. I maintained that men must come to see that the true way into the spiritual world must lead first to the experience of pure ideas. The thing for which I argued in every sort of form was this: that, just as man can have in his conscious experience colour, tone, and heat qualities, so also he can experience pure ideas uninfluenced by any perception of the external, but appearing with the fulness of man's experience of himself. And in these ideas there is real and living spirit. All other experience of the spirit in man, so I then said, must spring up within consciousness as the result of this experience of ideas.

The fact that I sought for the experience of the spirit first in the experience of ideas led to the misunderstanding of which I have already spoken – that even intimate friends did not see the living reality in ideas, and considered me a rationalist, or intellectualist.

Firmer in maintaining an understanding of the living reality of the ideal world was a young man who came frequently to Weimar – Max Christlieb. It was rather early after the beginning of my stay in Weimar that I saw him, a seeker after the knowledge of the spirit. He had completed his preparation for the evangelical ministry, was just then taking his doctor's examination, and was getting ready to go to Japan to engage in some sort of missionary work, as he soon afterward did.

This man saw – inspired, I dare say – that man is living in the spirit when he lives in pure ideas, and that, since all of nature must shine forth before the understanding in the world of pure ideas, therefore in everything material we have only appearance (illusions); that all physical being is revealed by means of ideas as spirit. It was profoundly satisfying to me to find a person who possessed an almost complete understanding of spiritual being. It was an understanding of the spiritual being within the idea. There, of course, the spirit so lives that feeling and creative spiritual individualities do not yet separate themselves for the conscious vision from the sea of general ideal spirit-being. Of these spirit individualities I could not yet speak to Max Christlieb. This would have shocked too much his beautiful idealism. But genuine spirit-being – of this one could speak with him.

He had read with thorough understanding everything that I had written up to that time. And I had the impression at the beginning of the 'nineties: "Max Christlieb has the gift of entering into the spiritual world through the spirituality of the ideal in the way that I must consider the most suitable."

The fact that he did not later wholly maintain this direction of mind, but took a somewhat different course – of this there is now no occasion to speak.

Notes:

1. Goethe's Share in Lavater's Physionomic Fragments.
2. Kaiser, Be Stern!
3. In Germany the midday meal is the principal occasion for the whole family to be together.
4. German Literary News.
5. "For more than sixty years the conception of Faust has been present to my mind – the earlier parts clear in my youth, the latter parts less fully developed."
6. "As to the earlier parts but not the latter."
7. Venice Submerged.

The Story of My Life

XXI

THROUGH the liberal politician of whom I have spoken I became acquainted with the owner of a book-shop. This book business had seen better days than those it was passing through during my stay in Weimar. This was still true when the shop belonged to the father of the young man whom I came to know as the owner. The important thing for me was the fact that this book-shop published a paper which carried sketchy articles dealing with contemporary spiritual life and whatever was then appearing in the fields of poetry, science, and art. This paper also was in a decline; its circulation had fallen off. But it afforded me the opportunity to write about much which then lay within the scope of my thinking or had a relation to this. Although the numerous essays and book reviews which I thus wrote were read by very few, it was an important thing to me to have a paper in which I could publish whatever I pleased to write. There was a stimulus in this which bore fruit later, when I edited the *Magazin für Literatur* and was therefore compelled to share intensely in thought and feeling in contemporary spiritual life.

In this way Weimar became for me the place to which my thoughts had often to turn back in later years. The narrow limits within which my life had been restricted in Vienna were now expanded, and I had spiritual and human experiences the results of which appeared later on.

Most important of all, however, were the relationships with men which were then formed. When in later years I have recalled to memory Weimar and my life there, my mental gaze has often been directed to a house which had become dear to me in very special measure.

I became acquainted with the actor Neuffer while he was still engaged at the Weimar theatre. I appreciated in him at first his earnest and austere conception of his profession. Into his judgment concerning the art of the stage he allowed nothing of the dilettante to enter. This was satisfying for the reason that people are not always aware that dramatic art must fulfil genuinely artistic requirements in the same way as does, for instance, music.

Neuffer married the sister of the pianist and composer Bernhard Stavenhagen. I was introduced into his home. One was in this way received at the same time in friendly fashion in the home of the parents of Frau Neuffer and Bernhard Stavenhagen. Frau Neuffer is a woman who radiates a spiritual atmosphere over everything about her. Her sentiments, deeply rooted in the soul, shone with wonderful beauty in the free and informal talk in which one shared while in her home. She brought forward whatever she had to say thoughtfully and yet graciously. Every moment that I spent with the Neuffers I had the feeling: "Frau Neuffer strives to reach truth in all the relationships of life in a way that is very rare." That I was welcomed there was evidenced in the most varied incidents. I will choose one example. One Christmas Eve Herr Neuffer came to my home, and – as I was not in – left the request that I must without fail come to his home for the ceremony of Christmas gifts. This was not easy, for in Weimar I always had to share in several such festivities. But I managed somehow to do this. Then I found, beside the gifts for the children, a special Christmas gift for me all nicely wrapped up, the value of which can be seen only from its history.

I had been one day in the studio of a sculptor. The sculptor wanted to show me his work. Very little that I saw there interested me. Only a single bust which lay out of sight in a corner attracted my attention. It was a bust of Hegel. In the studio, which belonged to the home of an old lady very prominent in Weimar, there was to be seen every possible sort of sculpture. Sculptors always rented the room for only a short time; and each tenant would leave there many things which he did not care to take with him.

But there were also some things which had lain there for a long time unobserved, such as the Hegel bust.

The interest I had conceived in this bust led from that time on to my mentioning it here or there. So this happened once also in the Neuffer home; there also I added a casual remark to the effect that I should like to have the bust in my possession.

Then on the following Christmas Eve it was given to me as a present at Neuffer's. At lunch on the following day, to which I was invited, Neuffer told how he had procured the bust. He first went to the lady to whom the studio belonged. He told her that some one had seen the bust in her studio, and that it would have a special value for him if he could procure it. The lady said that such things had been in her house for a long time past, but whether a "Hegel" bust was there – as to that she knew nothing. She appeared quite willing, however, to guide Neuffer around in order that he might look for it. Everything was "thoroughly searched"; not the most hidden corner was left uninspected; nowhere was the Hegel bust discovered. Neuffer was quite sad, for there had been something very

satisfying to him in the thought of giving me pleasure by means of the Hegel bust. He was already standing at the door with the lady. The maid-servant came along. She heard the words of Neuffer's: "Yes, it is a pity that we have not found the Hegel bust!" "Hegel!" interjected the maid: "Is this perhaps that head with the tip of the nose broken off which is under my bed in the servant's room?" Forthwith the final act of the expedition was carried out, and Neuffer actually succeeded in procuring the bust; before Christmas there was still time to supplement the defective nose.

So it was that I came by the Hegel bust which is one of the few things that later accompanied me to many different places. I always liked to look again and again at this head of Hegel (by Wassmann, the year 1826) when I was deeply immersed in the world of Hegel's ideas. And this, as a matter of fact, happened very often. This countenance, whose features are the most human expression of the purest thought, constitutes a life-companion wielding a manifold influence.

So it was with the Neuffers. They spared no pains when they wished to give someone pleasure by means of something that had a special relation to him. The children that came one by one into the Neuffer home had a model mother. Frau Neuffer brought them up less by what she did than by what she is – by her whole being. I had the happiness of being godfather to one of the sons. Every visit to this house was the occasion of an inner satisfaction. I was privileged to make such visits also in later years after I had left Weimar but returned to and fro to deliver lectures. Unfortunately this has not been possible now for a long while. It thus happens that I have not been able to see the Neuffers during the years in which a painful fate has broken in upon them; for this family is one of those most sorely put to the test by the World War.

A charming personality was the father of Frau Neuffer, the elder Stavenhagen. Before this time he had been engaged in a practical occupation, but he had then settled down to rest. He now lived wholly in the contents of the library he had acquired for himself; and it was a thoroughly congenial picture to others – the way in which he lived there. Nothing self-satisfied or top-lofty had entered into the lovable old man, but rather something that revealed in every word the sincere craving for knowledge.

The relationships in Weimar were then of such a character that souls which felt elsewhere unsatisfied would turn up here. So it was with those who made a permanent home there, but so also with those who loved to come again and again as visitors. One had this feeling about many persons: "Visits to Weimar are different for them from visits to other places." I had this feeling in a very special way about the Danish poet, Rudolf Schmidt. He came first for the production of his play, *Der verwandelte König*⁽¹⁾. During this very first visit I made his acquaintance. Later, however, he appeared on many occasions which brought visitors from elsewhere to Weimar. The fine figure of a man with those wavy locks was often among these visitors. The way in which a man "is" in Weimar had in it something that drew his soul. He was a very sharply marked personality. In philosophy he was an adherent of Rasmus Nielson. Through this man, who derived his thought from Hegel, Rudolf Schmidt had the most beautiful understanding of the German idealistic philosophy.

And if Schmidt's opinions were thus clearly stamped on the positive side, they were no less so on the negative. Thus he became biting, satirical, utterly adverse when he spoke of Georg Brandes. There was something artistic in seeing a person revealing an entire expansive field of experience poured out before you in his antipathy. Upon me these revelations could never make any impression except an artistic one; for I had read much from Georg Brandes. I had been especially interested in what he had written, in a manner rich in spiritual wealth and out of a wide range of observations and knowledge, about the spiritual currents of the European peoples. But what Rudolf Schmidt brought forward was subjectively honest, and because of the character of the poet himself it was really captivating.

At length I came to feel the deepest and most heartfelt love for Rudolf Schmidt; I rejoiced on the days when he came to Weimar. It was interesting to hear him talk about his northern homeland, and to perceive what significant capacities had sprung up in him from the fountain-head of his northern experiences. It was no less interesting to talk with him about Goethe, Schiller, Byron. Then he spoke very differently from Georg Brandes. The latter is always in his judgments the international personality, but in Rudolf Schmidt there spoke the Dane. For this very reason he talked about many things and in many connections in a more interesting way than Georg Brandes.

During the latter part of my stay in Weimar, I became an intimate friend of Conrad Ansorge and his brother-in-law, von Crompton. Conrad Ansorge later developed in a brilliant way his great artistic powers. Here I need speak only of what he was to me in a beautiful friendship at the close of the 'nineties, and how he then impressed me. The wives of Ansorge and von Crompton were sisters. Because of this relationship, our gatherings took place either at von Crompton's home or at the hotel Russischer Hof.

Ansorge was an energetically artistic man. He was active both as pianist and as composer. During the time of our Weimar acquaintance he set to music poems of Nietzsche and of Dehmel. It was always a delightful occasion when the friends who were gradually drawn into the Ansorge-Crompton circle were permitted to hear a new composition. To this group belonged also a Weimar editor, Paul Böhrer. He edited the *Deutschland*, which had a more independent existence side by side with the official journal, the *Weimarische Zeitung*. Many other Weimar friends besides these appeared in this circle: Fresenius, Heitmüller, Fritz Koegel, too, and others. When Otto Erich Hartleben came to Weimar, he also always appeared in this circle, after it had been formed. Conrad Ansorge had grown out of the Liszt circle. Indeed, I speak nothing but the truth when I assert that he considered himself one of the pupils of the master who understood him in an artistic sense most truly of all. But it was through Conrad Ansorge that what had come in living form from Liszt was brought before one's mind in the most beautiful way.

For everything musical which came from Ansorge arose out of an entirely original, individual human being. This humanity in him might be inspired by Liszt, but what was delightful in it was its originality. I express these things just as I then experienced them; how I was afterward related to them or am now related is not here under discussion.

Through Liszt, Ansorge had once at an earlier period been bound to Weimar; at the time of which I am here speaking, his soul was freed from this state of belonging to Weimar. Indeed, the characteristic of this Ansorge-Crompton circle was that it was in a very different relationship to Weimar from that of the great majority of persons of whom I have hitherto been able to state that they came into close touch with me.

Those persons were at Weimar in the way I have described in the preceding chapter. The interests of this circle reached outward from Weimar, and so it came about that at the time when my Weimar work was ended and I had to think about leaving the city of Goethe, I had formed the friendship of persons for whom the life in Weimar was not especially characteristic. In a certain sense one "lived oneself" out of Weimar while among these friends. Ansorge, who felt that Weimar put fetters upon his artistic development, moved at nearly the same time as I did to Berlin.

Paul Böhler, although editor of the most widely read paper in Weimar, did not write in the contemporary "spirit of Weimar," but expressed many a sharp criticism, drawn from a broader range of view, against that spirit. It was he who always raised his voice when dealing with this theme to place in the true light what was born of opportunism and littleness of soul. And in this way it happened that, just at the time when he was a member of this circle, he lost his place.

Von Crompton was the most lovable personality one could imagine. In his house the circle passed the most delightful hours. Frau von Crompton was there the central figure, a richly spiritual and gracious personality like sunlight to those who were privileged to be about her.

The whole group stood, so to speak, in the sign of Nietzsche. They looked upon Nietzsche's view as possessing greater interest than all others; they surrendered themselves to that mood of soul which manifested itself in Nietzsche, considering it as representing in a certain way the flowering of a genuine and free humanity. In both these aspects von Crompton especially was a representative of the Nietzsche followers in the 'nineties. My own attitude toward Nietzsche did not change at all within this circle. But the fact that I was the one who was questioned when any one wished to know something about Nietzsche brought it about that the relation in which the others stood to Nietzsche was assumed to be my own relation also.

But I must say that this circle looked up in a more understanding fashion to that which Nietzsche believed that he knew, and that they sought to express in their lives what lay in the Nietzsche ideals of life with greater understanding than was present in many other cases where *Superman* and *Beyond Good and Evil* did not always bring forth the most satisfying blossoms. For me the circle was important because of a strong and vital energy that bore one along with it. On the other hand, however, I found there the most responsive understanding for everything which I thought it possible to introduce into this circle.

The evenings, made brilliant by Ansorge's musical compositions, its hours filled with interesting talk about Nietzsche in which all shared, when far-reaching and weighty questions concerning the world and life formed, so to speak, a satisfying converse, – these evenings were, indeed, something to which I can look back with contentment as having given a beautiful character to the last part of my stay at Weimar. Since everything which had a living expression in this circle was derived from a direct and serious artistic experience and sought to permeate itself with a world-conception which held to the true human being as its central point, one could not cherish any sense of dissatisfaction if there was manifested something opposed to the Weimar of that time. The tone was different from that which I had experienced previously in the Olden circle. There much irony found expression; one looked upon Weimar also as “human, all too human” as one would have seen other places if one had been in these. In the Ansorge-Crompton circle there was present rather --I mean to say – the earnest feeling: “How can the evolution of German culture progress further if a place like Weimar does so little to fulfil its foreordained tasks?” Against the background of this social intercourse my book *Goethe's World-Conception* came into being, with which I ended my work at Weimar. Some time ago, when I was preparing a new edition of this book, I sensed in the way in which I then shaped my thoughts for the volume an echo of the inner nature of the friendly gatherings of the circle I have here described.

In this book there is somewhat more of the personal than would have been the case had there not re-vibrated in my mind while I was writing it what had over and over resounded in this circle with strong and avowed enthusiasm about the “nature of Personality.” It is the only one of my books of which I would say just this. All of them I can assert to have been personally experienced in the truest sense of the word; not, however, in this way, when one's own personality so strongly enters into the experiences of the personalities about one. But this concerns only the general bearing of the book.

The philosophy of Goethe, as revealed in relation to the realm of nature, is there set forth as this had already been done in my Goethe writings of the 'eighties. Only in regard to details my views had been broadened, deepened, or confirmed by manuscripts first discovered among the Goethe archives. In everything which I have published in connection with Goethe the thing that I have striven to do has been to set Goethe's “world-conception” before the world in its content and its tendency. From this was to appear, as a result, how that in Goethe which is comprehensive and spiritually penetrating into the thing leads to detailed discoveries in the most varied fields of nature. I was not concerned to point out these single discoveries as such, but to show that they were the flowers of the plant of a spiritual view of nature.

To characterize this view of nature as a part of what Goethe gave to the world – such was my purpose in writing descriptions of this portion of Goethe's work as a thinker and researcher. But I aimed at the same objective in arranging Goethe's papers in the two editions in which I collaborated, that in *Kürschner's Deutsche National-Literatur* and, also the Weimar Sophie edition. I never considered it a task which could fall to my lot because of the entire work of Goethe to bring to light what Goethe had achieved as botanist, zoologist, geologist, colour-theorist, in the manner in which one passes

judgment upon such an achievement before the forum of competent scientists. Moreover, it seemed to me inappropriate to do anything in this direction while arranging the papers for the two editions. So that part also of the writings of Goethe which I edited for the Weimar edition became nothing more than a document for the world-conception of Goethe as revealed in his researches in nature. How this world-conception cast its special light upon things botanical, geological, etc., this must be brought to the fore. It has been felt, for instance, that I ought to have arranged the geological-mineralogical writings differently in order that "Goethe's relationship to geology" might be seen from the contents of these. But it is only necessary to read what I said about the arrangement of the writings of Goethe in this field in the introductions to my publications in *Kürschner's Deutsche National-Literatur*, and there could be no doubt that I would never have agreed to the point of view urged by my critics. In Weimar this could have been known when the editing was entrusted to me. For in the Kürschner edition everything had already appeared which had become fixed in my point of view before the idea had ever arisen of entrusting to me a task in Weimar. The task was entrusted to me with full knowledge of this circumstance. I will by no means deny that what I have done in many single details in working up the Weimar edition may be pointed out as "errors" by specialists. This may be rightly maintained. But the thing ought not to be so presented as if the nature of the edition rested upon my competence or lack of competence, and not upon my fundamental postulates. Especially should this not be done by those who admit that they possess no organ for perceiving what I have maintained in regard to Goethe. When the question concerns individual errors of fact here and there, I might point out to those who criticize me in this respect many much worse errors in the papers I wrote as a student in the Higher Technical Institute. I have made it very clear in this account of the course of my life that, even in childhood, I lived in the spiritual world as in that which was self-evident to me, but that I had to strive earnestly for everything which pertained to a knowledge of the outer world. For this reason I am a man slow in development as to all the aspects of the physical world. The results of this fact appear in details of my Goethe editions.

Notes:

1. The King Transformed.

The Story of My Life

XXII

AT the end of the Weimar period of my life I had passed my thirty-sixth year. One year previously a profound revolution had already begun in my mind. With my departure from Weimar this became a decisive experience. It was quite independent of the change in the external relationships of my life, even though this also was very great. The realization of that which can be experienced in the spiritual world had always been to me something self-evident; to grasp the sense world in full awareness had always caused me the greatest

difficulty. It was as if I had not been able to pour the soul's experience deeply enough into the sense-organs to bring the soul into union with the full content of what was experienced by the senses.

This changed entirely from the beginning of my thirty sixth year. My capacities for observing things and events in the physical world took form both in the direction of adequacy and of depth of penetration. This was true both in the matter of science and also of the external life. Whereas before this time the conditions had been such that large scientific combinations which must be grasped in a spiritual fashion were appropriated by me without mental effort, and that sense-perceptions, and especially the holding of such facts in memory, required the greatest effort on my part, everything now became quite different. An attentiveness not previously present to that which appeals to sense-perception now awakened in me. Details became important; I had the feeling that the sense-world had something to reveal which it alone could reveal. I came to think one's ideal should be to learn to know this world solely through that which it has to say, without man's interjecting himself into this by means of his thought, or by some other soul-content arising within him.

I became aware that I was experiencing a human revolution at a far later period of life than other persons. But I saw also that this fact carried very special consequences for the soul's life. I learned that, because men pass early out of the soul's weaving in the spiritual world to an experience of the physical, they attain to no pure conception of either the spiritual or the physical world. They mingle permanently in a wholly instinctive way that which things say to their senses with that which the mind experiences through the spirit and which it then uses in combination in order to "conceive" things. For me the enhancement and deepening of the powers of sense-observation meant that I was given an entirely new world. The placing of oneself objectively, quite free from everything subjective in the mind, over against the sense-world revealed something concerning which a spiritual perception had nothing to say.

But this also cast its light back upon the world of spirit. For, while the sense-world revealed its being through the very act of sense-perception, there was thus present to knowledge the opposite pole also, to enable one to appreciate the spiritual in the fulness of its own character unmingled with the physical.

Especially was this decisive in its vital effect upon the soul in that it bore also upon the sphere of human life. The task for my observation took this form: to take in quite objectively and purely by way of perception that which lives in a human being. I took pains to refrain from applying any criticism to what men did, not to give way to either sympathy or antipathy in my relation to them; I desired simply to allow "man as he is to work upon me."

I soon learned that such an observation of the world leads truly into the world of spirit. In observing the physical world one goes quite outside oneself; and just by reason of this one comes again, with an intensified capacity for spiritual observation, into the spiritual world. Thus the spiritual world and the sense-world had come before my mind in all their

opposition. But I felt opposition to be not something which must be brought into harmony by means of some sort of philosophical thought – perhaps to a “monism.” Rather I felt that to stand thus with one's soul wholly within this opposition meant “to have an understanding for life.” Where the opposition seems to have been reduced to harmony, there the lifeless holds sway – the dead. Where there is life, there works the unharmonized opposition; and life itself is the continuous overcoming, but also the recreating, of oppositions.

From all this there penetrated into my life of feeling a most intense absorption, not in theoretical comprehension by means of thought, but in an experiencing of whatever the world contains which is in the nature of a riddle.

Over and over again, in order that I might through meditation attain to a right relationship to the world, I held these things before my mind: “There is the world full of riddles. Knowledge would draw near to these. But for the most part it seeks to produce a thought-content as the solution of a riddle. But the riddles” – so I had to say to myself – “are not solved by means of thoughts. These bring the soul along the path toward the solutions, but they do not contain the solutions. In the real world arises a riddle; it is there as a phenomenon; its solution arises also in reality. Something appears which is being or event, and this represents the solution of the other.”

So I said also to myself: “The whole world except man is a riddle, the real world-riddle; and *man himself* is its solution!”

In this way I arrived at the thought: “Man is able at every moment to say something about the world-riddle. What he says, however, can always give only so much of content toward the solution as he has understood of himself as man.” Thus knowledge also becomes an event in reality. Questions come to light in the world; answers come to light as realities; knowledge in man is his participation in that which the beings and events in the spiritual and physical world have to say. All this, to be sure, is contained both in its general significance and in certain passages quite distinctly in the writings I published during the period I am here describing. Only it became at this time the most intense mental experience, filling the hours in which understanding sought through meditation to look into the foundations of the world, and – which is the fact of chief importance – this mental experience in its strength came at that time out of my objective absorption in pure, undisturbed sense-observation. In this observation a new world was given to me; from what had until this time been present to knowledge in my mind, I had to seek for that which was the counterpart in mental experience in order to strike a balance with the new. The moment I did not *think* the whole reality of the sense-world, but contemplated this world through the senses, there was brought before me a riddle as a reality; and in man himself lies its solution.

In my whole mental being there was a living inspiration for that which I later called “knowledge by way of reality.” And especially was it clear to me that man possessed of such a “knowledge by way of reality” could not stand in some corner of the world while being and becoming should be taking their course outside of him. Understanding became

to me something that belongs, not to man alone, but to the being and becoming of the world. Just as the roots and trunk of a tree are not complete if they do not send their life into the flower, so are the being and becoming of the world nothing truly existing if they do not live again as the content of understanding. Having reached this insight, I said to myself on every occasion at which this came up: "Man is not a being who creates for himself the content of understanding, but he provides in his soul the stage on which for the first time the world partly experiences its existence and its becoming." Were it not for understanding, the world would remain incomplete. In thus knowingly living in the reality of the world I found more and more the possibility of creating a defence for human knowledge against the view that in this knowledge man is making a copy, or some such thing, of the world.

