

**NIETZSCHE, GOETHE AND THE NINETEENTH-
CENTURY TRADITION OF *BILDUNG***

by

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Abstract

This thesis sets out to identify and analyse two themes that underpin the theory of *Bildung* that Nietzsche develops in his works and notebooks from between 1870 and 1876, and to show that these themes both shape and reflect his view of Goethe. These themes will be designated as ‘Freiheit’, which denotes the autonomy of culture and the individual that permits their untrammelled development, and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’, which prioritises creative, life-enhancing activity over the acquisition of knowledge. The thesis will also show that these two themes remain central to Nietzsche’s philosophy in the later stages of his active life, and that the importance he attaches to them can help to illuminate some of the changes and shifts in his thought during those periods. They also continue to form the basis of his *Goethebild* in his later works.

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For Rhona

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List of Abbreviations

The edition of Nietzsche's works cited is *Nietzsche. Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe (KGW)*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 1967-). The following abbreviations will be used when referring to this edition:

- BA *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten: Sechs öffentliche Vorträge* (1872)
- EH *Ecce Homo. Wie man wird, was man ist* (1888)
- FW *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*; Books I-IV (1882), Book V and Preface (1886)
- GD *Götzen-Dämmerung, oder wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt* (1888)
- GM *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887)
- GT *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (1872)
- Die Geburt der Tragödie, Oder: Griechenthum und Pessimismus* (1886)
- GTVS *Versuch einer Selbstkritik*; preface to the 1886 edition of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*
- HKP *Homer und die klassische Philologie* (1869)
- JGB *Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft* (1886)
- MA *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches. Ein Buch für freie Geister* (1878); new edition with preface (1886)
- NF *Nachlass*
- VM *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches. Ein Buch für freie Geister. Anhang: Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche* (1879)
- UB I *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen. Erstes Stück: David Strauss. Der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller* (1873)

UB II *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen. Zweites Stück: Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben* (1874)

UB III *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen. Drittes Stück: Schopenhauer als Erzieher* (1874)

UB IV *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen. Viertes Stück: Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1876)

UWL *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne* (1873)

WS *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten* (1880)

ZS *Zu Schopenhauer* (1868)

References to Nietzsche's letters will be taken from *Briefwechsel. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGB), ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 1975). References will provide the date, the name of the addressee, the volume and page number.

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis has three principal aims. Firstly, it will identify and explain two themes that are central to Nietzsche's early theory of *Bildung*, which he develops in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872), *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* (1872) and the four essays of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (1873-76). Secondly, it will show that Nietzsche repeatedly associates Goethe with these two themes and often uses him to represent them figuratively. Finally, it will demonstrate that these themes remain vitally important to Nietzsche throughout his writing career, and that they continue to shape the *Goethebild* that emerges in his later works, including *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (1878), *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886) and *Götzen-Dämmerung* (1888).

The two themes in question will be designated in this thesis as 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit'. Both of these words and their respective cognates appear frequently in Nietzsche's writing, in a variety of contexts and in relation to a diverse range of arguments. He often uses them, however, to denote two specific qualities that pertain to both people and culture. Although they could not be described as formalised doctrines that are comparable, for example, to the 'Wille zur Macht'¹ or the 'Übermensch' (Z II, 'Inseln'), these qualities are precisely and coherently presented throughout his published works and *Nachlass*.

'Freiheit' refers to Nietzsche's belief that neither culture nor the individual should submit, or be subjected, to heteronomous authority that imposes a fixed set of rules or norms upon them. 'Fruchtbarkeit', meanwhile, signifies his insistence that they should both be oriented towards creative activity, rather than introspection or the acquisition of knowledge.

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* [1886], in *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [KGW], ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1967-), 6/2, p. 16. Subsequent references to Nietzsche's works will be to this edition and give the abbreviated name of the work, followed by the section, chapter number or abbreviated chapter title as appropriate. For references to the *Nachlass*, the year of the note will be given followed by the section and note number.

These ideas are tightly bound together – both within the context of Nietzsche’s thinking and the broader history of German literature and philosophy – by the concept of *Bildung*.

