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Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science,
and the Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea.

FOUNDED BY EDWARD C. HEGELER

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NIETZSCHE AND GOETHE

A COMPARATIVE ESTIMATE

BY W. L. GRAFF

THE COMPARISON of two men is not without its pitfalls. It is apt to result in a one-sided characterization because neither their similarities nor their contrasts are likely to exhaust the essentials of their personality. Moreover, it must stress those peculiarities in the two men which happen to overlap and those which happen to be mutually exclusive. The ensuing picture will be a "partial" one, in the two meanings of the word. Light and shadow will be more or less unevenly distributed.

But it is such partiality necessarily an evil? After all, our appraisals are never absolute; they are inevitably dependent upon a yardstick. Complete impartiality and a perfect perspective are not always ideals to be striven for, not to speak of the impossibility of attaining them. A maple presents a different appearance in a grove and on a front lawn. It adds to our appreciation of the tree to see it placed in different settings which underline different aspects. Is it not permitted to steal a leaf out of nature's book and to view one person in the light of another, even at the risk of offending temporarily our sense of proportion? The claim that such a procedure is deceptive is not quite to the point. It is not meant to be comprehensive. The physiognomies of Nietzsche and of Goethe change according as we observe them in the light of each other or in that of Kant or Schiller. But it is illuminating to see them against different backgrounds, providing we remember to make the necessary adjustments of general perspective.

I know of no other writer besides Nietzsche whose ultimate

* FRONTISPIECE: *Fishing on a Snowy Day*. A painting on silk, in color, much faded. Lent by the Chinese Government. It is ascribed to the Five Dynasties but is probably rather later. Courtesy of the International Exhibit of Chinese Art, Royal Academy of Arts, London. All rights reserved.

thoughts and theories are so uncannily distant from their harmless source and fundamental premises as to make it almost unbelievable that such mountains could have been born of such a mouse. It is enough to mention such slogans as "Radical Atheism," "A Race of Supermen," "A Different Morality for the Great from that of the Poor," "Down with Christian Pity and Altruism," "A Life beyond Good and Evil," "Democracy is a Sign of Decadence," "The Emancipation of Woman is a Crime against Humanity," in order to realize how wicked they are in the eyes of our modern civilization. Yet, these sensational catchwords, by which Nietzsche is too often judged and condemned, are in the last analysis nothing but projections of a pure and noble soul yearning for a better world of beauty and perfection. They do not represent the core of his thought, but rather lie at its periphery. While Goethe's name suggests "moderation" and "measure," the keynote in Nietzsche's characterization is "intensity." When Nietzsche and Goethe start out from similar positions, the whole of Nietzsche eventually lands in the stratosphere, whereas Goethe's feet are still solidly planted on the ground although his head may touch the clouds.

Few people deny that in German literature and cultural outlook Goethe occupies a central place. Since his appearance on the scene no cultural movement of any importance, no writer or artist has been completely unaware of the form and meaning which Goethe has given to the cultural pattern into which every German after him is born. This in spite of the partial truth contained in Nietzsche's saying that "Goethe is an incident in German history without consequences." There are those who repudiate his "Weltanschauung" theoretically, some who feel that his genius has been greatly overestimated, and a few who would like to ignore altogether his decisive contribution to German cultural life, but in practice there is no escaping the multitudinous threads that emanate from the "Frauenplan" at Weimar and radiate wherever the German word is spoken or understood. In fact, Goethe like Nietzsche, although for different reasons, presents so many facets that the romanticist as well as the classicist, the realist and the idealist, the revolutionary and the reactionary, the friend of the people as well as the aristocrat, the Christian as well as the pagan, the nationalist and the cosmopolitan have little difficulty in finding in his works passages which will sup-

port their own theories. "Hast du etwas vonnöthen, so geh zu Goethen" is the familiar, somewhat cynical saying.

Some describe this universality of Goethe by what they call his eclecticism, his panoramic view. But let us beware of attaching too superficial a meaning to these terms. Goethe's eclecticism is not that of a mere erudite with encyclopaedic information; it is the eclecticism of one whose personality touches at many vital points the very core of humanity. Put almost any name, famous in the world of German literature or thought, in juxtaposition with that of Goethe, and at once the combinations become not only plausible, but most fruitful parallelisms for consideration, because Goethe acts as a sort of prism through which each of the other personalities is broken into its iridescent qualities. At any rate, it is an inspiring experience to examine Nietzsche in the light of Goethe, whether we wish to appraise the characteristics of the former or those of the latter. Not that Nietzsche has at any time plagiarized from Goethe or even deliberately exploited the wealth of his thought. Even where he acknowledges outright his indebtedness to other thinkers, such as Schopenhauer for example, Nietzsche is much too personal, much too original to be able to copy or merely to work out somebody else's wisdom. But in spite of the sharp contrasts in mood and temperament, there exists between Nietzsche and Goethe a genuine affinity of thought and ideals. The medium in which Nietzsche's thought naturally thrives contains an amazingly large number of elements peculiar to Goethe.