For my idea of knowledge he actually partakes in the creation of the world instead of merely making afterwards a copy which could be omitted from the world without thereby leaving the world incomplete.

But this led also to an ever increasing clarity of understanding with reference to the "mystical." The participation of human experience in the world-event was removed from the sphere of indeterminate mystical feeling and transferred to the light in which ideas reveal themselves. The sense-world, seen purely in its own nature, is at first void of idea, as the root and trunk of the tree are void of blossoms. But just as the blossom is not a disappearance and eclipse of the plant's existence, but a transformation of that very existence, so the ideal world in man as related to the sense-world is a transformation of the sense-existence, and not a darkly mystical interjection of something indefinite from the human soul world. Clear as things physical become in their way in the light of the sun, so spiritually clear must that appear which lives in the human soul as knowledge.

What was then present in me in this orientation was an altogether clear experience of the soul. Yet in passing on to find a form of expression for this experience the difficulties were extraordinary.

It was at the close of my Weimar period that I wrote my book *Goethe's World-Conception*, and the introduction to the last volume that I edited for *Kürschner's Deutsche National Literatur*. I am thinking especially of what I then wrote as an introduction to my edition of Goethe's *Sprüche in Prosa*⁽¹⁾, and compare this with the formulation of contents in the book *Goethe's World-Conception*. If the matter is considered only superficially, this or that contradiction can be made out between the one and the other of these expositions, which I wrote at almost the same time. But, if one looks to what is vital beneath the surface – to that which, in the mere shaping and formulating of the surface, would reveal itself as perception of the depths of life, of the soul, of the spirit – then one will find no contradictions, but, indeed, in my writings of that period, a striving after means of expression. A striving to bring into philosophical concepts just that which I have here described as experience of knowledge, of the relation of man to the world, of the riddle-becoming and riddle-solving within the truly real.

When I wrote, about three and a half years later, my book *Welt- und Lebensanschauungen im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*⁽²⁾ I had made still further progress in many things; and I could draw upon my experience in knowledge here set forth in describing the individual world-conceptions as they have appeared in the course of history. Whoever rejects writings because the life of the mind knowingly strives within these – that is, because, in the light of the exposition here given, the world-life in its striving unfolds itself still further on the stage of the human mind – such a person cannot, according to my view, submerge himself with knowing mind into the truly real. This is something which at that time became confirmed within me as perception, although it had long before been vitally present in my conceptual world. In connection with the revolution in my mental life stand inner experiences of grave import for me. I came to know in my mental experience the nature of meditation and its importance for insight into the spiritual world. Even before this time I had lived a life of meditation; but the impulse to this had come from a knowledge through ideas as to its value for a spiritual world-conception. Now, however, there arose within me something which demanded meditation as a necessity of existence for my mental life. The striving life of the mind needed meditation just as an organism at a certain stage in its evolution needs to breathe by means of lungs.

How the ordinary conceptual knowledge, which is attained through sense-observation, is related to perception of the spiritual, became for me, at this period of my life, not only an experience through ideas as it had been, but one in which the whole man participated. The experience through ideas – which, however, takes up within itself the real spiritual – has given birth to my book *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*. Experience by means of the whole man attains to the spiritual world in its very being far more than does experience through ideas. And yet this latter is a higher stage as compared with the conceptual grasp upon the sense-world.

In the experience through ideas one grasps, not the sense-world, but a spiritual world which to a certain extent rests immediately upon this.

While all this was seeking for experience and expression in my soul, three sorts of knowledge were inwardly present before me. The first sort is the conceptual knowledge attained in sense-observation. This is acquired by the soul, and then sustained within in proportion to the powers of thought there existent. Repetitions of the acquired content have no other significance than that this may be well sustained. The second sort of knowledge is that which is not woven of concepts taken from sense-observation but experienced inwardly, independently of the senses. Then experience, by reason of its very nature, becomes the guarantor of the fact that these concepts are grounded in reality. To this realization that concepts contain the guarantee of spiritual reality one attains with certitude by reason of the nature of experience, just as one experiences in connection with knowledge through the senses a certainty that one is not in the presence of illusions but of reality.

In the case of this ideal-spiritual knowledge one is not content – as in the case of the sense-knowledge – with the acquisition of the knowledge, with the result that one then possesses this in one's thought. One must make this process of acquisition a continuous

process. Just as it is not sufficient for an organism to have breathed for a certain length of time in order then to metamorphose what has been acquired through breathing into further life processes, so also an acquiring like that of sense-knowledge does not suffice for the ideal-spiritual knowledge. For this it is necessary that the mind should remain in a continuous interchange with that world into which one has entered through knowledge. This takes place by means of meditation, which – as above indicated – arises out of one's ideal insight into the value of meditating. This interchange I had sought long before this revolution in my thirty-fifth year.

What now came about was meditation as a necessity for the mental life; and with this there stood before my mind the third form of knowledge. This not only led to greater depths of the spiritual world, but also permitted an intimate living communion with this world. By force of an inner necessity I was compelled to set up again and again at the very central point of my consciousness an absolutely definite sort of conception.

It was this: If in my mind I live in conceptions which rest upon the sense-world, then, in my direct experience, I am in position to speak of the reality of what is experienced only so long as I confront with sense-observation a thing or an event. My sense assures me of the reality of what is observed so long as I observe it.

Not so when I unite myself through ideal-spiritual knowledge with beings or events of the spiritual world. Here there enters into the single perception the direct experience of the status of the thing of which I am aware continuing beyond the duration of observation. For instance, if one experiences the human ego as the inner being most fundamentally one's own, then one knows in the perceiving experience that this ego was before the life in the physical body and will be after this. What one experiences thus in the ego reveals this directly, just as the rose reveals its redness in the act of our becoming aware.

In such meditation, practised because of inner spiritual necessity, there was gradually evolved the consciousness of an “inner spiritual man” who, through a more complete release from the physical organism, can live, perceive, and move in the spiritual. This self-sufficing spiritual man entered into my experience under the influence of meditation. The experience of the spiritual thereby underwent an essential deepening. That sense-observation arises by means of the organism can be sufficiently proven by the sort of self-observation possible in the case of this knowledge. But neither is the ideal-spiritual knowledge yet independent of the organism. Self-comprehension shows the following as to this: For sense-observation the single act of knowing is bound up with the organism. For the ideal-spiritual knowing the single act is entirely independent of the physical organism; but the possibility that such knowledge may be unfolded at all by man requires that in general the life within the organism shall be existent. In the case of the third form of knowing the situation is this: it can come into being in the spiritual man only when he can make himself as free from the physical organism as if this were not there at all.

A consciousness of all this evolved under the influence of the life of meditation. I was able truly to refute for myself the opinion that in such meditation one becomes subject to a form of auto-suggestion whose product is the resulting spiritual experience. For the

very first ideal-spiritual knowledge had been enough to convince me of the reality of spiritual experience: not only the experience sustained in its life by meditation, but indeed the very first of all, that whose life thus merely began. As one establishes absolutely exact truth in a discriminating consciousness, so I had already done for what is here brought forward before there could have been any question of auto-suggestion. Therefore, in the case of what was attained by meditation, the question could have to do only with something whose reality I was in a position to test prior to the experience.

All this, bound up with my mental revolution, appeared in connection with the result of a practicable self-observation which, like that described, came to have a momentous significance for me.

I felt that the ideal element in the ongoing life retired in a certain aspect, and the element of will took its place. If this is to be possible, the will during the unfolding of knowledge must succeed in ridding itself of everything arbitrary and subjective. The will increased as the ideal diminished. And the will also took over the spiritual knowledge which hitherto had been controlled almost wholly by the ideal. I had, indeed, already known that the separation of the soul's life into thinking, feeling, and willing has only limited significance. In truth there is a feeling and a willing contained in thinking; only thinking predominates over the others. In feeling there lives thinking and willing; in willing, likewise, thinking and feeling. Now it became to me a matter of experience that the willing took more from thinking; thinking more from willing.

As meditation leads on the one side to a knowledge of the spiritual, on another side there follows as a result of such self-observation the inner strengthening of the spiritual man, independent of the organism, and the establishment of his being in the spiritual world, just as the physical man has his establishment in the physical world. Only one becomes aware that the establishment of the spiritual man in the spiritual world increases immeasurably when the physical organism does not cramp this process of establishment; whereas the establishment of the physical organism in the physical world yields to destruction – at death – when the spiritual man no longer sustains this establishment from itself outward. For such an experiential knowledge, that form of theory of cognition is inapplicable which represents human knowledge as limited to a certain field, and considers the “beyond” the “primal bases,” the “thing in itself” as unattainable by human knowledge. That “unattainable” I felt to be such only “for the present”; it can continue unattainable only until man has evolved within himself that element of his being which is allied to the hitherto unknown, and can henceforth grow into one with this in experiential knowledge. This capacity of man to grow into every form of being became for me something that must be recognized by the person who desires to see the place of man in relation to the world in its true light. Whoever cannot penetrate to this recognition, to him knowledge cannot give something which really belongs to the world, but only a copy of some part of the world-content, something to which the world itself is indifferent. But through such a merely reproducing knowledge man cannot grasp a being within himself, which gives to him as a fully conscious individuality an inner experience of the truth that he stands fast within the cosmos.

What I wished to do was to speak of knowledge in such a way that the spiritual should be not merely recognized, but so recognized that man may reach it with his perception. And it seemed to me more important to hold fast to the fact that the “primal basis” of existence lies within that which man is able to reach in his totality of experience than to recognize in thought an unknown spiritual in some sort of “beyond” region.

For this reason my view rejected that form of thinking which considers the content of sense-experience (colour, heat, tone, etc.) to be something which an unknown external world calls up within man by means of his sense-perception while this external world itself can be conceived only hypothetically. The theoretical ideas which lie at the foundation of the thinking in physics and physiology in this direction seemed to my experiential knowledge as being in very special degree harmful. This feeling increased to the utmost intensity at the period of my life which I am here describing. All that was designated in physics and physiology as “lying behind subjective experience” caused me – if I may use such an expression – discomfort in knowledge.

On the other hand I saw in the form of thinking of Lyell, Darwin, Haeckel something which, although incomplete as it issued from them, was nevertheless suitable to a sound mind according to the order of evolution.

Lyell's basic principle – to explain by means of ideas which result from present observation of the earth's nature those phenomena which escape from sense-observation because they belong to past ages – this seemed to me fruitful in the direction indicated. To seek for an understanding of the physical structure of man by tracing his form from the animal forms, as Haeckel does in comprehensive fashion in his *Anthropogenie*⁽³⁾ appeared to me a good foundation for the further evolution of knowledge.

I said to myself: “If man places before himself a boundary of knowledge beyond which is supposed to lie ‘the thing in itself,’ he thus bars himself from any access to the spiritual world; if he relates himself to the sense-world in such a way that one thing explains another within that world (the present stage in the earth's becoming thus explaining past geological ages; animal forms explaining that of man), he may thus prepare himself to extend this intelligibility of beings and events also to the spiritual.”

As to my experience in this field also I can say: “This is something which was just at that time confirmed in me as perception, whereas it had long before been vitally present in my conceptual world.”

Notes:

1. Aphorisms in Prose.
2. *Conception of the World and of Life in the Nineteenth Century.*
3. The Evolution of Man.

The Story of My Life

XXIII

WITH the mental revolution thus described must I bring to a close the second main division of my life. The paths of destiny now took a different bearing from what had preceded. During both my Vienna and also my Weimar period, the outward indications of destiny manifested themselves in such directions as fell in line with the content of my inner mental strivings. In all my writings there is vitally present the basic character of my spiritual world-conception, even though an inner necessity required that my reflections should be less extended into spiritual spheres. In my work as a teacher in Vienna the goals set up were solely those which resulted from the insights of my own mind. At Weimar, as regards my work in connection with Goethe, there was active only what I considered to be the responsibility attaching to such a piece of work. I never had to overcome difficulties in order to bring the tendencies coming from the outer world into harmony with my own.

It was just from this course of my life that I was able to perceive the idea of freedom in a form shining clearly within me, and thus to set it forth. I do not think that the great significance which this idea had for my own life has caused me to view it in a one-sided way. The idea corresponds with an objective reality, and what one actually experiences of such a thing cannot alter this reality through a conscientious striving for knowledge, but can only enable one to see into it in greater or lesser degree.

With this view of the idea of freedom there was united the "ethical individualism" of my philosophy, which has been misunderstood by so many persons. This also at the beginning of the third division of my life was changed from an element in my conceptual world living within the mind to something which had now laid hold upon the entire man.

Both in physics and in physiology the world-conception of that period, to whose forms of thinking I was opposed, as also the world-conception of biology, which, in spite of its incompleteness, I could look upon as a bridge leading to a spiritual conception, required of me that I should continually improve the formulation of my own conceptions in all these aspects of the world. I must answer for myself the question: Can impulses for action reveal themselves to man from the external world? What I found was this: The divine spiritual forces, which are the inner soul of man's will, have no way of access from the outer world to the inner man. A right way of thinking both in physics and physiology, as well as biology, seemed to me to arrive at this result. A way in nature which gives access from without to the will cannot be discovered. Therefore no divine spiritual moral impulse can by such a road from without penetrate to that place in the soul where the impulse of man's own will, acting in man, comes into existence. External natural forces, moreover, can stimulate only that in man which pertains to nature. In that case, however, there is no real expression of a free will, but the continuation of the natural event in man and through him. Man has then not yet laid hold upon his entire being, but remains as to the natural element of his external aspect an unfree agent.

The problem can by no means be – so I said to myself again and again – to answer this question: Is man's will free or not? – but to answer this quite different one: How is the way to be attained in the life of the mind which leads from the unfree natural will to that which is free – that is, which is truly moral? And if we are to find an answer to this question we must observe how the divine-spiritual lives in each individual human soul. It is from the soul that the moral proceeds; in its entirely individual being, therefore, must the moral impulse have its existence.

Moral laws – as commands – which come from an external environment within which man finds himself, even though these laws had their primal origin in the spiritual world, do not become moral impulses within man by reason of the fact that he directs his will in accordance with them, but only by reason of the fact that he himself, purely as an individual, experiences the spiritual and essential nature of their thought content. Freedom has its life in human thought; and it is not the will which is of itself free, but the thinking which empowers the will.

So, therefore, in my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* I had found it necessary to lay all possible emphasis upon the freedom of thought in discussing the moral nature of the will. This idea also was confirmed in very special degree through the life of meditation. The moral world-order stood out before me in ever clearer light as the one clearly marked realization on earth of such ordered systems in action as are to be found in the spiritual regions ranged above. It showed itself as that which only he lays hold upon in his conceptual world who is able to recognize the spiritual.

During just that epoch of my life which I am here describing, all these insights were linked up for me with the lofty comprehensive truth that the beings and events of the world will not in truth be explained if man employs his thinking to “explain” them; but only if man by means of his thinking is able to contemplate the events in that connection in which one explains another, in which one becomes the riddle and another its solution, and man himself becomes the word for the external world which he perceives. Herein, however, was experienced the truth of the conception that in the world and its working that which holds sway is the Logos, Wisdom, the Word.

I believed that I was enabled by these conceptions to see clearly into the nature of materialism. I perceived the harmful character of this way of thinking, not in the fact that the materialist directs his attention to the manifestation of a being in the form of matter, but in the way in which he conceives the material. He contemplates matter without becoming aware that in reality he is in the presence of spirit, which is simply manifesting itself in material form. He does not know that spirit metamorphoses itself into matter in order to attain to ways of working which are possible only in this metamorphosis. Spirit must first take on the form of a material brain in order to lead in this form the life of the conceptual world, which can bestow upon man in his earthly life a freely acting self-consciousness. To be sure, in the brain spirit mounts upward out of matter; but only after the material brain has arisen out of spirit.

I must reject the form of thinking of physics and physiology only on the ground that this makes of matter that is not vitally experienced but only conceived through thought the external cause of man's spiritual experience; and, moreover, this matter is so conceived in thought that it is impossible to trace it to the point where it is spirit. Such matter, which this way of thinking postulates as real, is in no sense real. The fundamental error of the materialistically-minded thinkers about nature consists in their impossible idea of matter. Through this they bar before themselves the way leading to spiritual existence. A material nature which stimulates in the soul merely that which man experiences within nature makes the world an "illusion." The intensity with which these ideas entered into my mental life led me four years later to elaborate them in my work *Conception of the World and of Life in the Thirteenth Century*, in the chapter entitled **"Die Welt als Illusion."**⁽¹⁾ (In later enlarged editions this work was given the title *Rötsel der Philosophie*⁽²⁾.)

In the biological form of conceptions it is impossible in the same manner to fall into typical ways of thought which remove the thing so conceived wholly out of the sphere that is open to man's experience, and therefore to leave behind in his mind an illusion as to this. Here one cannot actually arrive at this explanation: "Outside of man there is a world of which he experiences nothing, which makes an impression on him only through his senses; an impression, however, which may be utterly unlike that which causes it." If a man suppresses within his mental life the more weighty elements of thinking, he may believe, indeed, that he has uttered something when he asserts that to the subjective perception of light the objective counterpart consists of a wave-form in ether – such was then the conception; but one must be an absolute fanatic if one proposes to "explain" in this way that also which is perceived in the realm of the living.

In no case, so I said to myself, does such a conception of ideas pertaining to nature penetrate to ideas concerning the moral order of the world. Such a conception can view this only as something which drops down into the physical world of man from a sphere foreign to man's knowledge.

The fact that these questions confronted my mind I cannot consider as having a significance for the third phase of my life; for they had confronted me for a long time. But it was significant for me that the whole sphere of knowledge within my mind – without changing anything essential in its content – attained by means of these questions to a quickness of vital activity in a greatly heightened sense as compared with what had hitherto been the case. In the Logos lives the human soul; how does the external world live in this Logos? This is the basic question in my *Theory of Cognition in Goethe's World-Conception* (of the middle of the 'eighties); such it continued for my writing *Wahrheit und Wissenschaft*⁽³⁾ and *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*. There were dominant in this orientation of soul all the ideas I was able to formulate in the effort to penetrate into the substrata of the soul from which Goethe sought to bring light for the phenomena of the world.

That which especially concerned me during the phase of my life here set forth was the fact that the ideas which I was forced to oppose so strongly had laid hold with the utmost intensity upon the thinking of that period. People lived so completely according to these

tendencies of mind that they were not in a position to realize at all the range of anything which pointed in the opposite direction. I so experienced the opposition between that which was to me plain truth and the opinions of my age that this experience gave the prevailing colour to my life, especially in the years near the turn of the century.

In every manifestation of the spiritual life the impression made upon me was drawn from this opposition. Not that

I regretted everything brought forward by this spiritual life; but I had a sense of profound distress in the presence of the many good things that I could hold dear, for I believed that I saw the powers of destruction ranging themselves against these good things, the evolutionary germs of the spiritual life.

So from all directions my life was focused upon this question: "How can a way be found whereby that which is inwardly perceived as true may be set forth in such forms of expression as can be understood by this age?" When one has such an experience, it is as if the necessity faced one of climbing in some way or other to the scarcely accessible peak of a mountain. One attempts it from the most varied points of approach; one remains there still, forced to feel that all the struggles one has put forth have been in vain.

I spoke once during the 'nineties at Frankfurt-am-Main concerning Goethe's conception of nature. I said in my introduction that I would discuss only Goethe's conceptions of life, since his ideas regarding light and colours were such that there was no possibility in contemporary physics of throwing a bridge across to these ideas. As for myself, however, I was forced to view this impossibility as a most significant symptom of the spiritual orientation of the age.

Somewhat later I had a conversation with a physicist who was an important person in his field, and who also worked intensively at Goethe's conception of nature. The conversation reached its climax when he said that Goethe's conception regarding colours is such that physics cannot possibly lay hold of it; and I – was speechless.

How much there was then which said that what was truth to me was such that the thought of the age could "not in the least lay hold of it."

Notes:

1. "The World of Illusion".
2. Riddles of Philosophy.
3. Truth and Science, the dissertation offered for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The Story of My Life

XXIV

So this question became a part of my experience: "Must one remain speechless?"

With this shaping of my mental life I then faced the necessity of introducing into my outer activity an entirely new note. No longer could the forces which determined my outward destiny remain in such unity with those inner directive tendencies which came from my experience of the spiritual world, as had till now been true.

For a long time previously I had thought of bringing to bear upon my age through a journal those spiritual impulses which I believed ought to be brought before the public of that time. I would not be "speechless," but would say as much as it was possible to say.

To found a newspaper myself was something not to be thought of at that time. The necessary funds and the connections essential to the founding of such a paper were utterly lacking to me. So I seized the opportunity which came to me to secure the editorship of the *Magazin für Literatur*.

This was an old weekly. It was founded in the year of Goethe's death (1832), at first as the *Magazin für Literatur des Auslandes*⁽¹⁾. It carried translations of whatever foreign productions in all aspects of the intellectual life the editors thought worthy of being incorporated into the intellectual life of Germany. Later on the weekly was changed into a *Magazin für die Literatur des In- und Auslandes*⁽²⁾. Now it contained poetry, character studies, criticism, from the whole expanse of the intellectual life. Within certain limits it was able to do well in this task. Its activity thus defined fell at a time when a sufficiently large number of persons in the German-speaking regions desired each week to have whatever was "forthcoming" in the intellectual sphere laid before their minds in brief, summary fashion. Then in the 'eighties and the 'nineties, when the new literary objectives of the younger generation entered into this peaceful and superior way of sharing in the intellectual, the Magazine was soon swept into this movement. Its editorship was rather suddenly changed, and it took its colour for the time being from those who in one way or another belonged to the new movements. When I succeeded in securing it in 1897, it was in close relationship with the strivings of the young literature without having placed itself in strong opposition to what lay outside these strivings. But at all events it was not in a position to maintain itself financially solely on the basis of its contents. For this reason it had become, among other things, the organ of the *Freie literarische Gesellschaft*⁽³⁾. This added a little to the otherwise no longer extensive subscription list. But, in spite of all this, the situation was such in connection with my taking over of the Magazine that one had to include all the subscribers, even the less certain ones, in order just barely to reach the minimum needed for a livelihood. I could take over the paper only in case I could include as part of my work an activity which seemed likely to increase the circle of subscribers. This was the activity of the Free Literary Society. I had so to determine the content of the paper that this Society should be adequately represented. In the Free Literary Society one expected to find those who had an interest in the productions of the younger generation. The headquarters of the Society was at Berlin, where younger Littérateurs had founded it. But it had branches also in many other German cities. Of

course, it soon came about that many a “branch” led a very distinctive existence of its own. It now became my task to deliver lectures before this Society in order that the mediation of intellectual life which was to be effected by the Magazine should also be given a personal expression. I had thus a circle of readers for the Magazine into whose intellectual needs I had to find my way. In the Free Literary Society I had an organized group which expected something quite definite because something quite definite had till now been offered them. In any case they did not expect that which I should have liked to give them from my innermost being. The stamp of the Free Literary Society was determined by the fact that it wished to form a sort of opposite to the *Literarische Gesellschaft*⁽⁴⁾ to which such persons, for instance, as Spielhagen gave the predominant tone.