As a recent study by Paul van Tongeren has shown, *Bildung* is a topic that greatly interests Nietzsche in the earlier stages of his writing.² *Bildung* is notoriously difficult to define as a concept: partly because it is difficult to render accurately in English,³ but also because it has been addressed from a wide range of authorial perspectives and is the product of a long and complex tradition that can be traced back to the beginning of the nineteenth-century.⁴ What can be claimed without too much fear of contradiction, however, is that it incorporates the ideas of education and culture, and that it typically envisions a specific relationship between the two. As van Tongeren explains, the proponents of *Bildung* typically view culture as a consequence of the process by which the individual constructs their identity during the course of their life:

The German word *Bildung* refers to the process through which a human being acquires the proper form of his or her humanity, as well as the product or the result of this formative process [...] But *Bildung* does not only describe the formative process of the individual human being and its result: it also refers to culture. For while the individual is being brought to the level of culture through *Bildung*, culture itself is being injected with new life.⁵

² ‘The word *Bildung*, together with all its word forms and compounds, occurs some 1100 times in Nietzsche’s writings as published in the *Kritische Studienausgabe*. Two thirds of these occurrences we find in the early writings of the first five or six years (1870-1876)’. Paul van Tongeren, ‘Measure and Bildung’, in *Nietzsche, Culture and Education*, ed. Thomas E. Hart (Ashgate: Farnham & Burlington, 2009), p. 97.

³ As Ronald Speirs states in his translation of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*: ‘No English term will adequately render *Bildung*, which remains strongly connected to its root, *bilden*, meaning to shape or form’. Speirs often uses W.H. Bruford’s term of ‘self-cultivation’ in order to overcome this problem, although he also uses ‘education’ in certain circumstances. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 95.

⁴ For a detailed analysis of the tradition of *Bildung* in Germany, which locates its origins in the thought of Wilhelm von Humboldt and charts its evolution during the nineteenth century through a study of works by writers including Goethe, Stifter and Nietzsche himself, see W. H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

⁵ Van Tongeren, ‘Measure and Bildung’, pp. 97-98.

Van Tongeren also argues correctly that, in this relatively broad sense, Nietzsche's usage of the term *Bildung* is 'consistent with the normal use of the word in the nineteenth century'.⁶ In fact, these two distinct, yet interdependent activities – the process of education or self-cultivation,⁷ and the enhancement of culture through artistic creativity that should supposedly result from this process – are at the forefront of Nietzsche's intellectual concerns during the first half of the 1870s. In his works, lectures and notebooks of the period, he frequently returns to the questions of what self-cultivation involves and how the individual should approach it, as well as discussing how and why one should contribute to the perpetual renewal of culture.

In a *Nachlass* fragment of 1870, Nietzsche sketches an answer to the question: 'Was ist *Bildung*?' (NF 1870, 8, 92). In a series of short, characteristically pithy sentences, he adumbrates the ideas and principles that he would develop more fully in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. In the first lines of the note, which was written during the first two years of his tenure as Chair of Classical Philology at the University of Basel,⁸ Nietzsche emphasises that the significance of *Bildung* lies in the tangible, practical difference that it can make to life, and claims that *Bildung* must be experienced rather than theorised if it is to help mankind and liberate him from his errors: '*Aufgabe der Bildung: zu leben und zu wirken in den edelsten Bestrebungen seines Volkes oder der Menschen. Nicht also nur recipiren und lernen, sondern leben. Seine Zeit und sein Volk befreien von den verzogenen Linien*' (ibid.). On this

⁶ Ibid., p. 98.

⁷ Nietzsche uses the words 'Erziehung' and 'Bildung' almost interchangeably to describe the means by which we shape our identity. This thesis will therefore refer to both 'education' and 'self-cultivation' – borrowing Bruford's effective translation of *Bildung* – in order to describe the same process.

⁸ Hollingdale relates the remarkable circumstances surrounding Nietzsche's appointment to this prestigious post: 'At the beginning of 1869 the chair of classical philology at Basel University fell vacant, and Ritschl [Nietzsche's doctoral supervisor at the University of Leipzig] was asked to suggest a possible candidate for it. [...] Ritschl suggested Nietzsche. On the 10th January he told him that the question of offering him the Basel chair was under discussion. On the 13th February Nietzsche was appointed, and on the 23rd March he was awarded his doctorate by Leipzig without examination, on the basis of the work he had published in the *Rheinisches Museum*'. R.J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche. The Man and his Philosophy*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 41.

occasion, Nietzsche neither states what these ‘edelsten Bestrebungen’ are, nor identifies the ‘false paths’ from which people allegedly need to be set free.

Chapter Two of this thesis will examine Nietzsche’s view of these ‘Bestrebungen’ as it emerges in his writing during the years between 1869 and 1876, and will explain what he means when he claims that the role of *Bildung* is to liberate. It will show that in his early work, Nietzsche considers the two tasks that are traditionally associated with *Bildung* – those of self-cultivation and cultural enrichment – to be two of our most important duties as individuals. He also claims that in order to carry them out successfully, both the individual and culture must be treated as autonomous, self-governing entities whose development cannot be subordinated to the needs of another person, idea or object. This inviolable sovereignty – or ‘Freiheit’ – is indispensable to Nietzsche’s view of ‘wahre Bildung’ (BA III).