From a biographical point of view, it is true, there appears to be hardly anything but contrast. Goethe's home surroundings were on the whole mundane. Neither his father nor his mother is known to have possessed any overdose of religious enthusiasm, in spite of the fact that their son had to submit to the conventional amount of religious instruction. The greatest influence exerted on young Goethe in this respect was perhaps that of his famous "schöne Seele," the pietistic Miss von Klettenberg. Nietzsche, on the other hand, was born into a family of Protestant clergymen, both on his father's and on his mother's side. Concern with dogmatic and especially with ethical problems was his natural inheritance, whereas to Goethe these problems only suggested themselves as occasional and speculative ones among many others. It is almost true to say that Goethe

had lived a life beyond good and evil, before Nietzsche rationalized and preached it.

Nor was Goethe submitted to much strict discipline during his boyhood. All his pre-university education was acquired rather playfully at home, while the six years which Nietzsche spent at *Schulpforta*, the German Eton, were years of stern control and of serious study along humanistic lines. Even at Leipzig and Strassburg Goethe chose his subjects most freely and devoted a good deal more time to poetry, literature, and art than to those disciplines of law in which he was to graduate. When a president of the University of Jena recently recommended Goethe as an inspiring ideal to the entering students, he felt impelled to surround his recommendation with all sorts of cautious reservations, warning them not to claim for themselves the freedom of the genius too quickly. But again, Nietzsche plunged earnestly and deeply into the study of classical philology, both at the University of Bonn and at that of Leipzig. He was only twenty-four years of age when his scholarly contributions attracted the attention of the authorities of the University of Basel. To be sure, when he was a student, he, too, took part in various extra-curricular activities, even to the point of laying the foundation for his subsequent aversion for nicotine and alcohol. But compared to Goethe's jovial and prankish youth, Nietzsche's was decidedly oriented toward the serious. Goethe's contacts with different layers of society, with all sorts of manifestations of life, were far broader, far more variegated than Nietzsche's.

From his early boyhood to his old age, Goethe's life was studded with colorful episodes of love, each of which became artistically inspiring and fruitful. In Nietzsche's life women and natural erotic relationships seem to have played a decidedly minor part. That he was capable of and thirsting for deep and passionate love, however, is clearly realized by all those who care to analyze his biological and psychic constitution: it is amply illustrated by his romantic adoration of Schopenhauer, who was dead, and by his erotically colored enthusiasm for Richard Wagner, who was living but much older. Both attachments appeared for a time undivided and absolute, although strongly intellectual and idealistic. What Nietzsche loved in them was his ideal type of the perfect man, his instinctively emerging image of the superman. Goethe's Eros, an artistic force "par

excellence," was directed primarily toward the plastic forms of life; Nietzsche's Eros yearned for some musical, idealistic, and philosophic incarnation. But it is with the same feeling of nostalgia that Nietzsche thinks all his life of the Arcadian days spent in the company of Wagner at Triebshen, and that Goethe is haunted by the memories of Sesenheim. And it is also the same blind destiny which drives them both away from their object of love in order that they may remain true to their own genius.

And can there be a greater contrast than that between Goethe, who at the age of twenty-six was whirled into the profane court-life at Weimar, and Nietzsche who at the age of twenty-four was appointed professor of Classical Philology at Basel University? During his first ten years at Weimar Goethe was at times the master of pleasure and entertainment at the court of a young prince who revelled in everything that is of this earth; at times he was a responsible officer in the administration of the Duchy; continuously he refreshed himself at the fountain of love at the house of Frau von Stein or explored the sinuous world of the Eternal Feminine in a variety of other ways; and all the time he clung close to nature, trying to understand the secret language of the universe in which he lived. During the ten years of his professional career Nietzsche led an almost monastical life in the austere cloisters of a Swiss institution for higher learning, drifting more and more away from philology into the channels of psychology and ethics. When Goethe went to Weimar, he had to his credit some fine poems, his *Goetz von Berlichingen*, and especially his *Werther* which spread his name all over Europe. When Nietzsche went to Basel, he was utterly unknown outside of a small circle of professional philologists. Goethe's release from his administrative duties at Weimar is paralleled by Nietzsche's retirement from the educational life at the university; but during his sojourn in Italy Goethe abandoned himself more than ever to the world of living forms, while Nietzsche seems to have detached himself steadily from the world of phenomena in order to work out his own world of dreams and thoughts.