It was now a necessity of my status within the spiritual world that I should truly share in a wholly inward fashion in this relationship into which I had entered. I made every effort to root myself in my circle of readers and in the membership of the Society in order to discover out of the spiritual nature of these men the forms into which I should have to pour what I wished in a spiritual way to give them.

I cannot say that I had yielded to illusions at the beginning of this activity and that these were gradually destroyed. But the very fact of working outward from the circle of readers and hearers, as it was necessary for me to do, met with greater and greater opposition. One could count upon no strong and earnest spiritual motive on the part of the men who had been drawn about the Magazine before I took it over. The interests of these men were only in a few cases deeply rooted. And even in the case of these few there were no strong underlying forces of the spirit, but rather a general desire seeking for expression in all sorts of artistic and other intellectual forms. So the question soon arose for me whether I was justified inwardly and before the spiritual world in working within this circle. For, even though many persons who were concerned were very dear to me, although I felt bound to them by ties of friendship, yet even these belonged among those persons who caused the question to arise with respect to that which I vitally experienced within me: Must one be speechless?

Then another question arose. In regard to a great many persons who had until now come into near and friendly relations with me, I was privileged to feel that, although they did not go along with me very far in our mental life, yet they assumed something in me which gave value in their eyes to whatever I did in the sphere of knowledge, and in many other sorts of life relationships. They so often shared in my way of life, without further testing of me, after we had come into relationship.

Those who had till now published the Magazine had no such feeling. They said to themselves: “In spite of many traits of a practical life in Steiner, he is nevertheless an idealist.” And since the sale of the Magazine had been made under such conditions that partial payments were to be made to the former owner within the course of the year, and that this person had the chief interest in point of fact in the continuance of the weekly, therefore from his point of view he could not do otherwise than to provide for himself, and for the affair in hand, another guarantee than that consisting in my own personality,

regarding which he was unable to say what effect it would have within the circle of persons who had till now rallied about the Magazine and the Free Literary Society. Therefore it was added to the terms of the purchase that Otto Erich Hartleben should be co-editor, sharing actively in the work.

Now in reflection upon the orientation of my editorial work I would not have had it different. For one who stands within the spiritual world must, as I have made clear in the preceding pages, learn to know fully through experience the facts of the physical world. And this had become for me, especially by reason of my mental revolution, an obvious necessity. Not to yield to that which I clearly recognized as the forces of destiny would have been to me a sin against my experience of the spirit. I saw not only “facts” which then associated me for some years with Otto Erich Hartleben, but “facts woven by destiny” (Karma).

Yet there resulted from this relationship insurmountable difficulties. Otto Erich Hartleben was a person absolutely dominated by the aesthetic. There was something appealing to me in every manifestation of his utterly aesthetic philosophy, even in his gestures, in spite of the really questionable *milieus* in which he often met me. Because of this attitude of mind he felt the need, every now and then, of staying for months at a time in Italy. And, when he returned, there was actually something Italian in what came to expression out of his nature. Besides, I felt a strong personal affection for him.

Only it was really impossible to work jointly at what was now our common field. He did not direct his efforts in the least toward transplanting himself into the sphere of ideas and interests pertaining to the readers of the Magazine or the circle of the Free Literary Society, but wished in both cases to “impose” what his aesthetic feelings said to him. This acted upon me like something alien. Besides, he often insisted upon his right as a co-editor, but also often did this not at all for a long while. Indeed, he was often absent in Italy for a long time. In this way there came to be a certain lack of consistency in the Magazine. And, with all his “ripe aesthetic philosophy,” Otto Erich Hartleben could never overcome the “student” in himself. I mean the questionable aspect of “studentship,” not, of course, that which may be brought into later life as a beautiful force of one's existence out of one's student days.

At the time when I had to bind myself to him, an added circle of admirers had become his on account of his drama *Die Erziehung zur Ehe*⁽⁵⁾. This production had not come into existence at all from the graceful aesthetic which was so charming in one's association with him; it was the product of that “exuberance” and “unrestraint” which caused everything that came from him, both by way of intellectual productions, and also in his decisions regarding the Magazine, to issue, not from the depths of his nature, but from a certain superficiality – the Hartleben known to very few of his personal associates.

It came about, as a matter of course, that, after I removed to Berlin, where I had to edit the Magazine, I associated with the circle formed about Otto Erich Hartleben. For this was the one that rendered it possible for me to supervise what pertained to the weekly and to the Free Literary Society in the manner necessary. This caused me, on the one hand,

much suffering; for I was thus hindered from seeking out those men, and getting close to them, with whom delightful relationships had existed in Weimar. And how I should also have enjoyed calling frequently on Eduard von Hartmann!

Nothing of this sort happened. The other side claimed me wholly. And so at one stroke much was taken from me of a valuable human element which I would gladly have retained. But I recognized this as a dispensation of destiny (Karma). It has always been perfectly possible for me, by reason of the substratum of the soul which I have here described, to apply my mind with complete interest to two such utterly different human groups as those associated with Weimar and those existing round the Magazine. Only neither of these groups would have found any permanent satisfaction in a person who associated by turns with those belonging in soul and mind to polarically opposed world spheres. Besides, I should have been forced in such an intercourse to explain continually why I was devoting my labour exclusively to that service to which I was obliged to devote it by reason of what the Magazine was.

More and more it became clear to me that I could no longer place myself in such a relationship to men as I have described in connection with Vienna and Weimar. *Littérateurs* assembled and learned in literary fashion to know one another as little *littérateurs*. Even with the best, even in the case of the most clearly marked characters, this element of the writer (or painter or sculptor) was so deeply embedded in the soul that the purely human retired wholly into the background.

Such was the impression I received when I sat among these persons, much as I valued them. All the deeper for this reason was the impression which I myself received of the human soul background. Once after I had given a lecture, and O. J. Bierbaum a reading, in the Free Literary Society in Leipzig, I sat amid a group in which was also Frank Wedekind. I could not take my eyes from this truly rare figure of a man. I use the term “figure” here in a purely physical sense. Such hands! – as if from a previous earthly life in which they had achieved things such as only those men can achieve who cause their spirits to stream into the most delicate branching of the fingers. This may have given an impression of brutality, because energy had been used up in work, yet the deepest interest was attracted to what streamed forth from those hands. And that expressive head – altogether like a gift of that which came from the unusual note of will in the hands. He had something in his glance and the play of his features which gave itself so arbitrarily to the world, but which especially could withdraw itself again, like the gestures of the arms expressing what the hands felt. A spirit alien to the present time spoke from that head. A spirit that really set itself apart from the human impulses of the present. Only a spirit that could not inwardly attain to clear consciousness as to which world of the past was that to which he belonged. As a writer – I express now only what I perceived in him, and not a literary judgment – Frank Wedekind was like a chemist who utterly rejects contemporary views in chemistry and practises alchemy, even this without sharing inwardly in it but with cynicism. One could learn much about the working of the spirit on the form if one received into the vision of the soul the outer appearance of Frank Wedekind. In this, however, one must not employ the look of that sort of “psychologist” who “proposes to observe man,” but the look which shows the purely human against the background of the

spiritual world through an inner dispensation of destiny, which one does not seek, but which simply comes.

A person who notices that he is being observed by a “psychologist” may justly be indignant; but the passing over from the purely human relationship to “perceiving the spiritual background” is also purely human, somewhat like passing from a casual to an intimate friendship.

One of the most unusual personalities of Hartleben's Berlin circle was Paul Scheerbarth. He had written poems which at first appeared to the reader arbitrary combinations of words and sentences. They are so grotesque that one for this reason feels oneself drawn on to get beyond the first impression. Then one finds that a fantastic sense for all sorts of generally unobserved meanings in words strives to bring to expression a spiritual content derived from a fantasy of soul, not only without foundation, but not in the least seeking for a foundation. In Paul Scheerbarth there was a vital inner cult of the fantastic, but one that moved in the sought-out forms of the grotesque. It is my opinion that he had the feeling that the man of wit should set forth whatever he does set forth only in grotesque forms, because others tease everything into humdrum form. But this feeling of his will not develop even the grotesque into rounded artistic form, but in a lordly, purposely senseless mood of soul. And what was revealed in these grotesque forms must spring from the inner realm of the grotesque. There was a basic quality of soul in Paul Scheerbarth of not seeking for clarity in reference to the spiritual. What comes out of common sense does not go over into the region of spirit – so said this “fantast.” Therefore one does not need to be sensible in order to express spirit. But Scheerbarth made not one step from the fantastic to fantasy. And so he wrote out of a spirit that was interesting but remained fixed in the wild fantastic, a spirit in which whole worlds of the cosmos gleam and glisten as framework for stories caricaturing the realm of spirit and yet containing elevated human experiences. Such is the case in *Tarub, Bagdad's berühmte Köchin*⁽⁶⁾.

One did not see the man in this light when one came to know him personally. A bureaucrat, somewhat lifted up into the spiritual. The “outer appearance,” which was so interesting in Wedekind, was in him quite ordinary, commonplace. And this impression was still further strengthened if one entered into conversation with him in the early stages of one's acquaintance. He bore within him the most burning hatred of the Philistines, but had the gestures of a Philistine, their manner of speech, and behaved as if the hatred came out of the fact that he had taken on too much from Philistine circles in his own appearance and was conscious of this and yet had the feeling that he could not overcome it. One read at the bottom of his soul a sort of recognition: “I should like to annihilate the Philistines because they have made me one of themselves.”

But if one passed from this outer appearance to the inner nature of Paul Scheerbarth independent of this, there was revealed an altogether fine spirit-man, only fixed in the grotesque-fantastic, and remaining incomplete. Then one realized in his “luminous” head, in his “golden” heart, the manner in which he stood in the spiritual world. One had to say to oneself what a strong personality, penetrating in vision into the realm of spirit, might there have come into the world if that incomplete had been at least in some measure

completed. One saw at the same time that the “devotion to the fantastic” was already so strong that even a future completion during this earthly life was no longer within the realm of the possible.

In Frank Wedekind and Paul Scheerbarth there stood before me personalities who, in their whole being, afforded the most significant experience to one who knew the truth of the repeated earthly lives of men. They were, indeed, riddles in the present earthly life. One perceived in them what they had brought with them into this earthly life, and an unlimited enrichment of their whole personalities stood forth. But one understood also their incompletenesses as the result of earlier earthly lives which could not in the present spiritual environment reach complete unfolding. And one saw how that which might come out of these incompletenesses needed future earthly lives.

Thus did many personalities of this group stand before me. I recognized that meeting them was for me a dispensation of destiny (Karma).

A purely human, heartfelt relationship I could never win even with that so entirely lovable Paul Scheerbarth. It was always the case that in our intercourse the *littérateur* in Paul Scheerbarth, as in the others, invariably intervened. So my feelings for him, affectionate to be sure, were finally restricted to the attention and interest which I was impelled to feel for his personality, in such high measure noteworthy.

There was, indeed, one personality in the group whose living presence was not that of a *littérateur* but in the fullest sense human – W. Harlan. But he talked little, always really sitting as a silent observer. When he spoke, however, his talk was always either in the best sense brilliant or else genuinely witty. He really wrote a great deal, but not exactly as a *littérateur*; rather as a man who must speak out what he had in his mind. It was just at that time that the *Dichterbörse*⁽⁷⁾ had come from his pen, a representation of life full of excellent humour. I was always glad when I came somewhat early to our meetings and found Harlan, as the first arrival, sitting there all alone. One then got close to him. I exclude him, therefore, when I say that in this group I found only *littérateurs* and no “persons.” And I think he understood that I had to view the group in this light. Utterly different paths of life soon bore us far apart.

The men associated with the Magazine and the Free Literary Society were evidently woven into my destiny. But I was in no manner whatever woven into theirs. They saw me appear in Berlin, became aware that I would edit the Magazine and work for the Free Literary Society, but did not understand why I should do this. For the way in which, as regards the eyes of their minds, I went about among them, offered them no inducement to go more deeply into me. Although there did not cling to me a single trace of theory, yet my spiritual activity appeared to their theoretical dogmatizing as something theoretical. This was something in which they, as “artistic natures,” thought they need take no interest. But I learned in direct perception to know an artistic current in its representatives. This was no longer so radical as that appearing in Berlin at the end of the 'eighties and in the early years of the 'nineties. It was also no longer such that it represented absolute naturalism as the salvation of art – as in the theatrical transformation

under Otto Brahms. They were without any such comprehensive artistic conviction. They relied more upon that which streamed together out of the wills and the gifts of individual personalities, which was, however, utterly without any unified endeavour toward style.

My place within this group became mentally unendurable because of the feeling that I knew why I was there but the others knew not.

Notes:

1. Magazine for Foreign Literature.
2. Magazine for German and Foreign Literature.
3. Free Literary Society.
4. The Literary Society.
5. Education for Matrimony.
6. Tarub, Bagdad's Famous Cook.
7. Poets' Exchange

The Story of My Life

XXV

ASSOCIATED with the Magazine group was a free Dramatic Society. It did not belong so intimately with the Magazine as did the Free Literary Society; but the same persons were on the board of directors here as in the other Society, and I was elected a member of this board immediately after I came to Berlin.

The purpose of this Society was that of producing plays which, because of their special character, because they fell outside the usual taste and tendencies and the like, were at first not produced by the theatres. It was no light task that rested upon the directors, to succeed in the midst of so many dramatic attempts with the “misunderstood” plays.

The productions were carried out in such a way that in each case a company of actors was made up of artists who played on the most varied stages. With these actors the play was given in the morning in a theatre rented or else lent freely by its managers. The actors proved to be very unselfish in relation to this Society, for it was not able by reason of its limited means to offer adequate compensation. But neither actors nor managers had any inner reason to object to the production of works of an unusual sort. They simply said: “Before the ordinary public and at an evening performance, this cannot be done, since it would cause financial injury to any theatre. The public is simply not ripe for the idea that the theatre should serve exclusively the cause of art.” The activity associated with this Dramatic Society proved to be of a character in a high degree suited to me; most of all the part having to do with the staging of the plays. Along with Otto Erich Hartleben I took part in the rehearsals. We felt that we were real stage-managers. We gave the plays their

stage forms. In this very art it became evident that all theorizing and dogmatizing are of no use unless they come from a vital artistic sense which intuitively grasps in the details the general requirement of style. One must steadfastly resist the resort to general rules. Everything which the circumstances in such a sphere render possible must appear in a flash from one's sure sense for style in action, in arrangement of the scenes. And what one then does, without any logical reflection but from the sense for style, gives a feeling of satisfaction to every artist in the cast, whereas a rule derived from the intellect gives them the feeling that their inner freedom is being interfered with. To the experiences in this field which were then mine, I had occasion afterwards again and again to look back with satisfaction.

The first play that we produced in this way was Maurice Maeterlinck's *L'intruse*⁽¹⁾. Otto Erich Hartleben had made the translation. Maeterlinck was then considered by the aesthetes as the dramatist who was fitted to bring upon the stage before the eyes of the susceptible spectator the invisible which lies amid the gross events of life. That which is ordinarily called incident in drama, the form of development in dialogue, Maeterlinck so employs as to produce thereby upon the susceptible the effect of symbols. It was this symbolizing that attracted many whose taste had been repelled by the preceding naturalism. All who were seeking for the "spirit," but who did not desire a form of expression in which a world of spirit is directly revealed, found their satisfaction in a symbolism that spoke a language not expressed in naturalistic form and yet entered into the spiritual only to the extent that this was revealed in the vague blurred form of the mystic-presentimental. The less one could "tell distinctly" what lay behind the suggestive symbols, the more were many enraptured by them.

I did not feel at ease in the presence of this spiritual glimmering. Yet it was delightful to work at the management of such a play as *The Intruder*. For the representation of just such symbols by appropriate stage means required in an unusual degree a managerial function guided in the way described above.

Moreover, it became my task to precede the production with a brief introductory address. This practice, common in France, had at that time been adopted also in Germany in connection with individual plays. Not, of course, in the ordinary theatre, but in connection with such undertakings as were adapted to the Dramatic Society. This did not occur, indeed, at every production of the Society, but infrequently: when it seemed necessary to introduce the public to an artistic purpose with which it was unfamiliar. The task of giving this brief stage address was satisfying to me for the reason that it afforded me an opportunity to make dominant in my speech a mood radiated to me myself from the spirit. And I was happy to do this in a human environment which had otherwise no ear for the spirit.

Being vitally within this dramatic art was, at all events, really important for me at that period. From that time on I myself wrote the dramatic criticisms for the Magazine. Concerning such "criticism," moreover, I had my own views, which, however, were little understood. I considered it unnecessary that an individual should pass "judgment" upon a

play and its production. Such judgments, as these were generally given, should really be reached by the public for itself alone.

He who writes about a theatrical production should cause to arise before his readers in an artistic-ideal picture what combination of fantasy-form stands behind the play. In artistically fashioned thoughts there should arise before the reader an ideal poetic reproduction as the living, though unconscious, germ from which the author produced his play. For to me thoughts were never merely something by means of which reality is abstractly and intellectually expressed. I saw that an artistic activity is possible in thought-conceptions just as in colours, in forms, in stage devices. And such a minor work of art should be created by one who writes about a theatrical production. But that such a thing should come about when a play is produced before an audience seemed to me a necessary co-operation in the life of art.

Whether a play is “good,” “bad,” or “mediocre” will be evident in the tone and bearing of such an “art-thought form.” For this cannot be concealed even though one does not say it in the form of crass judgments. Anything which is an impossible artistic structure will be visible in the thought art reproduction. For one there sets forth the thoughts, but they appear as utterly unreal if the work of art has not come from true and living fantasy.

Such a vital working in unison with the living art I wished to have in the Magazine. In this way something would have come about that would have given to the journal a character different from that of merely theoretical discussion and judgment upon art and the spiritual life. The Magazine would actually become a member of this spiritual life. For everything which the art of thinking can do for dramatic poetry is possible also for theatrical art. It is possible by means of thought-fantasy to bring into existence that which the art of the manager has introduced into the stage-conception; in this way it is possible to follow the actor, and, not through criticism but by “positive” presentation, cause that which is alive in him to stand forth. Then one becomes as a “writer” a formative participant in the artistic life of the time, and not a “judge” standing in the corner, “dreaded,” “pitied,” or even despised and hated. When this is practised for all branches of art, a literary-artistic periodical is in the midst of actual life. But in such things one always has the same experience. If one seeks to bring them into effect with persons who are engaged in writing, they either fail completely to enter into these things, because they are contrary to the writer's habits of thought, or else they laugh and say: “Yes, that's right, but I have always done so.” They do not observe at all the distinction between what one proposes and what they themselves “have always done.”

One who can go alone on his spiritual path need not be disturbed in mind by this. But whoever has to work among persons united in a spiritual group will be affected to the depths of his soul by these relationships. Especially so if his inner tendency is one so fixed, grown into him, that he cannot withdraw from this into another vitally real.

Neither my articles in the Magazine nor my lectures gave me at that time inner satisfaction. Only, anyone who reads them now and thinks that I intended to be a representative of materialism is mistaken. That I never wished to do. This can clearly be

seen from the essays and abstracts of lectures that I wrote. It is only necessary to set over against those individual passages which have a materialistic note others in which I speak of the spirit, of the eternal. So it is in the article *Ein Wiener Dichter*⁽²⁾. Of Peter Attenberg I say there. "What most interests the person who enters deeply into the world harmony seems foreign to him ... From the eternal ideas no light penetrates into Attenberg's eyes ..." (*Magazin*, July 17, 1897). And the fact that this "eternal world harmony" cannot be meant to signify something materialistic and mechanical becomes clear in utterances such as those in the essay on Rudolf Heidenhain (November 6, 1897): "Our conception of nature is clearly striving toward the goal of explaining the life of the organism according to the same laws by which the phenomena of inanimate nature must also be explained. General laws of mechanics, physics, chemistry are sought for in the bodies of animals and plants. The same sort of laws that control a machine must also be operative in the organism – only in immeasurably more complicated and scarcely comprehensible form. Nothing is to be added to these laws in order to render possible an explanation of the phenomenon we call life ... The mechanistic conception of the phenomena of life steadily gains ground. But it will never satisfy one who has the capacity to cast a deeper glance into nature's processes. Contemporary researchers in nature are too cowardly in their thinking. Where the wisdom of their mechanistic explanations fails, they say the thing is to us inexplicable ... A bold thinking lifts itself to a higher manner of perception. It seeks to explain by higher laws that which is not of a mechanical character. All our natural-scientific thinking remains behind our natural scientific experience. At present the natural-scientific form of thinking is much praised. In regard to this, it is said that we live in a natural-scientific age. But at bottom this natural-scientific age is the poorest that history has to show. Its characteristic is to hang fast to the mere facts and the mechanistic forms of explanation. Life will never be grasped by this form of thinking because such a grasp requires a higher manner of conceiving than that which belongs to the explanation of a machine."

Is it not obvious that one who speaks thus of the explanation of "life" cannot think materialistically of the explanation of "spirit"?

But I often spoke of the fact that the "spirit issues" from the bosom of nature. What is meant here by "spirit"? All that out of human thinking, feelings, and willing which begets "culture." To speak of another "spirit" would then have been quite futile. For no one would have understood me if I had said: "That which appears in man as spirit and lies at the basis of nature is neither spirit nor nature, but the complete unity of both." This unity – the creative Spirit which in its creating brings matter into existence and thereby is at the same time matter, but which also shows itself wholly as spirit – this unity is grasped by an idea which lay as far as possible from the habits of thought of that period. But it would have been necessary to speak of such an idea if one was to present in a spiritual form of thinking the primal state of the evolution of earth and man and the spiritual material Powers still active to-day in man himself, which on the one hand form his body and on the other cause to issue forth the living spiritual by means of which he creates culture. But external nature would have needed to be so discussed that in it the primal spiritual-material is represented as dead in natural laws.

All this could not be given. It could be linked up only with natural-scientific experience, not with natural-scientific thinking. In this experience there was something present which could set in shining light before a man's own mind a true, spirit-filled thinking regarding the world and man – something out of which might again be found the spirit now lost from the sort of knowledge confirmed by tradition and accepted on faith. The perception of spirit-nature I desired to draw from the experience of nature. I wished to speak of what is to be found on “this side” as the spiritual-natural, as the essentially divine. For in the knowledge confirmed by tradition the divine had come to belong to “the beyond” because the spirit of “this side” was not recognized and was therefore sundered from the perceptible world. It had become something which had been submerged in man's consciousness into an ever increasing darkness. Not the rejection of the divine-spiritual, but its setting within the world, its calling to “this side,” lay in such sentences as the following in one of the lectures before the Free Literary Society: “I believe that natural science can give back to us the consciousness of freedom in a form more beautiful than that in which men have yet possessed it. In the life of our souls there operate laws which are just as natural as those which send the heavenly bodies round the sun. *But these laws represent something which is higher than all the rest of nature. This something is present nowhere save in man alone. Whatever flows from this, in that is man free. He lifts himself above the fixed necessity of laws of the inorganic and organic; he heeds and follows only himself.*” (The last sentences are italicized [here](#)⁽³⁾ for the first time; they were not italicized in the Magazine. For these sentences see the Magazine of 12th February, 1898.).