David Owen has identified two key aspects of Nietzsche’s concept of individual freedom. The first is this relatively straightforward requirement to preserve our personal independence in the face of those who try to dominate or influence us, which enables us to think and act on our own terms: ‘One’s activity appeals to no authority independent of, or external to, the norms that govern the practice in which one is engaged’.⁹ In the case of self-cultivation, Nietzsche is adamant that only the individual can determine the rules or conditions that regulate his development, and that one must avoid conforming to desires or requirements that are imposed from without, whether by custom, diktat or fashion.

There is another facet to freedom, however, which is linked to Nietzsche’s belief that the process of self-cultivation never ceases during our lifetime. Nietzsche argues that if we ever regard our personal development as complete, or view the present version of ourselves as definitive or ‘real’, we sacrifice our freedom to the ideas, sympathies and convictions that we hold at that particular point in time. As Owen explains, Nietzschean freedom therefore

⁹ David Owen, *Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morality* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2007), p. 38.

‘requires that we engage in critically distanced reflection on our current self-understanding’,¹⁰ and presupposes the ability to alter or move beyond our opinions and beliefs. It is only this flexibility or open-mindedness that enables us to ‘tackle new tasks, [and] to take up new challenges’,¹¹ which in turn permits us to grow further as individuals and ensures that we retain our uniqueness.¹² This aspect of freedom is strongly opposed to dogmatism, which implies that the individual is controlled by the idea or object that he takes to be true.

Nietzsche stresses the importance of ‘Freiheit’ – in both these senses – throughout his early works, and portrays it as a prerequisite of self-cultivation. He also claims repeatedly, however, that the situation and mores in nineteenth-century Germany conflict with such autonomy. In particular, he insists that the rise in power and influence of the recently unified German nation – combined with the supposed readiness of his compatriots to embrace the narrative and values of their homeland – had contributed much to the ‘Verminderung’ (BA I) of *Bildung*. He argues that by regarding the state as the ‘höchste Ziel der Menschheit’ (UB III, 4) and dedicating themselves to it unquestioningly, men ignore the fact that there are ‘jenseits [des Staatsdienstes] doch noch Männer und Pflichten’ (ibid.), including those of self-cultivation and culture.

Nietzsche’s intense dislike of the ‘ekelhafte, zeitgötzendiennerische Schmeichelei’ (ibid.) that honours the nation state as if it were mankind’s ‘Blüthe und höchster Zweck’ (BA III) is closely connected to his broader point that we must assert our individuality instead of allowing ourselves to be defined by the environment in which we happen to live. If the individual views self-cultivation as a process that should equip him with the skills and knowledge to serve someone or something else – such as the country of his birth – or if his

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 39.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² This aspect of freedom is linked to what Georg Simmel describes as Nietzsche’s notion of ‘in ihm selbst indizierte Erhöhung’, in which each stage of our development is given value by what it precedes and makes possible: ‘Jedes Stadium des menschheitlichen Daseins findet jetzt seinen Zweck nicht in einem Absoluten und Definitiven, sondern in dem nächsthöheren, in dem alles in dem früher nur Angelegte zu größerer Weite und Wirkung erwacht ist’. Georg Simmel, *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche*, 2nd edn. (Munich & Leipzig: Duncker & Humboldt, 1920), p. 6.

thought and behaviour is conditioned by loyalty towards an extrinsic authority, then self-cultivation ceases to be a continuing project that constantly adds to the ‘wunderlich buntes Mancherlei zum Einerlei’ (UB III, 1) of his character. By adhering to rules or criteria that are not his own, he allegedly fails to take ‘joy in himself’¹³ and relinquishes his precious status as a ‘Unicum’ (ibid.). ‘Freiheit’, in Nietzsche’s understanding, can therefore only be achieved by thinking and acting in a way that affirms our independence from our surroundings, and which is consciously nonconformist and ‘unzeitgemäss’ (UB I, 12). In the context of Nietzsche’s age, this means – in Nietzsche’s view at least – resisting the nationalism and patriotic fervour that supposedly accompanied the founding of the Reich.

It is not only the individual that must transcend the grand sweep of events and ideologies that provide the backdrop to our lives. Nietzsche also regards this ‘Freiheit’ or autonomy as essential to art and culture.¹⁴ He insists that culture is ‘verbraucht’ (NF 1872, 19, 312) and deprived of its ‘gesunde[n] schöpferische[n] Naturkraft’ (GT 23) if it engages with the political and social issues of a particular time or place, while art that addresses themes from the ‘alltägliche Wirklichkeit’ (GT 7) supposedly loses the ability to enhance life in a more meaningful, elevated fashion.¹⁵

¹³ ‘Aber was ist es, was den Einzelnen zwingt, den Nachbar zu fürchten, heerdenmässig zu denken und zu handeln und seiner selbst nicht froh zu sein?’ (UB III, 1).