It is also most characteristic that Goethe eventually settled down in Weimar, where he was surrounded by things which he owned and cherished, by men and women whom he respected or loved. Nietzsche on the contrary never owned a home, but wandered rest-

lessly back and forth from Switzerland to Italy, from Italy to Germany, from Germany to the Riviera, from one city to another, living in simple rooms often without a stove, and trailing his boxes of books and his ever growing piles of manuscripts with him. Hardly anybody shared his thoughts outside of the blue Italian sky, the serene peaks of the Engadine or the grey German clouds. Because Goethe was wise enough to adopt the world, and to fit himself into it without jeopardizing the development of his own glorious personality, the world bowed to him: he had more friends than he liked, more admirers than he could endure. Nietzsche's famous loneliness is, indeed, a tragic and awe-inspiring spectacle. At Bonn he lost his student friends when he proposed a reform of the rules of the students' association to which he belonged. His friends, the philologists, including his beloved master Ritschl, became estranged from him because in his book entitled *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* he interpreted Greek tragedy and Greek culture in a manner not sanctioned by professional technique. He moved away from his friends, the philosophers, Deussen and other adherents of Schopenhauer and Kant, because he soon was no longer satisfied with Schopenhauer's pessimistic and Christian outlook, while Kant's categorical imperatives, his analyzing and systematic "philosophy of the back-doors" became a particularly chosen target for his attacks. He lost his friends, the Wagnerians, and above all the great Wagner himself, because the erstwhile eulogist eventually discovered that in Wagner, too, so many things were only human, all too human: his romantic flirting with mysticism, his yielding to the acclamations of the crowd, his fatal relapse into Christian morphology. Nietzsche lost the sympathetic understanding of his colleagues at Basel, of Overbeck and Burkhardt. When Burkhardt had read Nietzsche's *Dawn of the Day*, he wrote: "I read like an old man, with a feeling of vertigo," and Erwin Rohde of Leipzig did not so much as acknowledge the receipt of the book. Dr. Rée, for a long time the supplementing Mephisto to Nietzsche, was rejected in due time because he was too realistic and dialectic. Nietzsche was profoundly disappointed in that adventurous bluestocking, the Russian Jewess, Lou Salomé, who had been sent to him as a promising disciple but who proved to lack true understanding of her master's genius. For a time at least he lost confidence even in his sister, his lama, when

she had decided to marry the Anti-Semite Foerster and to follow him to Paraguay. At the time when Nietzsche finished his fourth part of *Zarathustra*, his publisher wrote to him that the public simply would not read his aphorisms, and poor Nietzsche had to have his manuscript printed at his own expense in a limited edition of 40 copies. So lonely was he at that time that he could think of only seven people to whom he might send a copy, and not all of them might go to the trouble of reading it. It is true, Nietzsche insists that he is proud of not being appreciated, especially by his German compatriots, considering that the greatness of a man can only be measured by the centuries required for his being understood. But at bottom, he yearned for friendship, for complete, true, absolute friendship, and he wanted to be heard by the world, even if it were only to be misunderstood and criticized. The complete and glacial silence with which his works were eventually received, nearly drove him mad and was partly responsible for the ever-increasing intensity of his shocking paradoxes and thunderbolts.

Many cannot forgive Goethe for the diplomatic caution with which he seemed to acknowledge the existing order of things and of society, while in more than one respect he thought and felt very much like Nietzsche about his compatriots and their philistine ideals. They prefer the Goethe, who in his rare moments of spontaneous indignation threw diplomacy to the winds and whose words could then strike with a directness worthy in every sense of Nietzsche. They forget, however, that Goethe's caution was anything but insincere or hypocritical. His compromising attitude on one hand and his feeling of superior greatness on the other were both deeply rooted in the instincts of his personality. Without either of these qualities Goethe could not be Goethe. Two of his favorite figures are Anteus and Euphorion. Anteus, the giant born of the Earth, unconquerable as long as his feet are on the ground but powerless as soon as Hercules succeeds in lifting him up; Euphorion, the winged son of Achilles and Helena, who flies toward the sun only to crash to the ground, blinded and scorched. Anteus is Goethe the conqueror, Goethe realized; Euphorion is the conquered Goethe, the potential Goethe, as realized more permanently in men like Byron or Nietzsche. It would be easy to argue that Nietzsche was more courageous than Goethe because he undoubtedly faced the greater dangers. But