Notes:

1. The Intruder.
2. “A Viennese Poet.”
3. That is, in the German text.

The Story of My Life

XXVI

INDIVIDUAL assertions regarding Christianity which I wrote or uttered in lectures at this time appear to be contrary to the expositions I gave later. In this connection the following must be noted. At that time, when I used the word “Christianity,” I had in mind the “beyond” teaching which is operative in the Christian creeds. The whole content of religious experience refers to a world of spirit which is not attainable by man in the unfolding of his spiritual powers. What religion has to say, what it has to give as moral precepts, is derived from revelations that come to man from without. Against this my view of spirit opposed itself, desiring to experience the world of spirit just as much as the sense-world in what is perceptible in man and in nature. Against this likewise was my ethical individualism opposed, desiring to have the moral life proceed, not from without

by way of precepts obeyed, but out of the unfolding of the human soul and spirit, wherein lives the divine.

What then occurred in my soul in viewing Christianity was a severe test for me. The time between my departure from the Weimar task and the production of my book *Das Christentum als mystische Tatsache*⁽¹⁾ is occupied by this test. Such tests are the opposition provided by destiny (Karma) which one's spiritual evolution has to overcome.

In my thoughts I perceived that there could result from the knowledge of nature – though this did not result at that time – the basis upon which man might attain to insight in the world of spirit. I therefore laid much stress upon the knowledge of the foundation of nature which must lead to the knowledge of spirit. For one who did not stand in living reality within the world of spirit, such a sinking of himself into a certain course of thought signified a mere activity of thought. For one who experiences the world of spirit, it signifies something quite different. He is brought into contact with Beings in the world of spirit who desire to make such tendencies of thought the sole predominant ones. Their one-sidedness in thinking does not merely lead to abstract error; there is a spiritual and living intercourse with a being which in the human world is error. Later I spoke of Ahrimanic beings when I wished to make reference to this. For these it is an absolute truth that the world must be a machine. They live in a world which touches directly upon the sense-world.

In my own ideas I never for one moment fell into this world, not even in the unconscious. For I took pains that all my knowledge should be reached in a state of discriminating consciousness. So much the more conscious was my inner struggle against the demonic Powers who would cause to come about from the knowledge of nature, not perception of spirit, but a mechanistic-materialistic form of thinking. He who seeks for knowledge of spirit must experience these worlds: for him a mere theoretical thinking about them does not suffice. At that time I had to save my spiritual perception by inner battles. These battles stood behind my outer experience.

In this time of testing I succeeded in advancing farther only when in spiritual perception I brought before my soul the evolution of Christianity. This led to the knowledge which was expressed in the book *Christianity as Mystical Fact*. Before this the Christian content to which I had referred had always been that found in existent creeds. This was true of Nietzsche also.

In an earlier passage in this biography I have narrated a conversation concerning Christ that I had with the learned Cistercian who was a professor in the faculty of Catholic theology of the University of Vienna. I was in the presence of a sceptical mood. The Christianity which I had to seek I did not find at all in the creeds. After the time of testing had set before me stern battles of the soul, I had to submerge myself in Christianity and in the world in which the spiritual speaks thereof.

In my attitude toward Christianity it can clearly be seen that I have by no means sought and found in spiritual science by the path which many persons have ascribed to me.

These state the matter as if I had collected together the knowledge of spirit left in ancient traditions. I am supposed to have elaborated Gnostic and other teachings. What is achieved of the knowledge of spirit in *Christianity as Mystical Fact* is brought directly out of the spiritual world. Only when I wished to show to those who heard my lectures and to the readers of the books the harmony between the spiritual perception and the historic traditions did I first take these traditions and blend them in the content. But nothing existing in these documents have I blended in the content unless I had first had this before me in the spirit.

At the time when I made the statements concerning Christianity so opposed in literal content to later utterances, it was also true that the real content of Christianity was beginning germinally to unfold within me as an inner phenomenon. About the turn of the century the germ unfolded more and more. Before this turn of the century came this testing of the soul here described. The evolution of my soul rested upon the fact that I stood before the mystery of Golgotha in most inward, earnest joy of knowledge.

Notes:

1. Christianity as Mystical Fact.

The Story of My Life

XXVII

THE thought then hovered before me that the turn of the century must bring a new spiritual light to humanity. It seemed to me that the exclusion of human thinking and willing from the spirit had reached a climax. A revolutionary change in the process of human evolution seemed to me a matter of necessity.

Many were talking in this way. But they did not see that man will seek to direct his eyes toward a world of real spirit as he directs them through the senses toward nature. They only supposed that the subjective spiritual temper of the soul would undergo a revolution. That a real, new objective world could be revealed – such a thought lay beyond the range of vision of that time.

With the experiences that came to me from my perspective of the future and from the impressions received from the world about me, I was forced to turn the eyes of my mind more and more to the development which marked the nineteenth century.

I saw how, with the time of Goethe and Hegel, everything disappeared which knowingly takes up conceptions of a spiritual world into human forms of thought. Thenceforth knowledge must not be “confused” by conceptions from the spiritual world. These conceptions are assigned to the sphere of faith and “mystical” experience.

In Hegel I perceived the greatest thinker of the new age. But he was just that – only a thinker. To him the world of spirit was in thinking. Even while I admired immeasurably the way in which he gave form to all his thinking, yet I perceived that he had no feeling for the world of spirit which I beheld and which is revealed behind thinking only when thinking is empowered to become an experience whose body, in a certain measure, is thought, and which takes up into itself as soul the Spirit of the world.

Since in Hegelianism everything spiritual has become thought, Hegel represented to me the person who brought the ultimate twilight of the ancient spiritual light into a period in which the spirit became hidden in darkness from human knowledge.

All this appeared thus before me whether I looked into the spiritual world or looked back in the physical world upon the century drawing to an end. But now there came forth in this century a figure which I could not trace on into the spiritual world – Max Stirner.

Hegel was wholly the man of thought, who in his inner unfolding strives after a thinking which goes ever deeper, and in going deeper extends to farther horizons. This thinking, in its deepening and broadening, becomes at last one with the thinking of the World-Spirit which includes the whole world-content. And Stirner was all that man unfolds from himself, bringing this wholly from his individual personal will. What exists in humanity lies only in the juxtaposition of single personalities.

I dared not just at that time fall into one-sidedness. As I stood completely within Hegelianism experiencing this in my soul as my own inner experience, so must I also wholly submerge myself inwardly in this opposite.

Against the one-sidedness of endowing the World-Spirit merely with knowledge must, indeed, the opposite appear, the assertion of man merely as a will-being.

Had the situation been such that this opposition had simply appeared in me as an experience of my own mind in its evolution, I would never have permitted anything of this to enter into my writing or lecturing. I have always observed this rule with regard to such mental experiences. But this particular contradiction – Hegel and Stirner – belonged to the century. Through this the century expressed itself.

And, indeed, it is true that philosophers are not to be principally considered in relation to their influence on their times. Certainly one can mention very strong influences proceeding from Hegel. But this is not the main thing. Philosophers show in the content of their thinking the spirit of their age as a thermometer shows the warmth of a place. In the philosophers that becomes conscious which lives unconsciously in the age.

And so the nineteenth century in its two extremes lived through the impulses expressing themselves through Hegel and Stirner: impersonal thinking which most delights to yield itself to a contemplation of the world in which man with his inner creative powers has no part; and wholly personal will with little feeling for the harmonious co-operation of men. To be sure, all possible “social ideals” appear, but they have no power to influence

reality. This more and more takes on the form of what can come about when the wills of individuals work side by side.

Hegel would have the thought of the moral take objective form more and more in the associated life of men; Stirner feels that the “individuals” (single persons) are harmed by everything which thus gives harmonious form to the life of men.

My own consideration of Stirner was connected at that time with a friendship which had a decisive effect upon very much in what we are here considering. This was my friendship with the important Stirner scholar and editor J. H. Mackay. It was while still in Weimar that I was brought in contact by Gabrielle Reuter with this personality, to me likewise altogether congenial. He had occupied himself with those chapters in my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* which deal with ethical individualism. He found a harmony between my discussions and his own social views.

At first it was the personal impression I received from; J. H. Mackay that filled my soul when in company with him. He bore the “world” in him. In his whole inner and outer bearing there spoke world-experience. He had spent some time in both England and America. All this was suffused with a boundless amiability. I conceived a great affection for him.

When, therefore, J. H. Mackay came to reside permanently at Berlin, there developed a delightful friendship between us. This also, unfortunately, has been destroyed by life and especially by my public discussion of anthroposophy.

In this instance I must only describe quite objectively how the work of J. H. Mackay seemed to me at that time, and still seems, and what effect it had upon me. For I am aware that he would express himself quite differently about it.

Profoundly hateful to this man was everything in human social life which is force, *Archie*. The greatest failure, he felt, was the introduction of force into social control. In “communistic anarchy” he saw a social idea in the highest degree objectionable because this proposed to bring about a better state of humanity through the employment of force.

Now it was a risky thing for J. H. Mackay to battle against this idea and the agitation based upon it while choosing for his own social thought the same name which his opponents had, only with another adjective preceding it. “Individualistic anarchy” was his name for what he himself represented, and that, too, as the very opposite of what was then called “anarchy.” This naturally led the public to form nothing but biased view concerning Mackay's ideas. He was in accord with the American, B. Tucker, who stood for the same conception. Tucker visited Mackay at Berlin, and in this way I came to know him.

Mackay is also a poet of his conception of life. He wrote a novel *Die Anarchisten*⁽¹⁾. I read this after I had become acquainted with the author. This is a noble work based upon faith in the individual man. It describes penetratingly and with great vividness the social

condition of the poorest of the poor. But it also sets forth how out of the world's misery those men will find a way to improvement who, being wholly devoted to the good forces, so bring these forces to their unfolding that they become effective in the free association of men rendering compulsion unnecessary. Mackay had the noble confidence that men could of themselves create a harmonious order of life. He considered, however, that this would be possible only after a long time, when by spiritual ways a requisite revolution should have been completed within men. He therefore demanded for the present that those individuals who were far enough advanced should propagate the idea of this spiritual way. A social idea, therefore, which would employ only spiritual means.

Destiny had now given such a turn to my experience with J. H. Mackay and Stirner that here also I had to submerge myself in a thought-world which became to me a spiritual testing. My ethical individualism I felt to be a pure inner experience of man. It was by no means my intention when I formulated this to make it the basis of a philosophy of politics. Now at this time, about 1898, a sort of abyss had to be opened in my mind in regard to this purely ethical individualism. It had to be changed from something purely human and inward to something external. The esoteric must be shifted to the exoteric.

Then, in the beginning of the new century, when I had succeeded in stating my experience of the spiritual in *Die Mystik im Aufgange*⁽²⁾ and *Christianity as Mystical Fact*, ethical individualism again stood after the test in its rightful place.

Yet the testing took such a course that the outward expression played no part in full consciousness. It took its course just below this full consciousness, and because of this very proximity it could influence the forms of expression in which, during the last years of the past century, I spoke regarding things social. Certain discussions of that time, however, which seem all too radical must be compared with others in order to arrive at a correct conception.

One who sees into the spiritual world always finds his own being externalized when he ought to express opinions and conceptions. He enters the spiritual world, not in abstractions, but in living perceptions. Nature likewise, which is the sensible copy of the spiritual, does not represent opinions and conceptions, but places these before the world in their forming and becoming.

A state of inner movement, which drove into billows and waves all the forces of my soul, was at that time my inner experience.

My external private life became one of absolute satisfaction by reason of the fact that the Eunicke family was drawn to Berlin and I could live with them under the best of care after having experienced for a short time the utter misery of living in a home of my own. My friendship with Frau Eunicke was soon thereafter transformed into a civil marriage. Only this shall be said concerning this private affair. Of my private life I do not wish to introduce anything into this biography except what concerns my process of development. Living in the Eunicke home enabled me to have an undisturbed basis for a life of inner

and outer movement. Otherwise, private relationships do not belong to the public. It is not concerned in these.

Indeed, my spiritual development is, in reality, utterly independent of all private relationships. I am conscious of the fact that this would have been quite the same had the shaping of my private life been entirely different.

Amid all the movement in my life at that time came now the continual anxiety concerning the possibility of an existence for the Magazine. In spite of all the difficulties I faced, it would have gained a circulation if there had been available to me the material means. But a periodical which at the utmost could afford only sufficient compensation to give me the bare necessities of a material existence, and for which nothing whatever could be done to make it known, could not thrive upon the limited circulation it had when I took it over.

So long as I edited the Magazine it was a constant source of anxiety to me.

Notes:

1. The Anarchist.
2. Mysticism at the Beginning of the Modern Spiritual Life.

The Story of My Life

XXVIII

AT this difficult time of my life the executive committee of the Berlin Workers' School came to me with the request that I should take charge of the courses in history and practice in "speaking" in the school. I was at first little interested in the socialistic connections of the school. I saw the beautiful task offered me of teaching mature men and women of the working class, for few young people were among the "pupils."

I explained to the committee that, if I took over the teaching, I must lecture entirely according to my own views of the course of evolution in human history, not in the style in which this is customary according to Marxism in Social-Democratic circles. They still wished to have me as a teacher.

After I had made this reservation, it could no longer disturb me that the school was a Social-Democratic foundation of the elder Liebknecht (the father). For me the school consisted of men and women of the proletariat; the fact that the great majority were Social-Democrats did not at all concern me.

But I obviously had to do with the mental character of the “pupils.” I had to speak in forms of expression to which I had till then been quite unaccustomed. I had to familiarize myself with the forms of conception and judgment of these persons in order to be in some measure understood.

These forms of conceptions and judgments came from two directions. First, from life. These people knew manual labour and its results. The spiritual Powers guiding mankind forward in history did not enter into their minds. It was for this reason that Marxism, with its “materialistic conception of history,” had such an easy way with them. Marx maintained that the impelling forces in the historic process are merely economic-material forces, those operative in manual labour. The “spiritual factors” are considered merely a sort of by-product which arises from the material-economic factors – as a mere ideology.

A craving for scientific education had long before grown up among the workers. But this could be gratified only by means of the popular materialistic scientific literature.

For this literature alone dealt in the forms of conceptions and judgments known to the workers. Whatever was not materialistic was written in such a way that the workers could not possibly understand it. Thus came about the unspeakably tragic fact that, while the developing proletariat desired knowledge with the most intense craving, this craving of theirs was satisfied only by means of the grossest materialism.

It must be confessed that half-truths are imbedded in the economic materialism which the workers take from Marxism as the “materialistic conception of history.” And these half-truths are just the thing they easily understand. If I had taught idealistic history to the complete ignoring of these half-truths, the students would have found involuntarily in the lack of these materialistic half-truths the very thing which would have repelled them in my lectures.

I therefore took as my starting-point a truth which could be grasped by my hearers also. I showed that to speak of a mastery by the economic forces up to the sixteenth century, as Marx does, is nonsense. That from the sixteenth century on the economic first comes into a relationship which can be conceived in a Marxian way; and that this process then reaches its climax in the nineteenth century.

In this way it was possible to speak quite as a matter of fact of the ideal-spiritual impulses in connection with the preceding periods of history, and to show that in the most recent times these had grown weak in comparison with the material-economic impulses.

In this way the workers arrived at conceptions of capacities for knowledge, of religious, artistic, and moral impulses in history, and abandoned the habit of thinking these mere “ideology.” It would have been senseless to resort to polemics against materialism; I had to cause realism to arise out of materialism.

In the “practice in speaking” little could be done in this direction. After I had discussed at the beginning of each course the formal principles of lecturing and speaking, the pupils

made practice speeches. Inevitably they then brought forward what was familiar to them from their materialistic nature. The “leaders” of the labour unions did not at first trouble themselves at all about the school, and so I had a perfectly free hand.

It became more difficult for me when the teaching of the natural sciences was annexed to that of history. There it was especially difficult to ascend to true conceptions from the materialistic conceptions dominant in science, especially among its popularizers. I did this as well as I possibly could.

Now, however, my teaching activity was extended through the sciences among the workers themselves. I was requested by numerous workers' unions to lecture on natural science.

Especially was instruction desired concerning that book then creating a sensation, Haeckel's *Welträtsel*⁽¹⁾. In the positive biological third of this book I saw a comprehensive handbook on the metamorphosis of living beings. My general conviction that mankind can be led from this side to spirituality I held to be true also for the workers. I connected my reflections with this third of the book and said often enough that the other two-thirds must be considered worthless and really ought to be cut out of the book and thrown away.

At the celebration of the Gutenberg jubilee I was entrusted with the festival address before 7,000 type-setters and printers in a Berlin circus. My manner of speaking to the workers must therefore have been found congenial.

With this activity destiny had once more transplanted me into a piece of life into which I had to submerge myself. I came to see how the single souls among this workers' group slumbered and dreamed, and how a sort of mass-soul laid hold upon men, revolutionizing their conception, judgment, bearing.

But it must not be imagined that the single souls were dead. In this respect I was able to look deeply into the souls of my pupils and of the whole workers' group. This brought me to the task which I set myself in all this activity. The attitude toward Marxism was not yet what it became two decades later. Marxism was still something which they elaborated with complete deliberation as a sort of economic gospel. Later it became something with which the mass of the proletariat were apparently obsessed.

The proletariat consciousness then consisted of feelings which manifested themselves like the effect of mass suggestion. Many of the single souls said again and again: “A time must come in which the world shall evolve spiritual interests; but for the present the proletariat must be freed by purely economic means.”

I found that my lectures wrought much good in their souls. Even that element was taken up which contradicted materialism and the Marxian conception of history. Later, when the leaders learned of my way of working, they fought against it. In a gathering of my pupils one of these “minor leaders” spoke. He made this statement: “We do not wish freedom in the proletarian movement; we wish rational compulsion.” Because of this the

desire arose to drive me out of the school against the will of my pupils. This activity gradually became so burdensome to me that, soon after I began my anthroposophic work, I dropped it.

It is my impression that if the workers' movement had been followed with interest by a greater number of unprejudiced persons, and if the proletariat had been dealt with understandingly, this movement would have developed quite differently. But we have left the people to live in their own class, and we have lived in ours. The conceptions of each class of men held by the others were merely theoretical. There was discussion of wages when strikes and the like forced it; and all sorts of welfare movements were established. These latter were exceedingly creditable.

But the submerging of these world-stirring questions into a spiritual sphere was wholly lacking. And yet only this could have taken from the movement its destructive forces. It was the time in which the “higher classes” had lost the community feeling, in which egoism spread abroad with its fierce competitive struggles – the time in which the world catastrophe of the second decade of the twentieth century was already being prepared. Side by side with this, the proletariat evolved the community sense in its own way as the proletarian class-consciousness. It took up the culture which had been developed in the “upper classes” only so far as this provided material for the justification of the proletarian class-consciousness. Gradually there ceased to be any bridge between the different classes. Thus by reason of the Magazine I was under the necessity of submerging myself in the being of the citizen, and through my activity among the workers in that of the proletariat. A rich field, wherein one could knowingly experience the motive forces of the time.

Notes:

1. The Riddle of the Universe.

The Story of My Life

XXIX

FROM the spiritual sphere new light on the evolution of humanity sought to break through in the knowledge acquired during the last third of the nineteenth century. But the spiritual sleep in which this acquired knowledge was given its materialistic interpretation prevented even a notion of the new light, much less any proper attention to it.

So that time arrived which ought by its own nature to have evolved in the direction of the spirit, but which belied its own being – the time wherein it began to be impossible for life to make itself real.

I wish to set down here certain sentences taken from articles which I wrote in March 1898 for the *Dramaturgische Blätter* (which had become a supplement of the Magazine at the beginning of 1898). Referring to the art of lecturing, I said: "In this field more than in any other is the learner left wholly to himself and to chance ... Because of the form which our public life has taken on, almost everybody nowadays has frequent need to speak in public ... The elevation of ordinary speech to a work of art is a rarity. We lack almost wholly the feeling for the beauty of speaking, and still more for speaking that is characteristic ... To no one devoid of all knowledge of correct singing would the right be granted to discuss a singer ... In the case of dramatic art the requirements imposed are far slighter ... Persons who know whether or not a verse is properly spoken become steadily scarcer ... People nowadays often look upon artistic speaking as ineffective idealism. We could never have come to this had we been more aware of the educative possibilities of speech ..."

What then hovered before me could come to a form of realization only much later, within the Anthroposophical Society. Marie von Sievers (Marie Steiner), who was enthusiastic on behalf of the art of speech, first dedicated herself to genuinely artistic speaking; and then for the first time it became possible with her help to work for the elevation of speech to a true art by means of courses in speaking and dramatic representations.

I venture to introduce this subject just here in order to show how certain ideals have sought their unfolding all through my life, though many persons have tried to find contradictions in my evolution.

To this period belongs my friendship with the young poet, now dead, Ludwig Jacobowski. He was a personality whose dominant mood of soul breathed the breath of inner tragedy. It was hard for him to bear the fate that made him a Jew. He represented a bureau which, under the guidance of a liberal deputy, directed the union "Defence against Anti-Semitism" and published its organ. An excessive burden in connection with this work rested upon Ludwig Jacobowski. And a sort of work which renewed every day a burning pain; for it brought home to him daily the realization of the feeling against his people which caused him so much suffering.

Along with this he developed a fruitful activity in the field of folk-lore. He collected everything obtainable as the basis for a work on the evolution of the peoples from primitive times. Individual papers of his, based upon his rich fund of knowledge in this field, are very interesting. They were at first written in the materialistic spirit of the time; but, had Jacobowski lived longer, he would certainly have been open to a spiritualizing of his research.

Out of this activity streamed the poetry of Ludwig Jacobowski. Not wholly original; and yet born of deeply human feeling and filled with an experience of the powers of the soul. *Leuchtende Tage*⁽¹⁾ he called his lyrical poems. These, when the mood bestowed them upon him, were in his life-tragedy really something that affected him like days of spiritual sunlight. Besides, he wrote novels. In *Werther der Jude*⁽²⁾ there lived all the inner tragedy of Ludwig Jacobowski.

In *Loki, Roman eines Gottes*⁽³⁾, he produced a work born of German mythology. The soulful quality which speaks from this novel is a beautiful reflection of the poet's love of the mythological element in a folk.

A survey of what Ludwig Jacobowski achieved leaves one astonished at its fulness in the most divers fields. Yet he associated with many persons and enjoyed social life. Moreover, he was then editing the monthly *Die Gesellschaft*⁽⁴⁾, which meant for him an enormous burden of work. He had a consuming passion for life, whose essence he craved to know in order that he might mould this into artistic form.

He founded a society, *Die Kommenden*⁽⁵⁾, consisting of writers, artists, scientists, and persons interested in the arts. The meetings there were weekly. Poets read their poems; lectures were given in the most divers fields of knowledge and life. The evening ended in an informal social gathering. Ludwig Jacobowski was the central point of his ever growing circle. Everybody was attached to the lovable personality, so full of ideas, who, moreover, developed in this club a fine and noble sense of humour.

Away from all this he was snatched by an early death, when he had just reached thirty years. He was taken off by an inflammation of the brain, caused by his unceasing labours.

There remained to me only the duty of giving the funeral address for my friend and editing his literary remains. A beautiful memorial of him was made by his friend, Marie Stona, in the form of a book consisting of papers by friends of his. Everything about Ludwig Jacobowski was lovable: his inner tragedy, his striving outward from this to his "luminous days," his absorption in the life of movement. I keep always alive in my heart thoughts of our friendship, and look back upon our brief association with an inner devotion to my friend.

Another friend with whom I came to be associated at that time was Martha Asmers, a woman philosophically thoughtful but strongly inclined to materialism. This tendency, however, was modified through the fact that Martha Asmers kept intensely alive the memory of her brother Paul Asmers, who had died early, and who was a decided idealist.