¹⁴ Nietzsche’s view that culture is primarily an artistic phenomenon is revealed most clearly by remarks from the *Nachlass*: ‘Die *Kultur* kann immer nur von der centralisirenden Bedeutung einer Kunst oder eines Kunstwerks ausgehen’ (NF 1872 23, 14). In another note from the same year he writes that: ‘Die Bändigung des Erkenntnißtriebes – ob zu Gunsten einer Religion? Oder einer künstlerischen Kultur, soll sich nun zeigen; ich stehe auf der zweiten Seite’ (NF 1872 19, 34).

¹⁵ Nietzsche’s somewhat vague notion of ‘life’ – and the exact nature of art and culture’s relationship to it – represents a real and substantial difficulty when analysing his philosophy. As Thomas Mann noted: ‘Das Leben über alles! Warum? Das hat er [Nietzsche] nie gesagt. Er hat nie einen Grund dafür angegeben, warum das Leben etwas unbedingt Anbetungswürdiges und höchst Erhaltenswertes ist, sondern hat nur erklärt, Leben gehe über Erkennen.’ Thomas Mann, *Nietzsche’s Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung* [1947], in *Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden* (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 1974), IX, 675–712 (p. 694). This thesis, as will be discussed in more detail below, will examine Nietzsche’s argument in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* that art should aesthetically transfigure existence, as opposed to advancing or revealing ‘truth’. It will not be possible, however, to provide an exhaustive discussion of the way in which Nietzsche thinks art and culture should serve life, because his thoughts on the matter undergo significant change even in his early works. To track these developments and modifications with due accuracy and in sufficient detail would require another chapter and, more importantly, would be to diverge from this thesis’ central theme. What is crucial here is the position that Nietzsche maintains throughout his early works: namely that art and culture should be regarded as sovereign and not made to serve a narrow, transient ‘truth’.

In contemporary German culture, Nietzsche once again finds deference to the ‘gegenwärtige Ordnung’ (UB III, 8) where he seeks constant renewal and creative flux. Unlike a ‘wirkliche, productive Kultur’ (UB I, 1) that serves no other master than life itself and is constantly regenerated through the work of artists and philosophers, Nietzsche views modern culture as shackled to the prosaic realities of the ‘moderne Welt’ (UB III, 6). Nietzsche assigns the title ‘Bildungsphilister’ (UB I, 2) to those whom he accuses of thus subjugating culture while purporting to serve it, and whose influence supposedly leads to the ‘bewusste oder unbewusste Ausschiessen und Negiren aller künstlerisch produktiven Formen’ (UB I, 2).

It is necessary to investigate Nietzsche’s portrayal of the *Bildungsphilister*, because this negative description illuminates – as their antipode – both Nietzsche’s concept of ‘Freiheit’ and his *Goethebild*. Nietzsche frequently contrasts Goethe with the *Bildungsphilister* in his early works, and in doing so establishes Goethe as a model of ‘Freiheit’ and cultural vitality. To illustrate this point further, it will be extremely useful to investigate the course of Goethe reception in the years between Goethe’s death in 1832 and the publication of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* in 1872. During this period, attitudes to Goethe and his works were substantially influenced by the shifting relationship between culture and the political, social and economic landscape of contemporary Germany. In a time of significant national upheaval, during which Germany was convulsed by the failed revolution of 1848 and unified under Bismarck’s leadership in 1871,¹⁶ Goethe was variously criticised for his supposed political quiescence and lauded as the cultural foundation stone for the new German nation. Among those who reached such radically different conclusions about the value of Goethe and his works were writers whom Nietzsche would later name as examples of the *Bildungsphilister*, including Julian Schmidt (1818-1886), Georg Gottfried Gervinus (1805-1871) and Herman Grimm (1828-1901). Their judgements of Goethe – judgements that

¹⁶ For a compelling account of this seminal period in German history, see Jonathan Steinberg, *Bismarck. A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Nietzsche explicitly rejects because he believes that they are based on the mistaken premise that culture should be an agent of political or social change – are a valuable indication of the historical context in which Nietzsche's thinking develops, and which he deems inimical to the emergence of a productive or fruitful culture.

Chapter Two will therefore show that Nietzsche considers self-cultivation and the nurture of culture to be our 'edelsten Bestrebungen', and will discuss his concomitant belief that these two tasks must not be directed towards extraneous ends: an idea that is encapsulated by the term 'Freiheit'. In the *Nachlass* note from 1870 cited above, in which Nietzsche writes that *Bildung* should free us to pursue these 'noble endeavours', he also claims that *Bildung* is 'durchaus produktiv zu verstehen' (NF 1870, 8, 92). Chapter Three will analyse Nietzsche's concept of a productive *Bildung*, and show that it is grounded in the principle that one should aim to enhance life through outward directed creative activity – or be 'fruchtbar' (BA II), as Nietzsche describes it – instead of trying to solve or explain the mysteries of existence through the application of reason and logic.