would it be equally easy to decide which of the two attitudes required greater strength of character: that of Nietzsche who dared to challenge the world without any regard of consequences but who in so doing allowed his Dionysian passion free play, or that of Goethe whose great aim was to subdue all those forces tending to the infinite and who thus succeeded in surpassing his time without offending it too recklessly?

Another biographical fact which stresses the peculiar contrast between Nietzsche and Goethe is that the latter enjoyed, by and large, the benefits of continuous and solid health, whereas Nietzsche did not. Nietzsche served in the German army twice: once in peace time when he was enlisted as an artilleryman, and a fall from his horse injured his chest; and once at the beginning of the Franco-Prussian war when he had already become a Swiss citizen. This time he could only be admitted to the ambulance corps, where he contracted dysentery. Not waiting for his complete recovery he returned to his duties at Basel, and from that time on his life was one long chain of sick spells, followed by glorious feelings of convalescence and resurrection. Hence what was a natural condition in Goethe, was the object of a constant struggle in Nietzsche. Nietzsche's instinctive restlessness was strengthened by his physical instability, whereas Goethe's classical repose was made easier by the normal metabolism of his body. And so we observe that Goethe's work *possesses* and *radiates* a calm and natural vigor, whereas Nietzsche's work rather *demands* and *preaches* a strength and health, which he himself could only arouse at intervals by the use of ever increasing doses of chloral. The joy of convalescence, the *will* to recovery, the *will* to life, the *will* to power, these are essential and constantly recurring motifs in Nietzsche's philosophy and poetry. While the optimism of Goethe's "Weltanschauung" is the natural outflow of his balanced personality, Nietzsche's optimistic philosophy is the result of his iron will. Goethe says "yea" to life because it is beautiful in its phenomenal variety of light and shadow, of good and bad, of happiness and sorrow; Nietzsche says "yea" to life because he convinces himself that it can be improved by the conscious rearing of a stronger, a nobler and happier race of men. Compared to Nietzsche, Goethe suggests to us the realization of an ideal for which Nietzsche only yearns. But again, Nietzsche's eye, and head

and stomach troubles may very well have been essential prerequisites for his amazing work. Without them his Zarathustra might not have been endowed with those fiery eyes and super-human demands, or might not even have been born. The required tension and tremendous pressure might have been lacking. Nietzsche might not have been driven to seek the rarified and invigorating air of the Engadine Alps, thousands of feet above the plains of Germany, "the only possible cradle for Zarathustra."

Finally, even the end of Nietzsche offers an illuminating contrast to that of Goethe. There is a legend according to which Goethe's last words were "More light!," a symbol of his alleged search for the infinite and for truth. In reality, he seems to have passed away calmly and peacefully, without expressing any challenging revolt or romantic yearning. For eighty-two years Goethe had grown like an oak, solidly spreading its roots in the ground, strengthening its trunk year by year and extending its branches and foliage in a wide sway in all directions. When that oak died, it was not because it was top-heavy, not because it was uprooted before its time by a sudden gust of wind, but because death is the inevitable process by which nature performs its marvelous metabolism. If Goethe's life be compared to a circle, his death was merely the final knot that closed the two ends. Upon entering the last ten years of his life he lived once more through a moment of rejuvenation as he fell in love with Ulrike von Levetzow who was still in her teens. But Goethe did not lose his healthy balance in the process. At the age of seventy-four his *Marienbader Elegie* had the same sobering effect upon him as had his *Werther* when he was young. When Nietzsche entered the last decade of his life, he too passed through a moment of physical jubilation, of lucidity of mind and clarity of soul, which impregnated his last works with dazzling light and alarming vitality. But this afflux of joy was a feverish glow, the ephemeral incandescence of a light on the point of burning out. For ten years, Nietzsche's mind was enveloped in a shroud of pitiful but harmless insanity. Unlike Goethe's life circle, that of Nietzsche was never closed; before the two ends could meet, one flew off at a tangent, into the infinite.