During the last third of the nineteenth century Paul Asmers had lived, like a philosophical hermit, in the idealism of the time of Hegel. He wrote a paper on the ego, and a similar one on the Indo-Germanic religion – both characteristically Hegelian in form, but both thoroughly independent.

This interesting personality, who had then long been dead, was brought really close to me through the sister Martha Asmers. It seemed to me that in him the spirit-tending philosophy of the beginning of the century flamed forth like a meteor toward its end.

Less intimate, but of constant significance for a long time thereafter, were the relationships which came about between the "Friedrich Hageners" – Bruno Wille and Wilhelm Bölsche – and myself. Bruno Wille is the author of a work entitled *Philosophie der Befreiung* durch das reine Mittel*⁽⁶⁾. Only the title coincides with my *Philosophie*

der Freiheit. The content moves in an entirely different sphere. Bruno Wille became very widely known through his important *Offenbarungen des Wachholderbaumes*⁽⁷⁾, a philosophical book written out of the most beautiful feeling for nature, permeated by the conviction that spirit speaks from every material existence. Wilhelm Bölsche is known through numerous popular writings on the natural sciences which are extraordinarily popular among the widest circles of readers. From this side came the founding of a Free Higher Institute, into which I was drawn. I was entrusted with the teaching of history. Bruno Wille took charge of philosophy, Bölsche of natural sciences, and Theodor Kappstein, a liberally minded theologian, the science of religion. A second foundation was the Giordano Bruno Union. In this the idea was to bring together such persons as were sympathetic toward a spiritual-monistic philosophy. Emphasis was placed upon the idea that there are not two world-principles – matter and spirit – but that spirit constitutes the sole principle of all existence. Bruno Wille inaugurated the Union with a very brilliant lecture based upon the saying of Goethe: “Never matter without spirit.” Unfortunately a slight misunderstanding arose between Wille and me after this lecture. My words following the lecture – that long after Goethe had coined this beautiful expression, he had supplemented it in impressive fashion, in that he had seen polarity and ascent as the concrete spiritual shapings in the actual spiritual activity in existence, and that in this way the general saying first received its full content – this remark of mine was interpreted as a reflection upon Wille's lecture, which, however, I had fully accepted in the sense he himself intended.

But I brought upon myself the direct opposition of the leadership of the Giordano Bruno Union when I read a paper on monism. In this I laid stress upon the fact that the crude dualistic conception, “matter and spirit,” is really a creation of the most recent times, and that likewise only during the most recent centuries were spirit and nature brought into the opposition which the Giordano Bruno Union would oppose. Then I indicated how this dualism is opposed by scholastic monism. Even though scholasticism withdrew from human knowledge a part of existence and assigned this part to “faith,” yet scholasticism set up a world-system marked by a unified (monistic) constitution, from the Godhead and the divine all the way to the details of nature. I thus set even scholasticism higher than Kantianism.

This paper of mine aroused the greatest excitement. It was supposed that I wished to open the road for Catholicism into the Union. Of the leading personalities, only Wolfgang Kirchbach and Martha Asmers stood by me. The rest could form no notion as to what I really meant to do with the “misunderstood scholasticism.” In any case, they were convinced that I was likely to bring the greatest confusion into the Giordano Bruno Union.

I must call attention to this paper because it belongs to a time during which, according to the later views of many persons, I was a materialist. But at that time this materialist passed with many persons as the one who would swear afresh by medieval scholasticism.

In spite of all this I was able later to deliver before the Giordano Bruno Union my basic anthroposophic lecture, which became the point of departure for my anthroposophic activity.

In imparting to the public that which anthroposophy contains as knowledge of the spiritual world, decisions are necessary which are not altogether easy. The character of these decisions can best be understood if one glances at a single historical fact.

In accordance with the quite differently constituted temper of mind of an earlier humanity, there has always been a knowledge of the spiritual world up to the beginning of the modern age, approximately until the fourteenth century. This knowledge, however, was quite different from anthroposophy, which is adapted to the conditions of cognition characterizing the present day.

After the period mentioned, humanity could at first bring forth no knowledge of the spiritual world. Men could only confirm the “ancient knowledge,” which the mind had beheld in the form of pictures, and which was also available later only in symbolic-picture form.

This “ancient knowledge” was practised in remote times only within the “mysteries.” It was imparted to those who had first been made ripe for it, the “initiates.” It was not to reach the public because there the tendency was too strong to use it in an unworthy manner. This practice has been maintained only by those later personalities who received the lore of the “ancient knowledge” and continued to foster it. They did this in the most restricted circles with men whom they had previously prepared. And thus it has continued even to the present time. Of the persons maintaining such a position in relation to spiritual knowledge whom I have encountered, I may select one who was active within the Viennese circle of Frau Lang to which I have referred but whom I met also in other circles with which I was associated in Vienna. This was Friedrich Eckstein, the distinguished expert in the “ancient knowledge.”

While I was associated with Friedrich Eckstein, he had not written much. But what he did write was filled with the spirit. No one, however, sensed from his essays the intimate expert in the “ancient knowledge.” This was active in the background of his spiritual work. Long after life had removed me from this friend also, I read in a collection of his writings a very significant paper on the Bohemian Brothers.

Friedrich Eckstein represented the earnest conviction that esoteric spiritual knowledge should not be publicly propagated like ordinary knowledge. He was not alone in this conviction; it was and is that of almost all experts in the “ancient wisdom.” To what extent this conviction of the guardians of the “ancient wisdom,” strongly enforced as a rule, was broken through in the Theosophical Society founded by H. P. Blavatsky – of this I shall have occasion to speak later.

Friedrich Eckstein wished that, as “initiate in the ancient knowledge,” one should clothe what one treats publicly in the force which comes from this “initiation,” but that one

should separate the exoteric strictly from the esoteric, which should remain within the most restricted circles of those who fully understood how to honour it.

If I was to develop a public activity on behalf of spiritual knowledge, I had to determine to break with this tradition. I found myself faced by the requirements of the contemporary intellectual life. In the presence of these the preservation of mysteries such as were inevitable in ancient times was an impossibility. We live in the time which demands publicity wherever any sort of knowledge appears. The point of view favouring the preservation of mysteries is an anachronism. The sole and only possibility is that persons should be taught spiritual knowledge by stages, and that no one should be admitted to a stage at which the higher portions of this knowledge are to be imparted until he knows the lower. This, indeed, corresponds with the practice in lower and higher schools even of an ordinary sort.

Moreover, I was under no obligation to anyone to guard mysteries, for I received nothing from the “ancient wisdom”; what I possess of spiritual knowledge is entirely

the result of my own researches. When any knowledge has come to me, only then I set beside it whatever of the “ancient knowledge” has already been made public from any side, in order to point out the harmony in mood and, at the same time, the advance which is possible to contemporary research.

So, after a certain point of time, it was quite clear to me that in coming before the public with spiritual knowledge I should be doing the right thing.

Notes:

1. Luminous Days.
2. Werther the Jew.
3. Loki, the Romance of a God.
4. Society.
5. The Coming Ones.
6. Philosophy of Freedom through the Pure Means.
7. Revelations of the Juniper Tree.

The Story of My Life

XXX

The decision to give public expression to the esoteric from my own inner experience impelled me to write for the Magazine for August 28, 1899, on the occasion of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Goethe's birth, an article on Goethe's fairy-tale of *The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*, under the title *Goethes Geheime Offenbarung*⁽¹⁾.

This article was, of course, only slightly esoteric. But I could not expect more of my public than I there gave. In my own mind the content of the fairy-tale lived as something wholly esoteric, and it was out of an esoteric mood that the article was written.

Since the 'eighties I had been occupied with imaginations which were associated in my thought with this fairy-tale. I saw set forth in the fairy-tale Goethe's way from the observation of external nature into the interior of the human mind as he placed this before himself, not in concepts, but in pictures of the spirit. Concepts seemed to Goethe far too poor, too dead, to be capable of representing the living and working forces of the mind.

Now in Schiller's letters concerning education in aesthetics, Goethe saw an endeavour to grasp this living and working by means of concepts. Schiller sought to show how the life of man is under subjection to natural necessity by reason of his corporeal aspect and to mental necessity through his reason. And he thought the soul must establish an inner equilibrium between the two. Then in this equilibrium man lives in freedom a life really worthy of humanity.

This is clever, but for the real life of the soul it is far too simple. The soul causes its forces, which are rooted in the depths, to shine into consciousness, but to disappear again in the very act of shining forth after they have influenced other forces just as fleeting. These are occurrences which even in arising also pass away; but abstract concepts can be linked only to that which continues for a longer or shorter time. All this Goethe knew through experience; he placed his picture-knowledge in a fairy-tale over against Schiller's conceptual knowledge. In experiencing this creation of Goethe's, one had entered the outer court of the esoteric.

This was the time when I was invited by Count and Countess Brockdorff to deliver a lecture at one of their weekly gatherings. At these meetings there came together seekers from all sorts of circles. The lectures there delivered had to do with all aspects of life and knowledge. I knew nothing of all this until I was invited to deliver a lecture; nor did I know the Brockdorffs, but heard of them then for the first time. The theme proposed was an article about Nietzsche. This lecture I gave. Then I observed that among the hearers there were persons with a great interest in the spiritual world. Therefore, when I was invited to give a second lecture, I proposed the subject "Goethe's Secret Revelation," and in this lecture I became entirely esoteric in relation to the fairy-tale. It was an important experience for me to be able to speak in words coined from the world of spirit after having been forced by circumstances throughout my Berlin period up to that time only to let the spiritual shine through my presentation.

The Brockdorffs were leaders of a branch of the Theosophical Society founded by Blavatsky. What I had said in connection with Goethe's fairy-tale led to my being invited by the Brockdorffs to deliver lectures regularly before those members of the Theosophical Society who were associated with them. I explained, however, that I could speak only about that which I vitally experienced within me as spiritual knowledge.

In truth, I could speak of nothing else. For very little of the literature issued by the Theosophical Society was known to me. I had known theosophists while living in Vienna, and I later became acquainted with others. These acquaintance ships led me to write in the Magazine the adverse review dealing with the theosophists in connection with the appearance of a publication of Franz Hartmann. What I knew otherwise of the literature was for the most part entirely uncongenial to me in method and approach; I could not by any possibility have linked my discussions with this literature.

So I then gave the lectures in which I established a connection with the mysticism of the Middle Ages. By means of the ideas of the mystics from Master Eckhard to Jakob Böhme, I found expression for the spiritual conceptions which in reality I had determined beforehand to set forth. I published the series of lectures in the book *Die Mystik im Aufgange des neuzeitlichen Geisteslebens*⁽²⁾. At these lectures there appeared one day in the audience Marie von Sievers, who was chosen by destiny at that time to take into strong hands the German section of the Theosophical Society, founded soon after the beginning of my lecturing. Within this section I was then able to develop my anthroposophic activity before a constantly increasing audience.

No one was left in uncertainty of the fact that I would bring forward in the Theosophical Society only the results of my own research through perception. For I stated this on all appropriate occasions. When, in the presence of Annie Besant, the German section of the Theosophical Society was founded in Berlin and I was chosen its General Secretary, I had to leave the foundation sessions because I had to give before a non-theosophical audience one of the lectures in which I dealt with the spiritual evolution of humanity, and to the title of which I expressly united the phrase **“Eine Anthroposophie.”**⁽³⁾ Annie Besant also knew that I was then giving out in lectures under this title what I had to say about the spiritual world.

When I went to London to attend a theosophical congress, one of the leading personalities said to me that true theosophy was to be found in my book *Mysticism ...*, I had reason to be satisfied. For I had given only the results of my spiritual vision, and this was accepted in the Theosophical Society.

There was now no longer any reason why I should not bring forward this spiritual knowledge in my own way before the theosophical public, which was at first the only audience that entered without restriction into a knowledge of the spirit. I subscribed to no sectarian dogmatics; I remained a man who uttered what he believed he was able to utter entirely according to what he himself experienced in the spiritual world. Prior to the founding of the section belongs a series of lectures – which I gave before *Die Kommenden*, entitled *Von Buddha zu Christus*⁽⁴⁾. In these discussions I sought to show what a mighty stride the mystery of Golgotha signifies in comparison with the Buddha event, and how the evolution of humanity, as it strives toward the Christ event, approaches its culmination. In this circle I spoke also of the nature of the mysteries.

All this was accepted by my hearers. It was not felt to be contradictory to lectures which I had given earlier. Only after the section was founded – and I then appeared to be stamped

as a “theosophist” – did any objection arise. It was really not the thing itself; it was the name and the association with the Society that no one wished to have.

On the other hand, my non-theosophical hearers would have been inclined to permit themselves merely to be “stimulated” by my discussions, to accept these only in a “literary” way. What lay upon my heart was to introduce into life the impulse from the spiritual world; for this there was no understanding. This understanding, however, I could gradually find among men interested theosophically.

Before the Brockdorff circle, where I had spoken on Nietzsche and the on Goethe's secret revelation, I gave at this time a lecture on Goethe's Faust, from an **esoteric point of view**.
(5)

The lectures on mysticism led to an invitation during the winter from the same theosophical circle to speak there again on this subject. I then gave the series of lectures which I later collected into the volume *Christianity as Mystical Fact*.

From the very beginning I have let it be known that the choice of the expression “as Mystical Fact” is important. For I did not wish to set forth merely the mystical bearing of Christianity. My object was to set forth the evolution from the ancient mysteries to the mystery of Golgotha in such a way that in this evolution there should be seen to be active, not merely earthly historic forces, but spiritual supramundane influences. And I wished to show that in the ancient mysteries cult-pictures were given of cosmic events, which were then fulfilled in the mystery of Golgotha as facts transferred from the cosmos to the earth of the historic plane.

This was by no means taught in the Theosophical Society. In this view I was in direct opposition to the theosophical dogmatics of the time, before I was invited to work in the Theosophical Society. For this invitation followed immediately after the cycle of lectures on Christ here described.

Between the two cycles of lectures that I gave before the Theosophical Society, Marie von Sievers was in Italy, at Bologna, working on behalf of the Theosophical Society in the branch established there.

Thus the thing evolved up to the time of my first attendance at a theosophical congress, in London, in the year 1902. At this congress, in which Marie von Sievers also took part, it was already a foregone conclusion that a German section of the Society would be founded with myself – shortly before invited to become a member – as the general secretary.

The visit to London was of great interest to me. I there became acquainted with important leaders of the Theosophical Society. I had the privilege of staying at the home of Mr. Bertram Keightley, one of these leaders. We became great friends. I became acquainted with Mr. Mead, the very diligent secretary of the Theosophical Movement. The most

interesting conversations imaginable took place at the home of Mr. Keightley in regard to the forms of spiritual knowledge alive within the Theosophical Society.

Especially intimate were these conversations with Bertram Keightley himself. H. P. Blavatsky seemed to live again in these conversations. Her whole personality, with its wealth of spiritual content, was described with the utmost vividness before me and Marie von Sievers by my dear host, who had been so long associated with her.

I became slightly acquainted with Annie Besant and also Sinnett, author of *Esoteric Buddhism*. Mr. Leadbeater I did not meet, but only heard him speak from the platform. He made no special impression on me.

All that was interesting in what I heard stirred me deeply, but it had no influence upon the content of my own views.

The intervals left over between sessions of the congress I sought to employ in hurried visits to the natural-scientific and artistic collections of London. I dare say that many an idea concerning the evolution of nature and of man came to me from the natural-scientific and the historical collections.

Thus I went through an event very important for me in this visit to London. I went away with the most manifold impressions, which stirred my mind profoundly.

In the first number of the Magazine for 1899 there appears an article by me entitled *Neujahrsbetrachtung eines Ketzers*⁽⁶⁾. The meaning there is a scepticism, not in reference to religious knowledge, but in reference to the orientation of culture which the time had taken on.

Men were standing before the portals of a new century. The closing century had brought forth great attainments in the realm of external life and knowledge. In reference to this the thought forced itself upon me: "In spite of all this and many other attainments – for example, in the sphere of art – no one with any depth of vision can rejoice greatly over the cultural content of the time. Our highest spiritual needs strive for something which the time affords only in meagre measure." And reflecting upon the emptiness of contemporary culture, I glanced back to the time of scholasticism in which, at least in concepts, men's minds lived with the spirit. "One need not be surprised if, in the presence of such phenomena, men with deeper intellectual needs find the proud structure of thought of the scholastics more satisfying than the ideal content of our own time. Otto Willmann has written a noteworthy book, his *Geschichte des Idealismus*⁽⁷⁾ in which he appears as the eulogist of the world-conception of past centuries. It must be admitted that the human mind craves those proud comprehensive illuminations through thought which human knowledge experienced in the philosophical systems of the scholastics ... Discouragement is a characteristic of the intellectual life at the turn of the century. It disturbs our joy in the attainments of the youngest of the ages now past."

And in contrast to those persons who insisted that it was just “true knowledge” itself which showed the impossibility of a philosophy comprising under a single conception the totality of existence, I had to say: “If matters were as they appear to the persons who give currency to such voices, then it would suffice one to measure, weigh, and compare things and phenomena and investigate them by means of the available apparatus, but never would the question be raised as to the higher meaning of things and phenomena.”

This is the temper of my mind which must furnish an explanation of those facts that brought about my anthroposophic activity within the Theosophical Society. When I had entered into the culture of the time in order to find a spiritual background for the editing of the Magazine, I felt after this a great need to recover my mind in such reading as Willmann's *History of Idealism*. Even though there was an abyss between my perception of spirit and the form of Willmann's ideas, yet I felt that these ideas were near to the spirit.

At the end of September 1900, I was able to leave the Magazine in other hands.

The facts narrated above show that the purpose of imparting the content of the spiritual world had become a necessity growing out of my temper of mind before I gave up the Magazine; that it has no connection with the impossibility of continuing further with the Magazine.

As into the very element suited to my mind, I entered upon an activity having its impulse in spiritual knowledge.

But I still have to-day the feeling that, even apart from the hindrance here described, my endeavour to lead through natural-scientific knowledge to the world of spirit would have succeeded in finding an outlet. I look back upon what I expressed from 1897 to 1900 as upon something which at one time or another had to be uttered in opposition to the way of thinking of the time; and on the other hand I look back upon this as upon something in which I passed through my most intense spiritual test. I learned fundamentally to know where lay the forces of the time striving away from the spirit, disintegrating and destructive of culture. And from this knowledge came a great access of the force that I later needed in order to work outward from the spirit.

It was still before the time of my activity within the Theosophical Society, and before I ceased to edit the Magazine, that I composed my two-volume book *Conceptions of the World and of Life in the Nineteenth Century*, which from the second edition on was extended to include a survey of the evolution of world-conceptions from the Greek period to the nineteenth century, and then appeared under the title *Ratzel der Philosophie*⁽⁸⁾. The external occasion for the production of this book is to be considered wholly secondary. It grew out of the fact that Cronbach, the publisher of the Magazine, planned a collection of writings which were to deal with the various realms of knowledge and life in their evolution during the nineteenth century. He wished to include in this collection an exposition of the conceptions of the world and of life, and this he entrusted to me.

I had for a long time held all the substance of this book in my mind. My consideration of the world-conceptions had a personal point of departure in that of Goethe. The opposition which I had to set up between Goethe's way of thinking and that of Kant, the new philosophical beginning at the turning-point between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Fichte, Schelling, Hegel – all this was to me the beginning of an epoch in the evolution of world-conceptions. The brilliant books of Richard Wahle, which show the dissolution of all endeavour after a world-conception at the end of the nineteenth century, closed this epoch. Thus the attempt of the nineteenth century after a world-conception rounded itself into a whole which was vitally alive in my view, and I gladly seized the opportunity to set this forth.

When I look back to this book the course of my life seems to me symptomatically expressed in it. I did not concern myself, as many suppose, with anticipating contradictions. If this were the case, I should gladly admit it. Only it was not the reality in my spiritual course. I concerned myself in anticipation to find new spheres for what was alive in my mind. And an especially stimulating discovery in the spiritual sphere occurred soon after the composition of the *Conceptions of the World and of Life*.

Besides, I never by any means penetrated into the spiritual sphere in a mystical, emotional way, but desired always to go by way of crystal-clear concepts. Experiencing of concepts, of ideas, led me out of the ideal into the spiritual-real.

The real evolution of the organic from primeval times to the present stood out before my imagination for the first time after the composition of *Conceptions of the World and of Life*.

During the writing of this book I had before my eyes only the natural-scientific view which had been derived from the Darwinian mode of thought. But this I considered only as a succession of sensible facts present in nature. Within this succession of facts there were active for me spiritual impulses, as these hovered before Goethe in his idea of metamorphosis.

Thus the natural-scientific evolutionary succession, as represented by Haeckel, never constituted for me something wherein mechanical or merely organic laws controlled, but as something wherein the spirit led the living being from the simple through the complex up to man. I saw in Darwinism a mode of thinking which is on the way to that of Goethe, but which remains behind this.

All this was still thought by me in ideal content ; only later did I work through to imaginative perception. This perception first brought me the knowledge that in reality quite other beings than the most simple organisms were present in primeval times. That man as a spiritual being is older than all other living beings, and that in order to assume his present physical form he had to cease to be a member of a world-being which comprised him and the other organisms. These latter are rejected elements in human evolution; not something out of which man has come, but something which he has left behind, from which he severed himself, in order to take on his physical form as the image

of one that was spiritual. Man is a microcosmic being who bore within him all the rest of the terrestrial world and who has become a microcosm by separating from all the rest – this for me was a knowledge to which I first attained in the earliest years of the new century.

And so this knowledge could not be in any way an active impulse in *Conceptions of the World and of Life*. Indeed, I so conceived the second volume of this book that a point of departure for a deepening knowledge of the world mystery might be found in a spiritualized form of Darwinism and Haeckelism viewed in the light of Goethe's world-conception.

When I prepared later the second edition of the book, there was already present in my mind a knowledge of the true evolution. All through I held fast to the point of view I had assumed in the first edition as being that which is derived from thinking without spiritual perception, yet I found it necessary to make slight changes in the form of expression. These were necessary, first because the book by undertaking a general survey of the totality of philosophy had become an entirely different composition, and secondly because this second edition appeared after my discussions of the true evolution were already before the world. In all this the form taken by my *Riddles of Philosophy* had not only a subjective justification, as the point of view firmly held from the time of a certain phase in my mental evolution, but also a justification entirely objective. This consists in the fact that a thought, when spiritually experienced as thought, can conceive the evolution of living beings only as this is set forth in my book; and that the further step must be made by means of spiritual perception. Thus my book represents quite objectively the pre-anthroposophic point of view into which one must submerge oneself, and which one must experience in this submersion, in order to rise to the higher point of view. This point of view, as a stage in the way of knowledge, meets those learners who seek the spiritual world, not in a mystical blurred form, but in a form intellectually clear. In setting forth that which results from this point of view there is also present something which the learner uses as a preliminary stage leading to the higher.

Then for the first time I saw in Haeckel the person who placed himself courageously at the thinker's point of view in natural science, while all other researchers excluded thought and admitted only the results of sense-observation. The fact that Haeckel placed value upon creative thought in laying the foundation for reality drew me again and again to him.