The chapter will begin by examining Nietzsche's argument, which he presents in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, that mankind had been beguiled by a 'naive Rationalismus' (NF 1869, 1, 106) since the time of Socrates. Nietzsche claims that Socrates was convinced of both the human intellect's ability to penetrate to the core of existence ('jene Gründe einzudringen', GT 15) and of the supreme importance of this task, which Socrates allegedly viewed as the 'einzige wahrhaft menschliche Beruf' (ibid.). Furthermore, Nietzsche insists that Socrates' ideas had gained wide acceptance,¹⁷ engendering a 'nie geahnte Universalität der Wissensgier in dem weitesten Bereich der gebildeten Welt' (ibid.) that supposedly manifests itself in modern Germany as it had done throughout the post-Socratic history of Western philosophy (ibid.).

¹⁷ Nietzsche goes so far as to describe Socrates as the 'Wendepunkt und Wirbel der sogenannten Weltgeschichte' (GT 15).

In contrast to this ‘sokratische[n] Weltbetrachtung’ (GT 19), Nietzsche regards both the glorification of knowledge and the assumptions upon which it is based as mistaken. Not only does Nietzsche doubt that the human intellect is capable of accessing ultimate truth, but he also strongly disputes the idea that the attempt to locate such truth is our most pressing duty. He claims, therefore, that the Socratic view of knowledge is not only a ‘Wahn’ (GT 15), but is also an ‘Unheil’ (GT 18); for it both weakens the individual’s ‘schöpferisch-affirmative Kraft’ (GT 13) by making him think that the acquisition of knowledge is the fundamental human imperative, and destroys the redemptive, transfigurative power (‘Verklärungskraft’, GT 25) of art.

The supposedly disastrous impact of Socrates’ thinking on art is one of the central topics in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. Nietzsche claims that since the days of Euripides – whose ‘enge Zusammengehörigkeit’ (GT 13) with Socrates is described by Nietzsche as a ‘zweifelhafte[n] Aufklärung’ and ‘Verkümmerung’ (ibid.) – art had often been viewed as a means of conveying or discovering truth, rather than a means of aesthetically enriching or affirming existence. Nietzsche also believes that this ‘naturalistische und unkünstlerische’ (GT 12) interpretation of art’s function – which he insists is both erroneous and detrimental to life – is the guiding principle of contemporary German culture.

Nietzsche frequently attacks the ‘sokratische[r] Trieb’ (NF 1871, 19, 16), which he regards as both hegemonic and enervating because it posits knowledge as our ultimate, defining goal and debases art in the process. He also targets the ‘Gelehrte’ (BA II) or ‘theoretische[r] Mensch’ (GT 15) who supposedly surrenders to this drive and therefore neglects the obligation to augment and affirm life rather than merely learn about it. It will be demonstrated, however, that Nietzsche does not view knowledge as innately harmful. Throughout his early works, he argues that knowledge plays a pivotal role in the development of a productive, ‘werdende Kultur’ (NF 1872, 19, 312), and that it therefore assists those who dedicate themselves to the ‘Zweck des Lebens’ (UB II, 4). Nietzsche develops this idea at

length in *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben* (1874), where he claims that an understanding of the past serves to inspire and instruct the abundant, creative individual, whom Nietzsche describes as: ‘der Mensch, der Grosses schaffen will’ (UB II, 2). Nietzsche even insists that it is as important to recognise that we need historical knowledge as it is to avoid being overwhelmed by it: ‘Dass das Leben aber den Dienst der Historie brauche, muss eben so deutlich begriffen werden als der Satz, der später zu beweisen sein wird – dass ein Uebermaass der Historie dem Lebendigen schade’ (ibid.).

This fundamental proposition – that we need knowledge to stimulate creative activity and serve life, and therefore cannot devote ourselves to the pursuit or acquisition of knowledge as an end in itself – is at the heart of Nietzsche’s understanding of ‘Fruchtbarkeit’. In order to advance this argument, it is necessary to address studies of Nietzsche that have ascribed to him the view that knowledge is a mere chimera. Some postmodern or deconstructionist readings of Nietzsche’s early works, which tend to focus on remarks in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the unpublished essay *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne* (1873), have portrayed Nietzsche as an uncompromising iconoclast whose primary aim is to undermine the legitimacy of every claim to truth by highlighting the unbridgeable epistemological gulf that separates man from the world in which he lives. The limitations of such interpretations must be demonstrated before we can examine Nietzsche’s explanation of how we should re-evaluate and redirect our desire for knowledge, and show that it is the mastery of the ‘Erkenntnißtrieb’ (NF 1872, 19, 38) – rather than its destruction – that Nietzsche believes is essential in order to make the ‘Rückkehr zum Leben’ (ibid.) possible.