As far as mood and temperament are concerned, therefore, Nietzsche has much more in common with men like Beethoven,

the proud iconoclast, the aggressive aristocrat of feeling and instinct; with Hölderlin, that "crucified Dionysus," who even in his long years of mental darkness had flashes of divine inspiration in which he wrote some beautiful poetry; or more still with the Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh, whose enraptured craving for color, light, and form reached unheard-of paroxysms as he drew nearer the benighted stage. With these Nietzsche had in common a resistless submission to some inner force which drove him slowly but inexorably into the complete loss of physical and mental balance, but which in the meantime spoke through him with absolutely elemental directness, with an irresistible stream of keen thoughts, luxuriant images, and musical words, with bursting emotion and burning enthusiasm.

Goethe, on the other hand, notoriously shunned the deadly charm of the extreme and violent, of the uncompromising and tragic. With naive passion, which betrays his deep-rooted instinct for self-protection, for harmony and organic growth, he rejected all volcanic theories of geological development. He was afraid of a certain type of music, because he feared its tendency toward the formless and chaotic, toward the infinite. What he appreciated above all in music was the melody, because of its definiteness and more palpable form. All his life Goethe fights the Dionysian, the demoniacal, the unchecked elemental, all those staccato, convulsive, and revolutionary forces of life. He knew too well the danger of their voracious, destructive tendencies if left to their own momentum, unchecked. As Stefan Zweig puts it, somewhere, at some crucial moment in his youth, he must have been face to face with the yawning abyss that lies at the end of every attempt to yield to the call of the demon within. A moment of tremendous importance this was for the future fate of Goethe, because it saved him once and for all from the deadly spell of the infinite. Whenever, henceforth, the Furies threaten him from within or cross his path in the persons of others, he either proceeds to exorcise himself by objectivating a Goetz, a Werther, a Prometheus, a Mahomet, an Egmont, an Orestes, a Tasso, a Faust—or else he wraps himself in the mantle of social aloofness or of classical and didactic moderation. And thus he strides along on his spiral way to harmony and self-culture. There is little doubt that had Nietzsche lived in Goethe's time, he would have met with the same cold reception on the part of the Sage of

Weimar as did Beethoven, and Kleist, and Heine and others of their temperamental type.

Is it surprising that Goethe was a friend of the restful plastic arts and of painting, while Nietzsche's musical talent was only challenged by his passion for ethical problems and by his irresistible urge for verbal and stylistic orgies? Goethe's style, especially his poetry, is musical, no doubt, but it is plastic above all, epically restful and measured. Nietzsche's style, too, is replete with plastic images: if he kept aloof from men, he composed most of his aphorisms on walks through the beautiful country of Italy or on the rocky shores of Alpine lakes, in intimate touch with nature. But above all, his word is music, intoxicating, bracing music, increasingly daring as he grows in age and in solitude. In Goethe, the Apollonian slowly but surely carries off the final victory; in Nietzsche, the Dionysian eventually routs the Apollonian and reaches orgiastic intensity in his last works. While Goethe sets his plastic images to music, as it were, Nietzsche translates his musical thoughts into plastic words.

However, these contrasts, which might be multiplied and elaborated, conceal only imperfectly the genuine affinity which exists between Nietzsche and Goethe. It will have been noticed that in our description of what gives these two men their antithetical character, there opened at many vital points unexpected vistas of fundamental agreement. In reading Nietzsche's work carefully, one is indeed often reminded of Goethe in one way or another. The upper currents in Nietzsche's work, especially their frothy tempo, their engulfing and erosive effects, are entirely different from those slow and peaceful waves which carry Goethe's thoughts to thankful shores. But there are strong undercurrents of remarkable similarity on both sides. What Nietzsche admired in Goethe was determined by these; what he criticized was dictated by his dislike of such things as cautious compromise with convention, of deliberate resignation with existing forms of life. Goethe's greatness and genius, however, appeared so supreme to Nietzsche, that in his general appraisal he generously disregarded the shortcomings of the greatest German that had ever lived.