And so I dedicated my book to him, in spite of the fact that its content – even in that form – was not conceived in his sense. But Haeckel was not in the least a philosophical nature. His relation to philosophy was wholly that of a layman. For this very reason I considered the attack of the philosophers that was just then raging around Haeckel as quite undeserved. In opposition to them, I dedicated my book to Haeckel, as I had already written in opposition to them my essay *Haeckel und seine Gegner*⁽⁹⁾. Haeckel, in all simplicity as regards philosophy, had employed thought as the means for setting forth biological reality; a philosophical attack was directed against him which rested upon an intellectual sphere quite foreign to him. I believe he never knew what the philosophers

wished from him. This was my impression from a conversation I had with him in Leipzig after the appearance of his *Riddle of the Universe*, on the occasion of a presentation of Borngräber's play *Giordano Bruno*. He then said: "People say I deny the spirit. I wish they could see how materials shape themselves through their forces; then they would perceive 'spirit' in everything that happens in a retort. Everywhere there is spirit." Haeckel, in fact, knew nothing whatever of the real Spirit. The very forces of nature were for him the "spirit," and he could rest content with this.

One must not critically attack such blindness to the spirit with philosophically dead concepts, but must see how far the age is removed from the experience of the spirit, and must seek, on the foundation which the age affords – the natural biological explanation – to strike the spiritual sparks.

Such was then my opinion. On that basis I wrote my *Conceptions of the World and of Life in the Nineteenth Century*.

Notes:

1. Goethe's Secret Revelation.
2. Mysticism at the Beginning of the Modern Spiritual Life.
3. "An anthroposophy."
4. From Buddha to Christ.
5. This was the lecture which was later published, together with my discussions of Goethe's fairy-tale, by the Philosophische-Anthroposophische Verlag.
6. New Year Reflections of a Sceptic.
7. History of Idealism.
8. Riddles of Philosophy.
9. Haeckel and His Opponents.

The Story of My Life

XXXI

ANOTHER collective work which represented the cultural attainments of the nineteenth century was published at that time by Hans Kraemer. It consisted of rather long treatises on the individual branches of knowledge, technical production, and social evolution. I was invited to give a description of the literary aspect of life. So the evolution of fantasy during the nineteenth century passed through my mind. I did not describe things like a philologist, who develops such things "from their sources"; I described what I had inwardly experienced of the unfolding of the life of fantasy.

This exposition also was important for me in that I had to speak of phenomena of the spiritual life without having recourse to the experience of the spiritual world. The real

spiritual impulses from this world that manifest themselves in the phenomena of poetry were left unmentioned.

In this case likewise what was present to my mind was that which the mental life has to say of a phenomenon of existence when the mind is at the point of view of the ordinary consciousness without bringing the content of the consciousness into such activity that it rises up in experience into the world of spirit. Still more significant for me was this experience of standing before the doorway of the spiritual world in the case of a treatise which I had to write for another work. This was not a centennial work, but a collection of papers which were to characterize the various spheres of knowledge and life in so far as human egoism is a motor force in each sphere. Arthur Dix published this work. It was entitled *Der Egoismus*⁽¹⁾ and was throughout applicable to the time – the turning-point between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The impulses of intellectualism, which had been effective in all spheres of life since the fifteenth century, have their roots in the “life of the individual soul” when these impulses are really genuine expressions of their own nature. When man reveals himself intellectually on the basis of the social life, this is not a genuine intellectual expression, but an imitation.

One of the reasons why the demand for a social feeling has become so intense in this age lies in the fact that this feeling is not experienced with original inwardness in intellectualism. Humanity in these things craves most of all that which it has not.

To my lot fell the setting forth for this book of *Egoismus in der Philosophie*⁽²⁾. My paper bears this title only because the general title of the book required this. The title ought really to have been *Individualismus in der Philosophie*.⁽³⁾ I sought to give in very brief form a survey of occidental philosophy since Thales, and to show how the goal of its evolution has been to bring the human individual to experience the world in ideal images, just as it is the purpose of my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* to set this forth with reference to knowledge and the moral life.

Again in this paper I stand before the “gateway of the spiritual world.” In the human individual were pointed out the ideal images which reveal the world-content. They appear so that they may wait for the experience whereby the mind may step through them into the world of spirit. In my description I held to this position. There is an inner world in this article which shows how far mere thinking comes in its grasp of the world.

It is evident that I described the pre-anthroposophic life of the mind from the most varied points of view before devoting myself to the anthroposophic setting forth of the spiritual world. In this there can be found nothing contradictory of my coming forward on behalf of anthroposophy; for the world-picture which arises will not be contradicted by anthroposophy, but extended and continued further.

If one begins to represent the spiritual world as a mystic, any one has a right to say: "You speak from your personal experiences. What you are describing is subjective." To travel such a spiritual road was not given me as my task from the spiritual world.

This task consisted in laying a foundation for anthroposophy just as objective as that of scientific thinking when this does not restrict itself to sensible facts but reaches out for comprehensive concepts. All that I set forth in scientific-philosophic manner, and in connection with Goethe's ideas is subject to discussion. It may be considered more or less correct or incorrect; but it strives after the character of the objective-scientific in the fullest sense.

And it is out of this knowledge, free of the emotional-mystical, that I have brought the experience of the spiritual world. It can be seen how in my *Mysticism and Christianity as Mystical Fact* the conception of mysticism is carried in the direction of this objective knowledge. And let it be noted also how my *Theosophy* is constructed. At every step taken in this book, spiritual perception stands as the background. Nothing is said which is not derived from this spiritual perception; but, while the steps are being made, the perception is clothed at first in the beginning of the book in scientific ideas until, in rising to the higher worlds, it must occupy itself more and more in freely picturing the spiritual world.

But this picturing grows out of the natural-scientific as the blossoms of a plant from the stem and leaves. As the plant is not seen in its entirety, if one fixes one's eye upon it only up to the blossom, so nature is not experienced in her entirety if one does not rise from the sensible to the spiritual.

Therefore that for which I strove was to set forth in anthroposophy the objective continuation of science, not to set by the side of science something subjective. It was inevitable that this very effort would not at first be understood. Science was supposed to end with that which antedates anthroposophy, and there was no inclination so to put life into the ideas of science as to lead to one's laying hold upon the spiritual. Men ran the risk of being excommunicated by the habit of thought built up during the second half of the nineteenth century.

They could not muster the courage to break the fetters of mere sense-observation; they feared that they might arrive at a region where each would insist upon his own fantasy.

Such was my orientation of mind when, in 1902, Marie von Sievers and I entered upon the leadership of the German section of the Theosophical Society. It was Marie von Sievers who, by reason of her whole being, made it possible to keep what came about through us far removed from anything sectarian, and to give to the thing such a character as won for it a place within the general spiritual and educational life. She was deeply interested in the art of the drama and of declamation and recitation, and had completed courses of study in these art forms, especially in the best institutions in Paris, which had given to her talent a beautiful development. When I became acquainted with her in Berlin

she was still continuing her studies in order to learn the various methods of artistic speech.

Marie von Sievers and I soon became great friends, and on the basis of this friendship there developed an united work in the most varied intellectual spheres and over a very wide area. Anthroposophy, but also the arts of poetry and of recitation, to cultivate these in common became for us the very essence of life.

Only in this unitedly cultivated spiritual life could the central point be found from which at first anthroposophy would be carried into the world through the local branches of the Theosophical Society.

During our first visit to London together, Marie von Sievers had heard from Countess Wachtmeister, an intimate friend of H. P. Blavatsky, much about the latter and about the tendencies and the evolution of the Theosophical Society. She was entrusted in the highest measure with that which was once revealed as a spiritual content to the Society and the story of how this content had been further fostered.

When I say that it was possible to find in the branches of the Theosophical Society those persons who desired to have knowledge imparted to them from the spiritual world, I do not mean that those persons enrolled in the Theosophical Society could be considered before all others as being of such a character.

Many of these, however, proved very soon to have a high degree of understanding in reference to my form of spiritual knowledge. But a large part of the members were fanatical followers of individual heads of the Theosophical Society. They swore by the dogmas given out by these heads, who acted in a strongly sectarian spirit.

This action of the Theosophical Society repelled me by the triviality and dilettantism inherent in it. Only among the English theosophists did I find an inner content, which also, however, rested upon Blavatsky, and which was then fostered by Annie Besant and others in a literal fashion. I could never have worked in the manner in which these theosophists worked. But I considered what lived among them as a spiritual centre with which one could worthily unite when one earnestly desired the spread of spiritual knowledge. So it was not the united membership in the Theosophical Society upon which Marie von Sievers and I counted, but chiefly those persons who were present with heart and mind whenever spiritual knowledge in an earnest sense was being cultivated.

This working within the existing branches of the Theosophical Society, which was necessary as a starting-point, comprised only a part of our activity. The chief thing was the arrangement for public lectures in which I spoke to a public not belonging to the Theosophical Society that came to my lectures only because of their content. Of persons who learned in this manner what I had to say about the spiritual world and of those who through the activity in one or another theosophical tendency found their way to this mode of learning – of these persons there was comprised within the branches of the Theosophical Society that which later became the Anthroposophical Society. Among the

various charges that have been directed against me in reference to my work in the Theosophical Society – even from the side of the Society itself – this also has been raised: that to a certain extent I used this Society, which already had a standing in the world, as a spring-board in order to render easier the way for my own spiritual knowledge.

There is not the slightest ground for such a statement. When I accepted the invitation into the Society, this was the sole institution worthy of serious consideration in which there was present a real spiritual life. Had the mood, bearing, and work of the Society remained as they then were, the withdrawal of my friend and myself need never have occurred. The Anthroposophical Society might only have been formed officially within the Theosophical Society as a special section.

But even as early as 1906 things were already beginning to be manifest and effective in the Theosophical Society which indicated in a terrible measure its deterioration.

If earlier still, in the time of H. P. Blavatsky, such incidents were asserted by the outer world to have occurred, yet at the beginning of the century it was clearly true that the earnestness of spiritual work on the part of the Society constituted a compensation for whatever wrong thing had taken place. Moreover, the occurrences had been left behind.

But after 1906 there began in the Society, upon whose general direction I had not the least influence, practices reminiscent of the growth of spiritualism, which made it necessary for me to warn members again and again that the part of the Society which was under my direction should have absolutely nothing to do with these things. The climax in these practices was reached when it was asserted of a Hindu boy that he was the person in whom Christ would appear in a new earthly life. For the propagation of this absurdity there was formed in the Theosophical Society a special society, that of “The Star of the East.” It was utterly impossible for my friend and me to include the membership of this “Star of the East” as a branch of the German section, as they desired and as Annie Besant, president of the Theosophical Society, especially intended. We were forced to found the Anthroposophical Society independently.

I have in this matter departed far from the narration of events in the course of my life; but this was necessary, for only these later facts can throw the right light on the purposes to which I bound myself in entering the Society at the beginning of the century.

When I first spoke at the congress of the Theosophical Society in London in 1902, I said that the unity into which the individual sections would combine should consist in the fact that each one should bring to the centre what it held within itself; and I gave sharp warning that I should expect this most especially of the German section. I made it clear that this section would never conduct itself as the representative of set dogmas but as composed of places independent of one another in spiritual research, which desired to reach mutual understandings in the conferences of the whole Society in regard to the fostering of genuine spiritual life.

Notes:

1. Egoism.
2. Egoism in Philosophy.
3. Individualism in Philosophy.

The Story of My Life

XXXII

IN reading discussions of anthroposophy such as appear nowadays there is something painful in having to meet again and again such thoughts, for instance, as “that the World War has been the cause of moods in men's souls fitted to set up all sorts of ‘mystical’ and similar spiritual currents”; and then to have anthroposophy included among these currents.

Against this stands the fact that the anthroposophic movement was founded at the beginning of the century, and that nothing essential has been done within this movement since its foundation that has not been derived from the inner life of the spirit. Twenty-five years ago I had a content of spiritual impressions within me. I gave the substance of these in lectures, treatises, and books. What I did was done from spiritual impulses. In its essence every theme was drawn from the spirit. During the war I discussed also topics which were suggested by the events of the times. But in these there was nothing basic due to any intention of taking advantage of the mood of the time for propagation of anthroposophy. These discussions occurred because men desired to have certain events illuminated by the knowledge which comes from the spiritual world.

On behalf of anthroposophy no endeavour has ever been made for anything except that it should take that course of development made possible by its own inner force bestowed upon it from the spirit. It is as far as possible out of harmony with anthroposophy to imagine that it would desire to win something from the dark abysses of the soul during the World War. That the number of those interested in anthroposophy increased after the war, that the Anthroposophical Society increased in its membership – these things are true; only one ought to note that all these facts have never changed anything in the development of the anthroposophical reality in the sense in which this took its full form at the beginning of the century.

The form which was to be given to anthroposophy from inner spiritual being had at first to struggle against all sorts of opposition from the theosophists in Germany.

There was, first of all, the justification of spiritual knowledge before the “scientific” mode of thought of the time. That this justification is necessary I have stated frequently in this story of my life. I took that mode of thought which rightly passes as “scientific” in

natural knowledge and extended this into spiritual knowledge. Through this means, the mode of knowledge of nature became, to be sure, something different for the observation of spirit from what it is for the observation of nature, but the character which causes it to be looked upon as “scientific” was maintained.

For this mode of scientific shaping of spiritual knowledge, those persons who considered themselves representatives of the theosophical movement at the beginning of the century never had any feeling or interest.

These were the persons grouped about Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden. He, as a personal friend of H. P. Blavatsky, had established a theosophical society as early as the 'eighties, beginning at Elberfeld. In this foundation H. P. Blavatsky herself participated. Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden then published a journal, *Die Sphinx*, in which the theosophical world-conception should be upheld. The whole movement failed; and, when the German section of the Theosophical Society was founded, there was nothing existing except a number of persons, who looked upon me, however, as a sort of trespasser in their territory. These persons awaited the “scientific founding” of theosophy by Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden. They held the opinion that, until this should occur, nothing was to be done in this matter within German territory. What I began to do appeared to them as a disturbance of their “waiting,” as something utterly blameworthy. Yet they did not at once withdraw; for theosophy was their affair, and, if anything should happen in this, they did not wish to be absent.

What did they understand of the “science” that Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden was to establish, whereby theosophy would be “proven”? To anthroposophy they conceded nothing.

They understood by this term the atomistic bases of natural scientific theorizing. The phenomena of nature were “explained” when one conceived the “primal parts” of the world-substance as grouping into atoms and these into molecules. A substance was there by reason of the fact that it represented a certain structure of atoms in molecules.

This mode of thought was supposed to be figurative. Complicated molecules were constructed which were also to be the basis for spiritual effects. Chemical processes were supposed to be the results of processes within the molecular structure; for spiritual processes something similar must be found.

For me this atomic theory, in the significance given to it in natural science, was something quite impossible even within that science; to wish to carry this over into the spiritual seemed to me a confusion of thought that one could not even seriously discuss.

In this field there have always been difficulties for my way of establishing anthroposophy. People have been assured from certain sides for a long time that materialism was overcome. To those who incline to this view, anthroposophy seems to be attacking windmills when it discusses materialism in science. To me, on the contrary, it was always clear that what people call a way of overcoming materialism is just the way unconsciously to maintain it.

It was never a matter of moment to me that atoms should be conceived either in a purely mechanical or other activity in connection with processes in matter. What was important to me was that the thoughtful consideration of the atom – the smallest image of the world – should go forward and seek for an issue into the organic, into the spiritual. I saw the necessity of proceeding from the whole. Atoms, or atomic structure, can only be the results of spiritual action or organic action. From the perceived primal phenomena, and not from an intellectual construction, would I take the way leading out into the spirit of Goethe's view of nature. Profoundly impressive to me was the meaning of Goethe's words that the factual is in itself theoretical, and that one should seek for nothing behind this.

But this demands that one must receive in the presence of nature that which the senses give, and must employ thought solely in order to go past the complicated derivative phenomena (appearances), which cannot be surveyed, and arrive at the simple, the primal phenomena. Then it will be noted that in nature one has to do with colour and other sense-qualities within which spirit is actually at work; but one does not arrive at an atomic world behind the sense-world.

That in this direction progress has occurred in the conception of nature the anthroposophic mode of thinking cannot admit. What appears in such views as those of Mach, or what has recently appeared in this sphere, is really the beginning of an abandonment of the atomic and molecular constructions; yet all this shows that this construction is so deeply rooted in the mode of thought that abandoning it means losing all reality. Mach has spoken now of concepts only as if they were economical generalizations of sense-perceptions, not something which lives in a spiritual reality; and it is the same with recent writers.

Therefore what now appears as a battle within theoretical materialism is no less remote from the spiritual being in which anthroposophy lives than from the materialism of the last third of the nineteenth century. What has been brought forward, therefore, by anthroposophy against the customary thinking of the physical sciences holds good to-day, not in lesser but in greater measure.

The setting forth of these things may appear to be theoretical obtrusions in this story of my life. To me they are not; for what is contained in these analyses was for me an experience, the strongest sort of experience, far more significant even than what came to me from without.

Immediately upon the foundation of the German section of the Theosophical Society, it seemed to me a matter of necessity to have a publication of our own. So Marie von Sievers and I established the monthly *Luzifer*. The name was naturally in no way associated at that time with the spiritual Power whom I later designated as *Lucifer*, the opposite of Ahriman. The content of anthroposophy had not then been developed to such an extent that these Powers could have been discussed. The name was intended to signify only "The Light-bearer."

Although it was at first my intention to work in harmony with the leadership of the Theosophical Society, yet from the beginning I had the feeling that something must originate in anthroposophy which evolves out of its own germ without making itself in any way dependent upon what theosophy causes to be taught. This I could accomplish only by means of such a publication. And what anthroposophy is to-day has really grown out of what I then wrote in that monthly.

It was thus that the German section was established under the patronage and in the presence of Mrs. Besant. At that time Mrs. Besant delivered a lecture in Berlin on the goal and the principles of theosophy. Somewhat later we requested her to deliver Lectures in a number of German cities. Such was the case in Hamburg, Berlin, Weimar, Munich, Stuttgart, Cologne. In spite of all this – and not by reason of any measures taken by me, but because of the inner necessities of the thing – theosophy failed, and anthroposophy went through an evolution determined by inner requirements.

Marie von Sievers made all this possible, not only because she made material sacrifices according to her ability, but because she devoted her entire effort to anthroposophy. At first we had to work under conditions truly the most primitive. I wrote the greater part of *Luzifer*. Marie von Sievers carried on the correspondence. When an issue was ready, we ourselves attended to the wrapping, addressing, stamping, and personally carried the copies to the post office in a laundry basket.

Very soon *Luzifer* had so far increased its circulation that a Herr Rappaport, of Vienna, who published a journal called *Gnosis*, made an agreement with me to combine this with mine into a single publication. Then *Luzifer* appeared under the title *Luzifer-Gnosis*. For a long time also Herr Rappaport had a share in the undertaking.

Luzifer-Gnosis made the most satisfactory progress. The publication increased its circulation in a highly satisfactory fashion. Numbers which had been exhausted had to be printed a second time. Nor did it “fail.” But the spread of anthroposophy in a relatively short time took such a form that I was called upon to deliver lectures in many cities. From the single lectures there grew in many cases cycles of lectures. At first I tried to maintain the editorship of *Luzifer-Gnosis* along with this lecturing; but the numbers could not be issued any longer at the right time – often coming out months later. And so there came about the remarkable fact that a periodical which was gaining new subscribers with every number could no longer be published, solely because of the overburdening of the editor.

In *Lucifer-Gnosis* I was able for the first time to publish what became the foundation of anthroposophic work. There first appeared what I had to say about the strivings that the human mind must make in order to attain to its own perceptual grasp upon spiritual knowledge. *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten*⁽¹⁾? came out in serial form from number to number. In the same way was the basis laid for anthroposophic cosmology in serial articles entitled *Aus der Akasha-Chronik*⁽²⁾.

It was from what was thus given, and not from anything borrowed from the Theosophical Movement, that the Anthroposophical Movement had its growth. If I gave any attention

to the teachings carried on in the Society when I composed my own writings on spiritual knowledge, it was only for the purpose of correcting by a contrasting statement one thing or another in those teachings which I considered erroneous.

In this connection I must mention something which is constantly brought forward by our opponents, wrapped in a fog of misunderstandings. I need say nothing whatever about this on any inner ground, for it has had no influence whatever on my evolution or on my public activities. As regards all that I have to describe here the matter has remained a purely “private” affair. I refer to my forming “esoteric schools” within the Theosophical Society.

The “esoteric schools” date back to H. P. Blavatsky.

She had created for a small inner circle of the Society a place in which she gave out what she did not wish to say to the Society in general. She, like others who know the spiritual world, did not consider it possible to impart to the generality of persons certain profound teachings.

All this is bound up with the way in which H. P. Blavatsky came to give her teachings. There has always been a tradition in regard to such teachings which goes back to the ancient mysteries. This tradition was cherished in all sorts of societies, which took strict care to prevent any teaching from permeating outside each society.

But, for some reason or other, it was considered proper to impart such teaching to H. P. Blavatsky. She then united what she had thus received with revelations which came to her personally from within. For she was a human personality in whom, by reason of a remarkable atavism, the spiritual worked as it had once worked in the leaders of the mysteries, in a state of consciousness which – in contrast with the modern state illuminated by the consciousness-soul – was dreamlike in character. Thus, in the human being, “Blavatsky,” was renewed that which in primitive times was kept secret in the mysteries.

For modern men there is an infallible method for deciding what portion of the content of spiritual perception can be imparted to wider circles. This can be done with everything which the investigator can clothe in such ideas as are current both in the consciousness-soul itself and also in appropriate form in acknowledged science.

Such is not the case when the spiritual knowledge does not live in the mind, but in forces lying rather in the subconsciousness. These are not sufficiently independent of the forces active in the body. Therefore the imparting of such teachings drawn from the subconscious may be dangerous; for such teachings can in like manner be taken in only by the subconscious. Thus both teacher and learner are then moving in a region where that which is wholesome for man and that which is harmful must be handled with the utmost care.

All this, therefore, does not concern anthroposophy, because this lifts all its teachings entirely above the subconscious.

The inner circle of Blavatsky continued to live in the “esoteric schools.” I had set up my anthroposophic activity within the Theosophical Society. I had therefore to be informed as to all that occurred in the latter. For the sake of this information, and also because I considered a smaller circle necessary for those advanced in anthroposophical spiritual knowledge, I caused myself to be admitted as a member into the “esoteric school.” My smaller circle was, of course, to have a different meaning from this school. It was to represent a higher participation, a higher class, for those who had absorbed enough of the elementary knowledge of anthroposophy. Now I intended everywhere to link up with what was already in existence, with what history had already provided. Just as I did this in regard to the Theosophical Society, I wished to do likewise in reference to the esoteric school. For this reason my “more restricted circle” arose at first in connection with this school. But the connection consisted solely in the plan and not in that which I imparted from the spiritual world. So in the first years I selected as my more restricted circle a section of the esoteric school of Mrs. Besant. Inwardly it was not by any means whatever the same as this. And in 1907, when Mrs. Besant was with us at the theosophical congress in Munich, even the external connection came to an end according to an agreement between Mrs. Besant and myself.

That I could have learned anything special in the esoteric school of Mrs. Besant is beyond the bounds of possibility, since from the beginning I never participated in the exercises of this school except in a few instances in which my participation was for the sole purpose of informing myself as to what went on there.

There was at that time no other real content in the school except that which was derived from H. P. Blavatsky and which was already in print. In addition to these printed exercises, Mrs. Besant gave all sorts of Indian exercises for progress in knowledge, to which I was opposed.