Having investigated the ideas of ‘Freiheit’ and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ in Chapters Two and Three, Chapter Four will show how Goethe is consistently linked to these two themes in Nietzsche’s early works. This thesis will not compare Nietzsche’s theory of *Bildung* with that of Goethe’s in the search for similarities and suggestions of influence. It will focus instead on

the picture of Goethe that emerges from Nietzsche's numerous references to him in both the published works and *Nachlass*, and examine the strong correlation between this *Goethebild* and the Nietzschean ideal of *Bildung*.

This correlation has two aspects, the first of which lies in the attributes that Nietzsche ascribes to Goethe as an individual. It will be shown that Nietzsche portrays Goethe as free or independent by repeatedly stating that Goethe shares nothing in common with either modern Germany or its supposedly 'schlechte und entartete Kultur' (UB I, 2): a contrast that Nietzsche emphasises by referring to criticisms that Goethe himself had aimed at his compatriots. The early Nietzsche – as will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two – regards the devotion or subservience towards one's native land as a hindrance to self-cultivation and deleterious to culture. By stressing Goethe's essential 'non-Germanness' – or accentuating Goethe's remoteness from the conditions and tendencies that Nietzsche identifies in contemporary Germany – Nietzsche depicts Goethe as having preserved his personal 'Freiheit'.

Nietzsche also describes Goethe as someone who recognised the paramount importance of art and culture, and who saw knowledge as a catalyst for creative activity rather than an end in itself. He therefore portrays Goethe as a fruitful individual who, unlike the scholar or theoretical man – whom Nietzsche regards as a symbol of a culture that is 'alles wissend und nichts könnend'¹⁸ – is capable of having an impact on the world through the outpouring of his creative energy.

This view of Goethe as fruitful emerges in spite of Nietzsche's pronounced ambivalence towards the substance of Goethe's writing, and his sharp criticism of three things in particular. As well as contending that Goethe was both unable to write tragedy and completely mistaken about the nature of Greek antiquity – two failings which, in Nietzsche's opinion, are closely related to each other – Nietzsche also reveals a marked dislike of *Faust*.

¹⁸ Henning Ottman, *Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987), p. 32.

The motives for these objections will be investigated, before showing that Nietzsche's capacity to admire Goethe as a person while finding significant fault with his work – which, it will be argued, is a specific example of Nietzsche's general practice of treating the writer and his work as separate entities – is wholly consistent with his ideal of *Bildung*. Nietzsche does not accept everything that Goethe wrote and said – he could hardly be said to have maintained his personal independence or 'Freiheit' if he had done – but this does not preclude him from citing Goethe as one of his greatest heroes.

In the *Nachlass* segment from 1870 in which Nietzsche outlines his view of *Bildung*, he states that the self-cultivating individual has a responsibility not only to himself, but to future generations. His aim, according to Nietzsche, should not be to establish sacrosanct 'truths' that will guide thought and behaviour for years to come, but to stimulate the 'flow' or 'power' of those who follow him: 'Die wichtigsten Forderungen des Menschen an sich sind abzuleiten aus seiner Beziehung zum ganzen Strome späterer Generationen' (NF 1870, 8, 92). Throughout Nietzsche's early work, Goethe appears as one of the 'einzelne grosse Menschen' (UB III, 6) who is capable of invigorating Nietzsche's own 'Strom': something that would not have been possible had Nietzsche concluded that Goethe's opinions on art and history represented the final word on the matter.

Goethe's ability to inspire and heighten Nietzsche's 'Thätigkeit' (UB III, 5) is increased by Nietzsche's extremely selective approach to Goethe's life and works. Eckhard Heftrich has shown, in his discussion of Goethe's significance for Nietzsche, that on many of the occasions when Nietzsche mentions historical figures, he does so in order to serve his own thematic or stylistic purposes, rather than to provide biographical detail or offer an interpretation of his subject's work: 'Nietzsche mythisiert historische Figuren so, daß sie für sein System von Wertschätzung taugen'.¹⁹ This technique, which prioritises the creation of

¹⁹ Eckhard Heftrich, 'Nietzsches Goethe: Eine Annäherung', in *Nietzsche Studien*, 16 (1987), 1-20 (p. 9).

new work over strict philological accuracy or the transmission of knowledge, is also consonant with Nietzsche's theory of *Bildung*.

Having demonstrated the connection between the early Nietzsche's *Goethebild* and his theory of *Bildung*, Chapters Five and Six will examine how the themes of 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit' inform Nietzsche's later philosophy and continue to underpin his image of Goethe. Although Nietzsche's references to *Bildung* are far less frequent in his works from the period between 1878 and 1888, it will be shown that he remains convinced of the paramount importance of personal independence and creative, life-enhancing activity throughout this decade.