Unhesitatingly he placed him in the Pantheon of his supermen. Among the many names to which Nietzsche directs his attention at one time or another, even at the height of his period of revaluation

of all values, there is none to which he attaches so much unstinting and persistent reverence as to that of Goethe. Nietzsche quotes freely from his works and calls Goethe's conversations with Eckermann the best book written in German. A number of his aphorisms and short essays are devoted to partial or summary characterizations of Goethe's personality and work. While he recognizes him as the great German lyricist, he remarks, however, that his dominating nature is epic, contemplative, Apollonian. From the point of view of the drama he was far inferior to Schiller and Kotzebue, whom Nietzsche mentions cruelly in the same breath. Goethe's conciliatory, redeeming nature made him utterly unfit for the tragedy, which is essentially fateful and inexorable in its exigencies. Hence, Nietzsche considered *Iphigenia* and *Tasso* as Goethe's best dramatic works, because of their epic-lyrical character. Although it may be said that temperamentally Nietzsche had much in common with the Promethean Faust of the first version, he parodied Faust nevertheless, because, as he saw it, the Weimer poet did not seem to take the demon in Faust seriously and tragically enough. Otherwise Nietzsche admired the sentences of wisdom and the glorious poetry strewn lavishly about in Goethe's great work. But again, the latter's recourse to Catholic symbolism and Faust's salvation at the end were taboo to Nietzsche, who also laughed at Goethe's famous deification of the Eternal Feminine. He admires Goethe as the great, creative, and truly inspired writer, the master of Prose, the only classical poet of Germany. Three times he finds in Goethe's poetry the word "Übermensch," and we may be sure that he was extremely sensitive to its potential force. He respects Goethe's ideas about Shakespeare, Sterne, Schiller, and others, and even calls up his spirit in order to find out what he would have thought of the decadent Wagner with his mystical and Christian Parsifal. With Goethe he agrees about the nature of poetry, about the conditional and relative faith in the usefulness of history. The impartial and scientific study of history is not only useless but has a deadening and sterilizing effect. Unless the study of history is made a lever for the achievement of greater cultural progress in the present and in the future, it had better be left alone. In fact, for the creation of really new values, a temporary oblivion of history supplies a better foundation than historical consciousness. Both Goethe and Nietzsche

were also deeply impregnated with Greek culture and a classical conception of beauty. But while the Greek antiquity of Winckelmann, Lessing, and Goethe was that rather of Socratic and post-Socratic Greece, with its great emphasis on cheerful bright harmony, proportion, simplicity, and measure, Nietzsche laid stress on that Greece in which the barbarian, the Dionysian, the demoniacal, orgiastic, and pessimistic instincts were essential ingredients of greatness. Goethe was in the eyes of Nietzsche the great European, the world-citizen, transcending the provincial and petty German. Napoleon's well-known words addressed to Goethe: "Voilà un homme," are interpreted and approved by Nietzsche as meaning: "Indeed, here is a man! And I had only expected a German." Just as Beethoven composed music and as Schopenhauer philosophized over the heads of the Germans, just so Goethe wrote *Iphigenia* and *Tasso* over their heads. Nietzsche's attitude toward the so-called German "Philister Bildung" was essentially the same as that of Goethe, but instead of being mildly resisting, gently sparing or kindly silent, Nietzsche was extremely vocal and superlatively sarcastic. How could he respect a nation that was so conceited and self-satisfied that it had only a shrug of the shoulders for the greatest man of Europe who left nothing undone to make himself heard? Nietzsche could never forget that the first who discovered him was a Dane, Georges Brandes, who devoted a series of lectures to his philosophy at the University of Copenhagen, at a time when Germany at large hardly knew who Nietzsche was. Sweden, France, Russia, New York were more interested in Nietzsche than the country of his birth. Nietzsche himself was proud of the Slavonic and aristocratic blood which he suspected in his veins and which he considered partly responsible for his praeter-German outlook. Like Goethe he admired the artistic instincts of the French, their classical lightness and superficiality, their clear psychological insight. But in spite of all these reservations he saw in Goethe—whom he calls "der Ausnahme Deutsche"—as well as in Luther and Schiller, the true German culture, the German culture *in potentia*, which could only be realized on a large scale in some distant future, when the Germans would come to know, like Goethe, that to be genuinely German meant being something more than merely German. And finally, Nietzsche admired in Goethe that sure instinct with which

he recognized the two great errors of his life: that of believing himself a great painter and that of putting his scientific talents above his poetic ones.