Until 1907, then, my more restricted circle was connected, as to its plan, with that which Mrs. Besant fostered as such a circle. But to make of these facts what has been made of them by opponents is wholly unjustifiable. Even the absurd idea that I was introduced to spiritual knowledge entirely by the esoteric school of Mrs. Besant has been asserted.

In 1903 Marie von Sievers and I again took part in the theosophical congress in London. Colonel Olcott, president of the Theosophical Society, was also present, having come from India. A lovable personality, as to whom, however, it was easy to see how he could become the partner of Blavatsky in the founding, planning, and guiding of the Theosophical Society. For within a brief time the Society had in an external sense become a large body possessing an impressive organization.

Marie von Sievers and I came closer to Mrs. Besant by reason of the fact that she lived with Mrs. Bright in London and we also were invited for our second London visit to this lovable home. Mrs. Bright and her daughter, Miss Esther Bright, constituted the family;

persons who were like an embodiment of loveliness. I look back with inner joy upon the time I was privileged to spend in this home. The Brights were loyal friends of Mrs. Besant. Their endeavour was to knit a closer tie between us and the latter. Since it was then impossible that I should stand with Mrs. Besant in certain things – of which some have already been mentioned here – this gave pain to the Brights, who were bound with bands of steel – utterly uncritical they were – to the leader of the Theosophical Society.

Mrs. Besant was an interesting person to me because of certain of her characteristics. I observed that she had a certain right to speak from her own inner experiences of the spiritual world. The inner entrance of soul into the spiritual world she did possess. Only this was later stifled by certain external objectives that she set herself.

To me a person who could speak of the spirit from the spirit was necessarily interesting. But, on the other hand, I was strongly of the opinion that in our age the insight into the spiritual world must live within the consciousness-soul.

I looked into an ancient spiritual knowledge of humanity. It was dreamlike in character. Men saw in pictures through which the spiritual world revealed itself. But these pictures were not evolved by the will-to-knowledge in full clarity of mind. They appeared in the soul, given to it like dreams from the cosmos. This ancient spiritual knowledge came to an end in the Middle Ages. Man came into possession of the consciousness-soul. He no longer had dream-knowledge. He drew ideas in full clarity of mind by his will-to-knowledge into the soul. This capacity first became a living reality in the sense-world. It reached its climax as sense-knowledge in natural science.

The present task of spirit-knowledge is to carry the experience of ideas in full clarity of mind into the spiritual world by means of the will-to-knowledge. The knower then has a content of mind which is experienced like that of mathematics. One thinks like a mathematician; but one does not think in numbers or in geometrical figures. One thinks in pictures of the spiritual world. In contrast to the ancient waking dream knowledge of the spirit, it is the fully conscious standing within the spiritual world.

Within the Theosophical Society one could gain no true relationship to this new knowledge of the spirit. One became suspicious as soon as full consciousness sought to enter the spiritual world. One knew a full consciousness solely for the sense-world. There was no true feeling for the evolving of this to the point of experiencing the spirit. The process was only to the point of a return to the ancient dream consciousness with the suppression of full consciousness. And this turning back was true of Mrs. Besant also. She has scarcely any capacity for grasping the modern form of knowledge of the spirit. But what she said of the world of spirit was, nevertheless, from that world. So she was to me an interesting person.

Since among the other leaders of the Society also there was present this opposition to fully conscious knowledge of the spirit, my mind could never feel at home in the Society as regards the spiritual. Socially I enjoyed being in these circles; but their temper of mind in reference to the spiritual remained alien to me.

For this reason I was also hindered from founding my lectures upon my own experience of the spirit. I delivered lectures which anyone could have delivered even though he might have no perception of spirit. This perception found expression in the lectures which I delivered, not at the meetings of branches of the Society, but before those which grew out of what Marie von Sievers and I arranged from Berlin.

Then arose the Berlin, Munich, and Stuttgart work. Other places joined. Later the content of the Theosophical Society gradually disappeared; and there came into existence that which was congenial to the inner force living in anthroposophy.

While carrying out the plans together with Marie von Sievers, for the external activities, I elaborated the results of my spiritual perception. On the one hand I had, of course, a fully developed standing – within the spiritual world; but I had in about 1902 – and in the succeeding years also as regards many things – “imagination, inspirations, and intuitions.” These gradually shaped themselves into what I then gave out publicly in my writings.

Through the activity developed by Marie von Sievers there came about from a small beginning the philosophical anthroposophical publication business. A small pamphlet based upon notes of a lecture I delivered before the Berlin Free Higher Institute to which I have referred was the first matter thus published. The necessity of getting possession of my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* – which could no longer be distributed by the former publisher – and of attending personally to its distribution gave the second task. We bought the remaining copies and the publisher's rights for this book.

All this was not easy for us. For we were without any considerable means. But the work progressed, for the very reason that it could not rely upon anything external but solely upon inner spiritual circumstances.

Notes:

1. *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*. The content of this book appeared in English at first in two volumes: *The Way of Initiation*, and *Initiation and Its Results*.
2. From the Akashic Record.

The Story of My Life

XXXIII

MY first work of lecturing within the circles which grew out of the Theosophical Movement had to be planned according to the temper of mind of the groups. Theosophical literature had been read there, and people were used to certain forms of

expression. I had to retain these if I wished to be understood. But with the lapse of time and the progress of the work I was able gradually to pursue my own course, even in the forms of expression used.

For this reason, in the reports of lectures belonging to the first years of the anthroposophical activity, there is spread before one a true inner and spiritual picture of the path by which I moved in order to extend the knowledge of the spirit, stage by stage, so that from what lay close at hand the remote might be grasped; but one must also take this path truly according to its inwardness.

The years, approximately, from 1901 to 1907 or 1908 were a time in which I stood with all the forces of my soul under the impression of the facts and Beings of the spiritual world coming close to me. Out of the experience of the spiritual world in general there grew the special sorts of knowledge. One experiences very much while composing such a book as *Theosophy*. At every step my endeavour was to remain always in touch with scientific knowledge.

With the expansion and deepening of spiritual experience, this endeavour after such a contact takes on special forms. My *Theosophy* seems to fall into an entirely different tone at the moment when I pass from the description of the human being to a setting forth of the “Soul-World” and the “Spirit-Land.”

While describing the human being I proceed from the results of physical science. I seek so to deepen anthropology that the human organism may appear in its differentiation. Then one can see in this how, according to its several kinds of organization, it is in different ways bound up with that penetrating it from the beings of the spheres of soul and spirit. One finds the vital activity in one form of organization; then the point of action of the etheric body becomes visible. One finds the organs of feeling (*Empfindung*) and of perception (*Wahrnehmung*); then the astral body is indicated through the physical organization. Before my spiritual perception there stood spiritually these members of man's being: etheric body, astral body, ego, etc. In setting these forth I sought to connect them with the results of physical science. Very difficult for one who wishes to remain scientific is the setting forth of the repeated earthly lives and of the destinies which are thereby determined. If one does not wish at this point to speak merely from spiritual perception, one must resort to ideas which result, to be sure, from a fine observation of the sense world, but which men fail to grasp. To such a finer manner of observation man shows himself to be, in organization and evolution, different from the animal kingdom. And if one observes this difference, life itself gives rise to the idea of repeated earthly lives; but people do not actually observe this. So such ideas seem not to be taken from life but to be conceived arbitrarily or simply taken out of more ancient world-conceptions.

I faced these difficulties in full consciousness. I battled with them. And anyone who will take the trouble to review the successive editions of my *Theosophy* and see how I recast again and again the chapter on repeated earthly lives, for the very purpose of attaching

the truths of this to those ideas which are taken from observation of the sense-world, will find what pains I took to adjust myself rightly to the recognized scientific methods.

Even more difficult from this point of view were the chapters on the “Soul-World” and the “Spirit-Land.” To one who has read the preceding discussions only to take cognizance of the content, the truths set forth in these chapters will seem to be mere assertions arbitrarily uttered. But it is different for one whose experience of ideas has received an access of strength from the reading of that which is linked up with the observation of the sense-world. To him the ideas have released themselves from their bondage to sense and have taken on an independent inner life. Now, therefore, the succeeding process of soul can become an inner possession. He becomes aware of the life of released ideas. These weave and work in his soul. He experiences them as he experiences through the senses colours, tones, and sensations of warmth. And as the world of nature is given in colours, tones, etc., so is the world of spirit given to him in the experienced ideas. Of course, any one who reads the first discussions of my *Theosophy* without the impression of inner experience, so that he does not become aware of a metamorphosis of his previous ideal experience, – whoever, in spite of having read the preceding, goes on to the succeeding discussions as if he had begun to read the book at the chapter “The Soul-World” – such a person must inevitably reject it. To him the truths appear to be assertions set up without proof. But an anthroposophic book is designed to be taken up in inner experience. Then by stages a form of understanding comes about. This may be very weak. But it may – and should – be there. The further deepening confirmation through exercises described in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment* is simply a deepening confirmation. For progress on the spiritual road this is necessary; but a rightly understood anthroposophic book should be an awakener of the spiritual experience in the reader, not a certain quantity of information imparted. The reading of it should not be a mere reading; it should be an experiencing with inner commotions, tensions, and releasings.

I am aware how far removed is that which I have given in books from sufficing by its own forces to bring about such an experience in the mind of the reader. But I know also that in every page my inner endeavour has been to reach the utmost possible in this direction. I do not, as regards style, so describe that my subjective feelings can be detected in the sentences. In writing, I subdue to a dry, mathematical style what has come from warm and profound experience. But only such a style can be an awakener; for the reader must cause warmth and experience to awaken in himself. He cannot simply allow these to flow into him from the one setting forth the truth, while the clarity of his own mind remains obscured.

The Story of My Life

IN the Theosophical Society artistic interests were scarcely fostered at all. From a certain point of view this situation was at that time quite intelligible, but it ought not to have continued if the true sense for the spiritual was to be nurtured. The members of such a society centre all their interests at first upon the reality of the spiritual life. In the sense-world man appears to them only in his transitory existence severed from the spiritual. Art seems to them to have its activity within this severed existence. It seems, therefore, to be apart from the spiritual reality for which they seek. Because this was so in the Theosophical Society, artists did not feel at home there.

To Marie von Sievers and to me it was important to make the artistic also alive within the Society. Spiritual knowledge as an experience takes hold, indeed, of the whole human existence. All the forces of the soul are stimulated. In formative fantasy there shines the light of the experience of spirit when this experience is present.

But here there enters something which creates hindrances. The artist's temperament feels a certain misgiving in regard to this shining in of the spiritual world in fantasy. He desires unconsciousness in regard to the dominance of the spiritual world in the soul. He is entirely right if what we are concerned with is the "stimulation" of fantasy by means of that element of clear-consciousness which has been dominant in the life of culture since the beginning of the age of consciousness. This "stimulating" by the intellectual in man has a deadly effect upon art.

But just the opposite occurs when spiritual content which is actually perceived shines through fantasy. It is here that all the formative force in man arises which has ever led to art.

Marie von Sievers had her place in the art of word-shaping; to dramatic representation she had the most beautiful relationship. Here, then, was a sphere of art for anthroposophy in which the fruitfulness of spiritual perception for art might be tested.

The "word" is the product of two aspects of the experience which may come from the evolution of the consciousness soul. It serves for mutual understanding in social life, and it serves for imparting that which is logically and intellectually known. On both these sides the "word" loses its own value. It must fit the "sense" which it is to express. It must allow the fact to be forgotten that in the tone, in the sound, in the formation of the sound, there lies a reality. Beauty, the shining of the vowels, the characteristics of the consonants are lost from speech. The vowels become soulless, the consonants void of spirit. And so speech leaves entirely the sphere in which it originates – the sphere of the spiritual. It becomes the servant of intellectual knowledge and of the social life which shuns the spiritual. Thus it is snatched wholly out of the sphere of art.

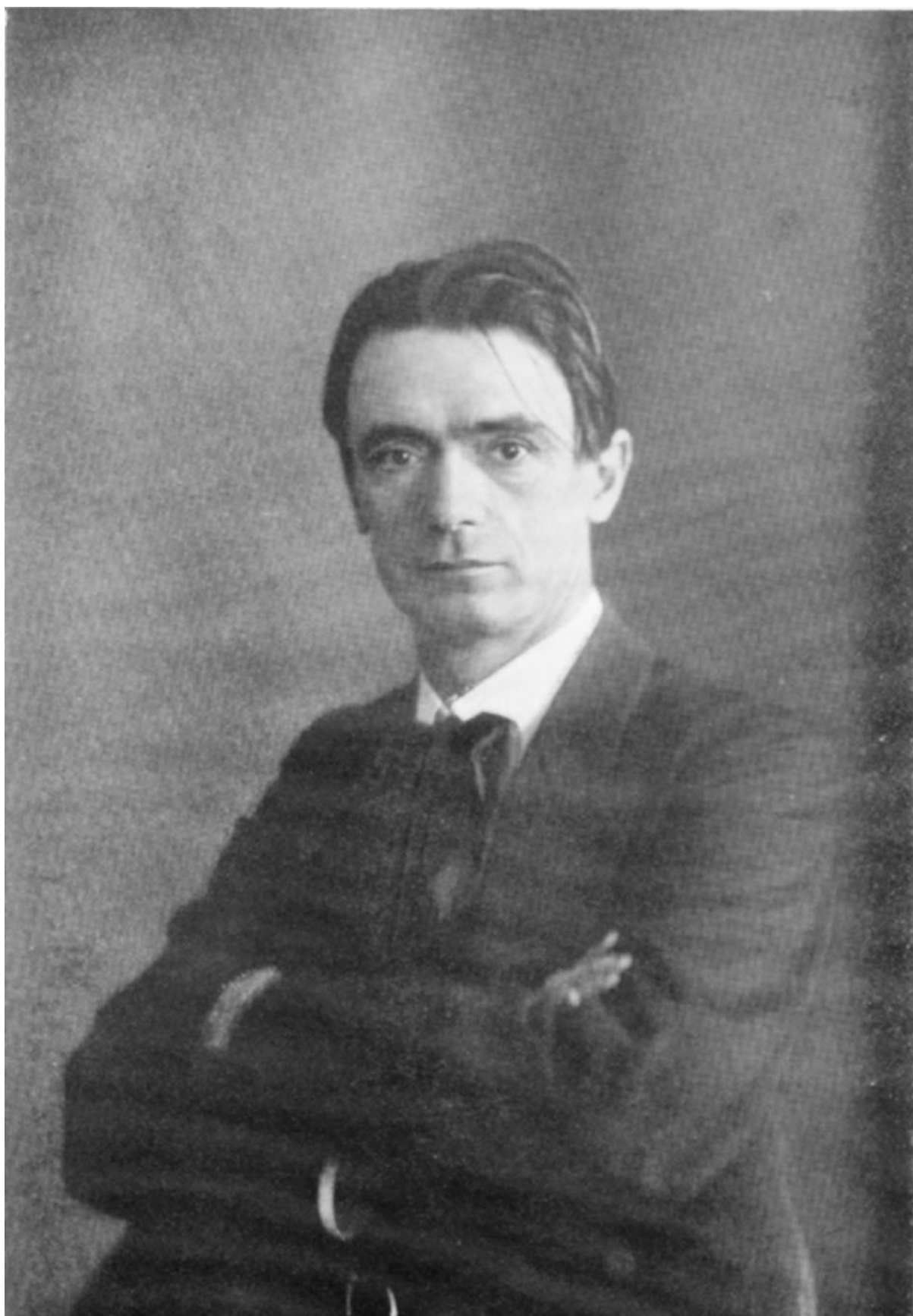
True spiritual perception falls as if wholly from instinct into the "experience of the word." It becomes experience in the soul-representing intoning of the vowels and the spiritually empowered colours of the consonants. It attains to an understanding of the secret of the evolution of speech. This secret consists in the fact that divine spiritual

beings could once speak to the human soul by means of the word, whereas now the word serves only to make oneself understood in the physical word.

An enthusiasm kindled by this insight is required to lead the word again into its sphere. Marie von Sievers developed this enthusiasm. So her personality brought to the Anthroposophical Movement the possibility of fostering artistically the word and word-shaping. The cultivation of the art of recitation and declamation grew to be an activity by means of which to impart truth from the spiritual world – an activity which forms a part receiving more and more consideration in the ceremonies which found a place within the Anthroposophical Society.

The recitations of Marie von Sievers at these ceremonies were the initial point for the entrance of the artistic into the Anthroposophical Society; for a direct line leads from these recitations to the dramatic representations which then took place in Munich along with the course of lectures on anthroposophy.

By reason of the fact that we were able to unfold art along with spiritual knowledge, we grew more and more into the truth of the modern experience of the spirit. Art has indeed grown out of the primeval dreamlike experience of spirit. At the time in human evolution when the experience of spirit receded, art had to seek a way for itself; it must again find itself united with this experience when this enters in a new form into the evolution of culture.



The Story of My Life

XXXV

THE beginning of my anthroposophic activity belongs to a time when there was a sense of dissatisfaction among many persons with the tendencies in knowledge characterizing the immediately preceding period. There was a desire to find a way out of that realm of being in which men were shut up by reason of the fact that only what was grasped by means of mechanistic ideas was allowed to pass as “sure” knowledge. These endeavours of many contemporaries toward a form of spiritual knowledge came very close to me. Biologists such as Oskar Hertwig – who began as a student under Haeckel but had then abandoned Darwinism because, according to his opinion, the impulse which this theory recognized could give no explanation of the organic process of becoming – were to me personalities in whom was revealed the longing of the age for knowledge.

But I felt that a heavy burden rested upon all this longing. This burden was the ripe fruit of the belief that only what can be investigated in the realm of the senses by means of mass, number, and weight can be recognized as knowledge. Man dared not unfold an active inner process of thought in order thereby to live in closer contact with reality as one experiences reality through the senses. Thus the situation continued to be such that men said: “With the means which have been used hitherto in interpreting even the higher forms of reality, such as the organic, we can advance no further.” But when men ought to have reached something positive, when they ought to have said what is at work in the activities of life, they moved about in indeterminate ideas.

In those who were attempting to escape from the mechanistic explanation of the world there was chiefly lacking the courage to admit that whoever wished to overcome that mechanism must also overcome the habits of thought which have led to it. Such a confession as the time needed would not come forth. This should have been the confession: – With one's orientation towards the senses one penetrates into what is mechanistic. In the second half of the century men had accustomed themselves to this orientation. Now that the mechanistic leaves men unsatisfied they should not desire to penetrate into the higher realms with the same orientation. The senses in man are self-unfolding, but the unfolding which the senses undergo will never enable one to perceive anything save the mechanistic. If one wishes to know more, then out of oneself one must give to the deeper-lying forces of knowledge a form which nature gives to the forces of the senses. The forces of knowledge for the mechanistic are in themselves awake; those for the higher forms of reality must be awakened. This self-confession on the part of the endeavour to attain knowledge appeared to me to be a necessity of the time.

I felt happy when I became aware of spokesmen for this. So there lives in beautiful memory within me a visit in Jena. I had to deliver lectures in Weimar on

anthroposophical themes. There was also arranged a lecture to a smaller group in Jena. After this I happened to be with a very little group. There was a desire to discuss what theosophy had to say. In this group was Max Scheler, who was at that time a *dozent*⁽¹⁾ in philosophy in Jena. In a verbal statement of what he had felt in my lecture he soon began our discussion; and I felt at once the profound characteristic which dominated in his striving after knowledge. It was with inner tolerance that he met my view, – the very tolerance which is necessary for one who desires really to know.

We discussed the confirmation of spiritual knowledge on the basis of theories of cognition. We talked of the problem as to how the penetration into spiritual reality on the one side must be established on foundations of the theory of cognition, just as that into the sense-world must be on the other side.

Scheler's mode of thought made an agreeable impression upon me. Even till the present I have followed his way of knowledge with the deepest interest. Inner satisfaction was always my feeling when I could again meet – very seldom, unfortunately – the man who at that time became so congenial to me.

Such experiences were important for me. Every time that these occurred there was an inner need to test anew the certainty of my own way of knowledge. And in these constantly recurring tests the forces were evolved which then embraced wider and wider spheres of spiritual existence. Two results had now come from my anthroposophic work: first my books published to the whole world, and secondly a great number of lectures which were at first to be considered as privately printed and to be sold only to members of the Theosophical (later the Anthroposophical) Society. These were really reports on the lectures more or less well made and which I, for lack of time, could not correct. It would have pleased me best if spoken words had remained spoken words. But the members wished the printed copies. So this came about. If I had then had time to correct the reports, the restriction “for members only” would not have been necessary. For more than a year now, this restriction has been allowed to lapse.

At this point in my life story it is necessary to say, first of all, how the two things – my published books and this privately printed matter – combine into that which I elaborated as anthroposophy.

Whoever wishes to trace my inner struggle and labour to set anthroposophy before the consciousness of the present age must do this on the basis of the writings published for general circulation. In these I explained myself in connection with all which is present in the striving of this age for knowledge. Here there was given what more and more took form for me in “spiritual perception,” what became the structure of anthroposophy – in a form incomplete, to be sure, from many points of view.

Together with this purpose, however, of building up anthroposophy and thereby serving only that which results when one has information from the world of spirit to give to the modern culture world, there now appeared the other demand – to face fully whatever was manifested in the membership as the need of their souls or their longing for the spirit.

Most of all was there a strong inclination to hear the Gospels and the biblical writings generally set forth in that which had appeared as the anthroposophic light. Persons wished to attend courses of lectures on these revelations given to mankind.

While internal courses of lectures were held in the sense then required, something else arose in consequence. Only members attended these courses. These were acquainted with the elementary information coming from anthroposophy. It was possible to speak to them as to persons advanced in the realm of anthroposophy. The manner of these internal lectures was such as it would not have been in writings intended wholly for the public. In internal groups I dared to speak about things in a manner which I should have been obliged to shape quite differently for a public presentation if from the first these things had been designed for such an audience.

Thus in the two things, the public and the private writings, there was really something derived from two different bases. All the public writings are the result of what struggled and laboured within me; in the privately printed matter the Society itself shares in the struggle and labour. I hear of the strivings in the soul-life of the membership, and through my vital living within what I thus hear the bearing of the course is determined. Nothing has ever been said which was not to the utmost degree an actual result of the developing anthroposophy. There can be no discussion of any concession whatever to preconceptions or to previous experiences of the members. Whoever reads this privately printed material can take it in the fullest sense as that which anthroposophy has to say. Therefore it was possible without hesitation – when accusations became too insistent in this direction – to depart from the plan of circulating this printed matter among the members alone. Only it will be necessary to remember there are errors in the lectures which I did not revise.

The right to an opinion in regard to the content of such privately printed material can naturally be admitted only in the case of one who knows what is taken as the pre-requisite basis of this judgment. For most of those pamphlets such a pre-requisite will be at least the anthroposophic knowledge of man and of the cosmos, in so far as its nature is set forth in anthroposophy, and of that which is found in this information as “anthroposophic history” as it is taken from the spiritual world.

Notes:

1. Scholar.

The Story of My Life

XXXVI

A CERTAIN institution which arose within the Anthroposophical Society in such a way that there was never any thought of the public in connection with it does not really belong

to the chapters of this exposition. Only it has to be described for the reason that attacks made upon me have been based upon material derived from this.