Chapter Five will focus on Nietzsche's writing from between 1878 and 1882, which has been variously described as Nietzsche's 'middle'²⁰ or 'second'²¹ period. This distinguishes it from his more explicitly 'cultural' early works – which conclude with the fourth *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtung, Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1876) – and the series of books, beginning with *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883-1885), in which he develops his most famous doctrines. This thesis will make use of this tripartite division, which was first devised by Lou Salomé, while advocating the same caution that Salomé herself advised when she introduced it.²² There is undoubted value in an interpretive method which separates Nietzsche's oeuvre into manageable, thematically coherent sections, and which does not bend or distort Nietzsche's thought by forcing it into an ill-fitting hermeneutic framework. Yet we must also follow Abbey's recommendation in regard to the periodisation of Nietzsche's philosophy: 'it is possible to employ this schema while acknowledging that the boundaries between Nietzsche's phases are not rigid, that some of the thoughts elaborated in one period

²⁰ This term is borrowed from Ruth Abbey's excellent book, *Nietzsche's Middle Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²¹ Gianni Vattimo, *Nietzsche: An Introduction*, trans. Nicholas Martin (London: The Athlone Press, 2002), p. 85.

²² Lou Salomé, *Nietzsche*, trans. Siegfried Mandel (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 8. Salomé identifies 1878, when Nietzsche sent Wagner a copy of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, and the completion of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* in 1882 as turning points in Nietzsche's philosophy. She also insists, however, that the periods demarcated by these events overlapped significantly (ibid.).

were adumbrated in the previous one, that there are differences within any single phase and that some concerns pervade his oeuvre'.²³ Abbey's latter point is particularly pertinent to this thesis: for it will be shown that the ideas of 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit' appear throughout Nietzsche's works.

Menschliches, Allzumenschliches (1878), which is the first published work of this second period, is often cited as the beginning of a 'Neuorientierung'²⁴ in Nietzsche's philosophy, in which he turns away from the veneration of art that characterises *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and embraces a 'scientific viewpoint'.²⁵ The book marks an undeniable shift in Nietzsche's attitudes towards art and science, which is carried over into his two subsequent works, *Morgenröthe* (1881) and *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882). Chapter Five will demonstrate, however, that this change is grounded in consistency. The praise that Nietzsche now bestows on science is closely related to his belief that scientific methods can free us from dogmatic, self-limiting beliefs, and that they are an essential tool in the hands of the 'freie Geister' whom Nietzsche addresses in the book's subtitle. These free spirits, according to Nietzsche, preserve their autonomy through a defiance of convention that is strongly reminiscent of the 'untimely' man from Nietzsche's early works: 'Man nennt Den einen Freigeist, welcher anders denkt, als man von ihm auf Grund seiner Herkunft, Umgebung, seines Standes und Amtes oder auf Grund der herrschenden Zeitansichten erwartet' (MA 225).

Nietzsche's new respect for science stems from what he sees as its capacity to liberate us from stifling 'truths'. Similarly, the cooling of his passion for art is linked to the fact that he now associates the artist with the desire for 'profound' ('tiefsinnig', MA 146) or absolute truth: the same longing that Nietzsche portrays as typical of the Socratic man in his early works. This reversal does not mean that Nietzsche abjures art, however, in the same way that

²³ Abbey, *Nietzsche's Middle Period*, p. xii.

²⁴ Karl Pestalozzi, 'Der Aphorismus – Nietzsches sokratische Schreibweise?', in *Nietzsche: Radikalaufklärer oder radikaler Gegenauflärer?*, ed. Renate Reschke (Berlin: Akademie, 2004), 81-92 (p. 81).

²⁵ Robin Small, *Nietzsche and Rée. A Star Friendship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p. xxi.

he never fully rejects knowledge in his earlier writing. Not only does Nietzsche continue to acknowledge art's importance as a shield and source of comfort, which both protects men from the terrible nature of existence and satisfies their ineradicable need for 'Vergnügen' and 'Freude' (MA 251), but he also outlines an ideal form of creativity that issues from the 'Überschuss einer weisen und harmonischen Lebensführung' (VM 173). It will be argued that this ideal – which suggests a natural outflow of energy that enhances existence and is bound up with the life we lead as individuals – closely corresponds to the idea of 'Fruchtbarkeit' that Nietzsche describes in his early work on *Bildung*.

The resemblance is heightened by Nietzsche's use Goethe as a paradigm for this 'healthy creativity'. He contends that Goethe possessed the 'Kraft, Güte, Milde, Reinheit und ungewolltes, eingeborenes Mass' (VM 99) that is a prerequisite of this exemplary 'dichterische Kraft' (ibid.), and therefore views Goethe as a suitable model for future poets.