Professional philosophers are reluctant to consider Goethe and even Nietzsche as one of their clan. And in a sense there are very good reasons for their attitude. The outstanding fact is that Nietzsche and Goethe are poet-philosophers. Neither is in sympathy with the dialectic, critical, and analyzing method by which the philosopher proceeds to scrutinize all that is involved in a theory and to dissect all the consequences that will logically follow from it. It is quite true that they both pass through a period of hesitation in this respect: Goethe had his Kantian spell and Nietzsche turned rather Socratic in his second philosophic stage. But in their instinctive youth as well as in their period of maturity they are emphatic in putting constructive synthesis above critical analysis. And what is worse—or better—is that they both believe implicitly in the supreme importance of intuition and instinct in order to arrive at this synthesis. *Fiat vita, pereat veritas* is Nietzsche's slogan in these two characteristic periods: "if so-called philosophic truth tends to destroy life, then by all means let us sacrifice that truth." If truth is to be reached, it is not by the one-sided application of reason which slowly builds up a logical system, but rather by intuitive vision in which the whole of man has part, his senses, his imagination, his emotions and his intellect. Not that Goethe's and Nietzsche's thoughts are absolutely sudden and disconnected flashes of light, inspirations gleaned at random out of the air. In fact they often carry them with them for a more or less long period, sometimes for years, until at last they ripen into a peculiarly pregnant form and appear suddenly luminous and brilliant as a flame. All that is then required is not a long treatise, but a clear and short formulation, in a style which is not dry and dialectic but emotionally colored and visionary, not slow moving and expansive but convincingly assertive, not punctiliously accurate and exhaustive, but revelling in the suggestive and stimulating paradox. Hence, both Goethe's and Nietzsche's philosophy is laid down in aphorisms, short essays, condensed sayings, epigrams, symbolic poems. Hence also, their positive dislike of logically and laboriously worked out systems. Their philosophy is often clad in luxuriant metaphors, plastic images,

carrying you away by its music and rhythm. Even in his seemingly organic works such as his *Birth of Tragedy* or his *Zarathustra* Nietzsche is in reality aphoristic. His thoughts are the result of instinctive and prophetic vision, captured at the moment of greatest clarity on walks in the open.

The danger of error resulting from this method of philosophizing and scientific study is obvious. Goethe's antipathy for analysis and decomposition led him to become passionately opposed to Newton's optical theories, and his comical dislike of mathematical physics is pointed out with great satisfaction by professional philosophers and scientists as ample justification for their attitude of reserve. It is equally evident that many of Nietzsche's theories about racial, social, and ethical problems are open to criticism or downright rejection. But after all, if we consider the light that these men have really thrown on many unexplored or insufficiently explored problems, we cannot help recognizing the great value and efficiency of their intuitive, that is, poetic procedure. Even the mere posing of new problems is a most significant part of philosophic and scientific research. And who can claim to rival Nietzsche as a poser of tremendous problems in a field where human tradition and inertia are so stubbornly bent upon taking things for granted? If it is true that a systematic edifice of philosophy is apt to be more consistent and coherent, less contradictory and less fragmentary, is it not equally evident that unless every essential part of that edifice is solid and impervious to criticism, the whole system is bound to crumble away into nothingness? Accuracy and exhaustive completeness are naturally more characteristic of a systematic pursuit of thought, but intuition and inspiration have the supreme advantage of greater inventiveness and creative power. Are not many of the greatest discoveries and truths the result of the sudden flash of light caught by the genius in its swift passing? Not to speak of the superior form of presentation that we may expect from the poet-philosopher, superior by its enthusiasm, its dynamic and persuasive power, its fascinating imagery, its music and rhythm. A false assumption of a purely dialectic thinker becomes *ipso facto* a worthless thing, deserving nothing but profound oblivion and neglect. An untrue aphorism of a poet-philosopher may still remain a gem, beautiful to look at and to caress with one's imagination.

Even if we disagree most emphatically with Nietzsche in what he has to say or to preach, we still like to breathe the stimulating ozone which fills the atmosphere of his thinking, to hear the dancing music of his words.