Some years after the beginning of the activity in the Theosophical Society, Marie von Sievers and I were entrusted by certain persons with the leadership of a society similar to others which have been maintained in preservation of the ancient symbolism and cultural ceremonies that embody the “ancient wisdom.” I never thought in the remotest degree of working in the spirit of such a society. Everything anthroposophic should and must spring from its own sources of knowledge and truth. There should not be the slightest deviation from this standard. But I had always felt a respect for what was historically given. In this lives the spirit which evolves in the human process of becoming. And so wherever possible I also favoured the linking of the newly given to the historically existent. I therefore took the diploma of the society referred to, which belonged to the stream represented by Yarker. It had the forms of Free Masonry of the so-called high degrees; but I took nothing else – absolutely nothing – from this society except the merely formal authorization, in historic succession, to direct a symbolic-cultural activity.

Everything set forth in content in the “ceremonies” which were employed in the institution were without historic dependence upon any tradition whatever. In the formal granting of the diploma only that was fostered which resulted in the symbolizing of anthroposophic knowledge.

And our purpose in this matter was to meet the needs of the members. In elaborating the ideas in which the knowledge of spirit is given in a veiled form, the effort is made to arrive at something which speaks directly to perception, to the heart; and such purposes I wished to serve. If the invitation from the society in question had not come to me, I should have undertaken the direction of a symbolic-cultural activity without any historic connection.

But this did not create a “secret society.” Whoever entered into this practice was told in the clearest possible manner that he was not dealing with any “order,” but that as participant in ceremonial forms he would experience a sort of visualization, demonstration of spiritual knowledge. If anything took on the forms in which the members of traditional orders had been inducted or promoted to higher degrees, this did not signify that such an order was being founded but only that the spiritual ascent in the soul's experience was rendered visible to the senses in pictures.

The fact that this had nothing to do with the activity of any existing order or the mediation of things which are mediated in such orders is proved by the fact that members of the most various types of orders participated in the ceremonial exercises which I conducted and found in these something quite different from what existed in their own orders.

Once a person who had participated with us for the first time in a ceremonial came to me immediately afterward. This person had reached a very high degree in an order. Under the influence of the experience now shared, the wish had arisen to hand over to me the

insignia of the order. The feeling was that, after having once experienced real spiritual content, one could no longer share in that which remained fixed in mere formalism. I put the matter right; for anthroposophy dare not draw any person out of the association in which he stands. It ought to add something to that association and take away nothing from it. So this person remained in the order, yet continued to participate further with us in the symbolic exercises.

It is only too easily understood that, when such an institution as the one here described becomes known, misunderstandings arise. There are, indeed, many persons to whom the externality of belonging to something seems more important than the content which is given to them. And so even many of the participants spoke of the thing as if they belonged to an “order.” They did not understand how to make the distinction that things were demonstrated among us without the environment of an order which otherwise are given only within the environment of an order.

Even in this sphere we broke with the ancient traditions. Our work was carried on as work must be carried on if one investigates in spiritual-content in an original manner according to the requirements of full clarity in the mind's experience. The fact that the starting-point for all sorts of slanders was found in certain attestations which Marie von Sievers and I signed in linking up with the historic Yarker institution means that, in order to concoct such slanders, people treated the absurd with the grimace of the serious. Our signatures were given as a “form.” The customary thing was thus preserved. And while we were giving our signatures, I said as clearly as possible: “This is all a formality, and the practice which I shall institute will take over nothing from the Yarker practice.”

It is obviously easy to make the observation afterwards that it would have been far more “discreet” not to link up with practices which could later be used by slanderers. But I would remark with all positiveness that, at the period of my life here under consideration, I was still one of those who assume uprightness, and not crooked ways, in the people with whom they have to do. Even spiritual perception did not alter at all this faith in men. This must not be misused for the purpose of investigating the intentions of one's fellow-men when this investigation is not desired by the man in question himself. In other cases the investigation of the inner nature of other souls remains a thing forbidden to the knower of the spirit; just as the unauthorized opening of a letter is something forbidden. And so one is related to men with whom one has to do in the same way as is any other person who has no knowledge of the spirit. But there is just this alternative – either to assume that others are straight-forward in their intentions until one has experienced the opposite, or else to be filled with sorrow as one views the entire world. A social co-operation with men is impossible for the latter mood, for such co-operation can be based only upon trust and not upon distrust.

This practice which gave in a cult-symbolism a content which is spiritual was a good thing for many who participated in the Anthroposophical Society. Since in this, as in every sphere of anthroposophical work, everything was excluded which lies outside the region of clear consciousness, so there could be no thought of unconfirmed magic, or suggestive influences, and the like. But the members obtained that which, on the one

hand, spoke to their ideal conceptions and yet in such a way that the heart could accompany this in direct perception. For many this was something which also guided them again into the better shaping of their ideas. With the beginning of the War it ceased to be possible to continue the carrying on of such practices. In spite of the fact that there was nothing of the nature of a secret society in this, it would have been taken for such. And so this symbolic-cultural section of the anthroposophical movement came to an end in the middle of 1914.

The fact that persons who had taken part in this practice – absolutely unobjectionable to anyone who looked upon it with a good will and a sense for truth – became slanderous accusers is an instance of that abnormality in human conduct which arises when men who are not inwardly genuine share in movements whose content is genuinely spiritual. They expect things corresponding with their trivial soul life; and, since they naturally do not find such things, they turn against the very practice to which they previously turned – though with unconscious insincerity.

Such a society as the Anthroposophical could not be formed otherwise than according to the soul-needs of its members. It could not lay down an abstract programme which required that in the Anthroposophical Society this and that should be done. The programme had to be elaborated out of reality. But this very reality is the soul-need of its members. Anthroposophy as a content of life was formed out of its own sources. It had appeared before the world as a spiritual creation, and many who were drawn to it by an inner attraction tried to work together with others. Thus it came about that the Society was the formation of persons of whom some sought the religious, others rather the scientific, and others the artistic. And it was necessary that what was sought should be found.

Because of this working out from the reality of the needs of the members, the private printed matter must be judged differently from that given to the public from the beginning. The content of this printed matter was intended as oral, not printed, information. The subjects discussed were determined by the soul-needs of the members as these needs appeared with the passage of time.

What is contained in the published writings is adapted to the furtherance of anthroposophy as such; in the manner in which the private printed matter evolved, the configuration of soul of the whole Society has co-operated.

The Story of My Life

XXXVII

WHILE anthroposophic knowledge was brought into the Society in the way that results in part from the privately printed matter, Marie von Sievers and I through our united

efforts fostered the artistic element especially, which was indeed destined by fate to become a life-giving part of the Anthroposophical Movement.

On one side there was the element of recitation, looking toward dramatic art, and constituting the objective of the work that must be done if the Anthroposophical Movement was to receive the right content.

On the other hand, I had the opportunity, during the journeys that had to be made on behalf of anthroposophy, to go more deeply into the evolution of architecture, the plastic arts, and painting.

In various passages of this life-story I have spoken of the importance of art to a person who enters in experience into the spiritual world.

But up to the time of my anthroposophic work I had been able to study most of the works of human art only in copies. Of the originals only those in Vienna, Berlin, and a few other places in Germany had been accessible to me.

When the journeys on behalf of anthroposophy were made, together with Marie von Sievers, I came face to face with the treasures of the museums throughout the whole of Europe. In this way I pursued an advanced course in the study of art from the beginning of the century and therefore during the fifth decade of my life, and together with this I had a perception of the spiritual evolution of humanity. Everywhere by my side was Marie von Sievers, who, while entering with her fine and full appreciation into all that I was privileged to experience of perception in art and culture, also shared and supplemented all this experience in a beautiful way. She understood how these experiences flowed into all that gave movement to the ideas of anthroposophy; for all the impressions of art which became an experience of my soul penetrated into what I had to make effective in lectures. In the actual seeing of the masterpieces of art there came before our minds the world out of which another configuration of soul speaks from the ancient times to the new age. We were able to submerge our souls in the spirituality of art which still speaks from Cimabue. But we could also plunge through the perception of art into the spiritual battle which Thomas Aquinas waged against Arabianism.

Of special importance for me was the observation of the evolution of architecture. In the silent vision of the shaping of styles there grew in my soul that which I was able to stamp upon the forms of the Goetheanum.

Standing before Leonardo's *Last Supper* in Milan and before the creations of Raphael and Michelangelo in Rome, and the subsequent conversations with Marie von Sievers, must, I think, be felt with gratitude to have been the dispensation of destiny just then when these came before my soul for the first time at a mature age. But I should have to write a volume of considerable size if I should wish to describe even briefly what I experienced in the manner indicated.

Even when the spiritual perception remains in abeyance, one sees very far into the evolution of humanity through the gaze which loses itself in reflection in the *School of Athens* or the *Disputa*. And if one advances from the observation of Cimabue to Giotto and to Raphael, one is in the presence of the gradual dimming of an ancient spiritual perception of humanity down to the modern, more naturalistic. That which came to me through spiritual perception as the law of human evolution appeared in clear revelation before my mind in the process of art.

I had always the deepest satisfaction when I could see how the anthroposophical movement received ever renewed life through this prolonged submergence in the artistic. In order to comprehend the elements of being in the spiritual world and to shape these as ideas, one requires mobility in ideal activity. Filling the mind with the artistic gives this mobility.

And it was necessary constantly to guard the Society against the entrance of all those inner untruths associated with false sentimentality. A spiritual movement is always exposed to these perils. If one gives life to the informative lectures by means of those mobile ideas which one derives from living in the artistic, then the inner untruths derived from sentimentality which remain fixed in the hearers will be expelled. The artistic which is truly charged with experience and emotion, but which strives toward luminous clarity in shaping and in perception, can afford the most effective counterpoise against false sentimentality.

And here I feel that it has been a peculiarly fortunate destiny for the Anthroposophical Society that I received in Marie von Sievers a fellow-worker assigned by destiny who understood fully how to nourish from the depths of her nature this artistic, emotionally charged, but unsentimental element.

A lasting activity was needed against this inwardly untrue sentimental element; for it penetrates again and again into a spiritual movement. It can by no means be simply repulsed or ignored. For persons who at first yield themselves to this element are in many cases none the less seekers in the utmost depths of their souls. But it is at first hard for them to gain a firm relation to the information imparted from the spiritual world. They seek unconsciously in sentimentality a form of deafness. They wish to experience quite special truths, esoteric truths. They develop an impulse to separate themselves on the basis of these truths into sectarian groups.

The important thing is to make the right the sole directive force of the Society, so that those erring on one side or the other may always see again and again how those work who may call themselves the central representatives of the Society because they are its founders. Positive work for the content of anthroposophy, not opposition against outgrowths which appeared – this was what Marie von Sievers and I accepted as the essential thing. Naturally there were exceptional cases when opposition was also necessary.

At first the time up to my Paris cycle of lectures was to me something in the form of a closed evolutionary process within the soul. I delivered these lectures in 1906 during the theosophical congress. Individual participants in the congress had expressed the wish to hear these lectures in connection with the exercises of the congress. I had at that time in Paris made the personal acquaintance of Edouard Schuré, together with Marie von Sievers, who had already corresponded with him for a long time, and who had been engaged in translating his works. He was among my listeners. I had also the joy of having frequently in the audience Mereschkowski and Minsky and other Russian poets.

In this cycle of lectures I gave what I felt to be ripe within me in regard to the leading forms of spiritual knowledge for the human being.

This “feeling for the ripeness” of forms of knowledge is an essential thing in investigating the spiritual world. In order to have this feeling one must have experienced a perception as it rises at first in the mind. At first one feels it as something non-luminous, as lacking sharpness of contour. One must let it sink again into the depths of the soul to “ripen.” Consciousness has not yet gone far enough to grasp the spiritual content of the perception. The soul in its spiritual depths must remain together with this content, undisturbed by consciousness.

In external natural science one does not assert knowledge until one has completed all necessary experiments and observations, and until the requisite calculations are free from bias. In spiritual science is needed no less methodical conscientiousness and disciplined knowledge. Only one goes by somewhat different roads. One must test one's consciousness in its relationship to the truth that is coming to be known. One must be able to “wait” in patience, endurance, and conscientiousness until the consciousness has undergone this testing. It must have grown to be strong enough in its capacity for ideas in a certain sphere for this capacity for concepts to take over the perception with which it has to deal. In the Paris cycle of lectures I brought forward a perception which had required a long process of “ripening” in my mind.

After I had explained how the members of the human being – physical body; etheric body, as mediator of the phenomena of life; and the “bearer of the ego” – are in general related to one another, I imparted the fact that the etheric body of a man is female, and the etheric body of a woman is male. Through this a light was cast within the Anthroposophical Society upon one of the basic questions of existence which just at that time had been much discussed. One need only remember the book of the unfortunate Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter*⁽¹⁾, and the contemporary poetry.

But the question was carried into the depths of the being of man. In his physical body man is bound up with the cosmos quite otherwise than in his etheric body. Through his physical body man stands within the forces of the earth; through his etheric body within the forces of the outer cosmos. The male and female elements were carried into connection with the mysteries of the cosmos.

This knowledge was something belonging to the most profoundly moving inner experiences of my soul; for I felt ever anew how one must approach a spiritual perception by patient waiting and how, when one has experienced the “ripeness of consciousness,” one must lay hold by means of ideas in order to place the perception within the sphere of human knowledge.

Notes:

1. Sex and Character.

The Story of My Life

XXXVIII

IN what is to follow it will be difficult to distinguish between the story of my life and a history of the Anthroposophical Society. And yet I should wish to introduce from the history of the Society only so much as is needed for the narration of the story of my life. This will be considered even in mentioning the names of active members of the Society. I have come too close to the present time to avoid all too easy misunderstandings through the mention of names. In spite of entire good will, many a one who finds some other mentioned and not himself may experience a feeling of bitterness. I shall mention in essential matters only those who, apart from their activity in the Society, had an association with my spiritual life, and not those who have not brought such a connection with them into the Society. In Berlin and Munich there were destined to develop to a certain extent the two opposite poles of anthroposophical activity. There came into anthroposophy, indeed, persons who found neither in the scientific world-conception nor in the traditional sects that spiritual content for which their souls had to seek. In Berlin a branch of the Society and an audience for the public lectures could be formed only of such persons as were opposed to all those philosophies which had come about in opposition to the traditional creeds; for the adherents of philosophies based upon rationalism, intellectualism, etc., considered what anthroposophy had to give as something fantastic, superstitions, etc. An audience and a membership arose which took in anthroposophy without tending in feeling or ideas to anything else than this. What had been given them from other sources did not satisfy them. Consideration had to be given to this temper of mind. And, as this was done, the number of members steadily increased as well as the number of those attending the public lectures. There came about an anthroposophic life which was, to a certain extent, self-enclosed and gave little attention to what else was taking form by way of endeavours to see into the spiritual world. Their hopes rested upon the unfolding of anthroposophic information imparted to them. They expected to go further and further in knowledge of the spiritual world.

It was different in Munich, where at the beginning there was effective in the anthroposophic work the artistic element. In this a world-conception like that of

anthroposophy can be taken up quite otherwise than in rationalism and intellectualism. The artistic image is more spirit-like than the rationalist concept. It is also alive and does not kill the spiritual in the soul as does intellectualism. In Munich those who gave tone to the membership and audience were persons in whom artistic experience was effective in the way indicated.

This condition resulted in the formation of a unified branch of the Society in Berlin from the beginning. The interests of those who sought anthroposophy were of the same kind. In Munich the artistic experiences brought about certain individual needs in different groups, and I lectured to those groups. A sort of compromise among these groups came to be the group formed about Countess Pauline von Kalckreuth and Fräulein Sophie Stinde, the latter of whom died during the war. This group also arranged for my public lectures in Munich. The ever-deepening understanding in this group brought about a very beautiful response to what I had to say. So anthroposophy unfolded within this group in a manner which can truly be designated as very satisfying. Ludwig Deinhard, the old theosophist, the friend of Hübbe-Schleiden, came very early as a very congenial member into this group, and this was worth a great deal.

The centre of another group was Frau von Schewitsch. She was an interesting person, and for this reason it was well that a group formed around her also which was less concerned in going deeply into anthroposophy than in becoming acquainted with it as one of the spiritual currents among those of the period.

At that time also Frau von Schewitsch had given to the public her book *Wie ich mein Selbst fand*⁽¹⁾. It was an unique and strong confession of theosophy. This also made it possible for this woman to become the interesting central figure of the group here described. To me and also to many who formed part of this group, Helene von Schewitsch was a notable part of history. She was the lady for whom Ferdinand Lassalle came to an early end in a duel with a Rumanian. She was afterwards an actress, and on a journey to America she became a friend of H. P. Blavatsky and Olcott. She was a woman of the world whose interests at the time when I made these lectures at her home had been deeply spiritualized. The impressive experiences through which she had passed gave to her appearance and to everything she did an extraordinary weight. Through her, I might say, I could see into the work of Lassalle and his period; through her also many a characteristic of H. P. Blavatsky. What she said bore a subjective colouring, and a manifold and arbitrary form of fantasy; yet, after allowing for this, one could see the truth under many veils, and one was faced by the revelation of an unusual personality.

Other groups at Munich possessed different characteristics. I recall a person whom I met in several of these groups – a Catholic cleric, Müller, who stood apart from the narrow limits of the Church. He was a discriminating student of Jean Paul. He edited a really stimulating periodical, *Renaissance*, through which he fostered a free Catholicism. He took from anthroposophy as much as was interesting to him from his point of view, but remained always sceptical. He raised objections, but always in such an amiable and at the same time elementary fashion that he often brought a delightful humour into the discussions which followed the lectures.

In pointing out these as the opposing characteristics of the anthroposophic work in Berlin and in Munich, I have nothing to say as to the value of the one or the other; here there simply came to view differences among persons which had to be taken into account, both of equal worth – or at least it is futile to judge them from the point of view of their relative values.

The form of the work at Munich brought it about that the theosophical congress of 1907, which was to be set up by the German Section, was held there. These congresses, which had previously been held in London, Amsterdam, and Paris, consisted of sessions in which theosophical problems were dealt with in lectures and discussions. They were planned on the model of the congresses of learned societies. The administrative problems of the Society were also discussed.

In all this very much was changed at Munich. In the great Concert Hall where the ceremonies were to take place, we – the committee of arrangements – provided interior decorations which in form and colour should correspond artistically with the mood that dominated the oral programme. Artistic environment and spiritual activity were to constitute a harmonious unity. I attached the greatest possible value to the avoidance of abstract inartistic symbolism and to giving free expression to artistic feeling.

Into the programme of the congress was introduced an artistic representation. Marie von Sievers had long before translated Schuré's reconstruction of the Eleusinian drama. I planned the speeches for a presentation of this. This play was then introduced into the programme. A connection with the nature of the ancient mysteries – even though in so feeble a form – was thus afforded; but the important thing was that the congress had now an artistic aspect, – an artistic element directed toward the purpose of not leaving the spiritual life henceforth void of art within the Society. Marie von Sievers, who had undertaken the rôle of Demeter, showed already in her presentation the nuances which drama was to reach in the Society. Besides, we had reached a time when the art of declamation and recitation developed by Marie von Sievers by working out from the inner force of the word had arrived at the most varied points from which further fruitful progress could be made in this field.

A great portion of the old members of the Theosophical Society from England, France, and especially from Holland, were inwardly displeased by the innovations offered them at the Munich congress. What it would have been well to understand, but what was clearly grasped at that time by exceedingly few, was the fact that the anthroposophic current had given something of an entirely different bearing from that of the Theosophical Society up to that time. In this inner bearing lay the true reason why the Anthroposophical Society could no longer exist as a part of the Theosophical Society. Most persons, however, place the chief emphasis upon the absurdities which in the course of time have grown up in the Theosophical Society and have led to endless quarreling.

Notes:

1. How I Found My Self.

The Story of My Life

CONCLUSION BY MARIE STEINER

HERE the life-story abruptly ends. On 30th March, 1925 Rudolf Steiner passed away.

His life, consecrated wholly to the sacrificial service of humanity, was requited with unspeakable hostility; his way of knowledge was transformed into a path of thorns. But he walked the whole way, and mastered it for all humanity. He broke through the limits of knowledge; they are no longer there. Before us lies this road of knowledge in the crystal clarity of thoughts of which this book itself constitutes an example. He raised human understanding up to the spirit; permeated this understanding and united it with the spiritual being of the cosmos. In this he achieved the greatest human deed. The greatest deed of the Gods he taught us to understand; the greatest human deed he achieved. How could he escape being hated with all the demonic power of which Hell is capable?

But he repaid with love the misunderstanding brought against him.

He died – a Sufferer, a Leader, an Achiever –
In such a world as trod him under foot
Yet which to raise aloft his strength sufficed.
He lifted men; they cast themselves before him,
They hissed with hate and blocked his forward way.
His work they shattered even as he wrought it.
They raged with venom and with flame;
And now with joy they brand his memory: –
So he is dead who led you into freedom,
To light, to consciousness, to comprehension
Of what is Godlike in a human soul
To your own selves, to Christ.
Was this not criminal, this undertaking?

He did what once Prometheus expiated
What gave to Socrates the poisoned cup –
The pardoning of Barabbas was less vile –
A deed whose expiation is the cross.
He made the future live before you there.
We demons cannot suffer such a thing.
We harry, hunt, pursue who dares such deeds
With all those souls who give themselves to us,
With all those forces which obey our will.
For ours are the turning-points of time

And ours this humanity which lies,
Without their God, in weakness, vice, and error.
We never yield the booty we have won,
But tear to pieces him who dares to touch it.

“He dared – and, daring, he endured his fate –
In love, long suffering, and tolerance
Of weak, incapable humanity
Which ever all his work in peril set,
Which ever wrenched his word' awry,
Which misinterpreted his kind forbearance,
And in their smallness did not know themselves
Because his greatness was beyond their compass.
'Twas thus he bore us – we were out of breath
In following his stride, his very flight
Which ravished us away. 'Twas our weakness
That was the hindrance ever to his flight,
The lead that weighed his footsteps down ...

Now he is free, a helper to those high ones
Who take whatever hath been wrung from earth
As safeguard of their goal. So now they greet
The son of man who his creative power
Unfolded thus to serve the Gods' high will;
Who to the age of hardened understanding
And to the time of dead machinery
Stamped clear the Spirit, called the Spirit forth ...

They would not suffer him.
The earth rolls into shadows.
Behold those forms which now appear in space.
The Leader waits; the heavens part and open;
In joy and reverence stand the rangéd hosts.

But earth is wrapped in grey enshrouding night,
Springing from Powers of the Sun,
Radiant Spirit-powers blessing all Worlds!
For Michael's garment of rays
Ye are predestined by Thought Divine.

He, the Christ-messenger revealeth in you –
Bearing mankind aloft – the sacred Will of Worlds.
Ye, the radiant Beings of Aether-Worlds,
Bear the Christ-Word to Man.

Thus shall the Herald of Christ appear
To the thirstily waiting souls,
To whom your Word of Light shines forth
In cosmic age of Spirit-Man.

Ye, the disciples of Spirit-Knowledge
Take Michael's Wisdom-beckoning,
Take the Word of Love of the Will of Worlds
Into your soul's aspiring a c t i v e l y!



From a crayon drawing by William Scott Pyle

The Story of My Life

Editorial Additions Not In Original Text

From Rudolf Steiner's last published communication:

In the age of natural science, since about the middle of the nineteenth century, the civilized activities of mankind are gradually sliding downward, not only into the lowest regions of nature, but even beneath nature. Technical science and industry become sub-nature.

This makes it urgent for man to find in conscious experience a knowledge of the spirit, wherein he will rise as high above nature as in his sub-natural technical activities he sinks beneath her. He will thus create within him the inner strength not to go under.