Nietzsche does not share Goethe's conviction of the inherently organic structure of the cosmos, but rather sees in nature nothing but unrelated phenomena, a sort of hodge podge of individually conflicting wills. Nevertheless they both have an instinctive distrust of all fundamentally dualistic theories. They are repelled by any system of thought which splits the universe into two irreconcilable parts: the physical and the metaphysical, the phenomenon and the noumenon. Hence also their hostile attitude to such Christian concepts as this life and the life beyond, sin and grace, guilt and reconciliation, a personal God and his creation, body and soul, the natural and the supernatural, good and evil. All these concepts tear the universe of man apart into two incompatible and intolerable worlds, destructive of happiness and harmony. If Goethe seems more reserved in his confessions about religion and morality, it is merely because of his superior, non-tragic feeling of tolerance. His works and sayings as well as his life, however, are eloquent testimonies for anyone who is willing to see. Nietzsche, on the other hand, can never be heretic, paradoxical, extreme and godless enough. He seems to draw Goethe's thoughts from their soft twilight into the blinding light of day, and to throw them on the market with naked fanaticism, magnifying their weaknesses and covering their delicate shadings with crying colors. That Goethe considered the distinction between good and evil as merely relative, that he did not believe in an absolute good as opposed to an absolute evil, can be gathered from his works and life at every turn. It was an instinctive conviction of his, which was merely strengthened by his acquaintance with Spinoza's *Ethics*. It separated him as well as Nietzsche from Kant's bourgeois philosophy. "Das, was wir böse nennen, ist nur die andre Seite vom Guten." The Christian concept of the original sin he complements with that of the original virtue: "eine angeborene Güte, Rechtlichkeit und besonders eine Neigung zur Ehrfurcht." He calls the very personification of Evil, namely Mephisto: "ein Teil von jener Kraft, die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft." In his *Prologue in Heaven* he lets the devil speak on equal

terms with God: "Des Menschen Tätigkeit kann allzuleicht erschlafen, Er liebt sich bald die unbedingte Ruh; Drum geb ich gern ihm den Gesellen zu, Der reizt und wirkt und muss, als Teufel, schaffen." And Mephisto comments: "Von Zeit zu Zeit seh' ich den Alten gern, Und hüte mich, mit ihm zu brechen. Es ist gar hübsch von einem grossen Herrn, So menschlich mit dem Teufel selbst zu sprechen." A consciousness of guilt in a Judaeo-Christian sense was unknown to Goethe, and his relative adjustment to existing customs was merely an expression of his desire for peace and harmony. If he differs in this respect from Nietzsche it is only in form and expression. What Goethe hides shyly under a coat of transparent symbols or behind the screen of his discreet behavior, Nietzsche rationalizes with all the articulate sharpness of his passionate thought. He writes whole books of aphorisms and essays about it, such as *The Genealogy of Morality*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *The Will to Power*, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Against the artificial, moral concepts of good and evil he puts the natural, amoral concepts of good and bad. Good as opposed to bad is that which is conducive to stronger, healthier life, the supreme and ultimate goal of humanity. The concept of morality is perfectly irrelevant to it. Good and bad belong to a different sphere from that of good and evil, they lie beyond good and evil, and it is in this sphere only that the superman can live and thrive. It is his function to fight what is bad and to nurse what is good, regardless of moral considerations of good and evil. And all this is said and preached with an amazing directness of speech, with a clarity of vision, a cutting sharpness, which would undoubtedly have caused the non-tragical Goethe to stare and to balk.

Besides these few peculiarities, which reveal such a marked relationship of affinity and contrast between Nietzsche and Goethe, many other parallelisms of equal significance could easily be shown to exist. I will only suggest in a general way that Nietzsche also shared with Goethe that yearning for Italy which has become so characteristic of the Germans, especially since Winckelmann. It is a yearning for Italy as a symbol of sunshine, of a bright and naive culture which comes nearest to being a natural continuation of the ancient classical tradition, a symbol of the strong and glorious art of the Renaissance. By instinct, Goethe and Nietzsche were aristo-

crats of the heart and mind; nobility as they understood it is not a mere matter of birth and social position, but real nobility of instinct, talent, and ideals. They are outspoken champions of a healthy egoism as opposed to altruism on one hand and to selfishness on the other. They are individualists with unlimited contempt for a mechanical world which reduces the human being to the rank of a mere wheel in the social or national machine. Yet, each in his own personal way, strove for the betterment of mankind, for a higher culture in which greater and stronger individuals would raise society to a superior level.

In conclusion, we might observe that Goethe's and Nietzsche's undoubted non- or anti-Christian attitude did not prevent either of them from recognizing the great cultural value of Christianity in certain defined fields. Goethe was decidedly more generous and tolerant in this respect than Nietzsche, not only because of his more compromising and less fanatic nature, but also because in the personal experience of his life the Christian dogma and ethics had not touched him to the quick as they had Nietzsche. Moreover, although Goethe and Nietzsche were undoubtedly praeter-national in their thoughts, sentiments, and aspirations, they were both deeply embedded in the Teutonic cultural mold. Their own individuality and works are, in spite of all reservations, profoundly German, and when they speak disparagingly of their country and countrymen, they only refer to certain features of the present, past, or immediate future. But they have in common a sincere belief in the great potentialities and latent qualities of their people.