As well as continuing to depict Goethe as fruitful or productive, Nietzsche also emphasises Goethe's independence by insisting – as he does throughout his works – that Goethe could never belong to Germany or the German cultural tradition, despite the supposed attempts of various factions within that tradition to appropriate him. This constancy of Nietzsche's *Goethebild* in his early and middle periods reflects, and is almost certainly a consequence of, the continued importance that Nietzsche attaches to the ideas of 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit'.

Chapter Six, which will conclude the main body of the thesis, will show that Nietzsche's interest in these motifs – 'Freiheit', 'Fruchtbarkeit' and the *Goethebild* that subsumes them both – is also undimmed in his later work. The analysis in this chapter will focus on *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886) and *Götzen-Dämmerung* (1888), and will show that in both of these texts, Nietzsche reiterates his twofold argument that we must preserve our independence or 'Freiheit' from the prevailing customs, values and beliefs of the age, and that we must aspire to create rather than merely absorb knowledge. In *Jenseits von Gut und*

Böse, Nietzsche reintroduces the figure of the ‘freie Geist’ – whom he first mentions in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* – and once again argues that this archetype’s defining characteristic is his refusal to be constrained by any truth that would impede his further growth and development. This makes the free spirit, according to Nietzsche, an implacable enemy of dogmatism, and indeed of anything that would subdue his constant striving: an idea that is very closely linked to the ideal of self-cultivation which Nietzsche describes in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*.

Nietzsche’s belief in the paramount importance of creativity and action – which forms the basis of his concept of ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ in his early works – also appears in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* as the idea of ‘Spannung’ (JGB Vorrede). This idea is imbued with the sense of possibility and incessant change which is vital to ‘Fruchtbarkeit’, and Nietzsche opposes it to the ease and complacency that he regards as a consequence of faith or a belief in truth. In both *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* and *Götzen-Dämmerung*, Nietzsche resumes his polemic against the Socratic or scholarly man who supposedly cannot add to life because he has dedicated himself to learning about it. He also, however, retains the view from his early works that knowledge and the desire to acquire it are extremely valuable if they are used properly; he insists that the search for truth had initially increased the intensity of the ‘Spannung’ felt by men throughout European history, until that search came to be viewed – disastrously, in Nietzsche’s opinion – as an end in itself.

Finally, it will be demonstrated that Goethe is once again depicted as an independent and fruitful individual in these late works. Nietzsche continues to distance Goethe from the errors and limitations that Nietzsche sees as typically German. He extends this argument, however, by claiming that Goethe had successfully overcome a wide range of potentially limiting tendencies and proclivities – some of which originated within him, and others that were characteristic of the age – that could have impeded his self-creation. Instead of devoting himself to any of these ideas or inclinations, Goethe supposedly assimilated and made use of

them, with the result that he was able to shape his own identity rather than being a simple product of the era and place in which he happened to live.

This image is conveyed with remarkable clarity in a passage from the ‘Streifzüge’ chapter of *Götzen-Dämmerung* (§49), in which Nietzsche highlights Goethe’s crucial expansiveness as an individual. This latter attribute supposedly enabled Goethe to incorporate a large, diverse range of experiences and knowledge within the borders of his self-determined personality, while not being overwhelmed. This controlled multiplicity, which prevents him from devoting himself to a single facet of existence but also ensures that his individualism is not submerged beneath a flood of information and knowledge, is very much in keeping with the ideal of autonomous self-cultivation that Nietzsche establishes in his early works.

Before beginning this analysis, we must acknowledge a strikingly unpleasant feature of Nietzsche’s philosophy of *Bildung* that must always be borne in mind when analysing his discussion of culture and education. Throughout his works, Nietzsche presents a picture of *Bildung* that is unashamedly, and often repugantly elitist.²⁶ He describes it as ‘aristocratic’ (‘aristokratische’, BA IV), and criticises the supposedly demotic approach to *Bildung* that he believes had arisen in Germany as a response to the ‘sociale Frage’ (BA I).²⁷ As Detwiler correctly argues, a principal cause of Nietzsche’s ‘radical elitism’²⁸ or ‘aristocratic

²⁶ In his unpublished essay *Der griechische Staat*, Nietzsche presents this argument in even starker terms by insisting that the Greek model of *Bildung* was predicated on the subjugation of the majority in a form of slavery: ‘Die Bildung, die vornehmlich wahrhaftes Kunstbedürfnis ist, ruht auf einem erschrecklichen Grunde: dieser aber giebt sich in der dämmernden Empfindung der Scham zu erkennen. Damit es einen breiten tiefen und ergiebigen Erdboden für eine Kunstentwicklung gebe, muß die ungeheure Mehrzahl im Dienste einer Minderzahl, über das Maaß ihrer individuellen Bedürftigkeit hinaus, der Lebensnoth sklavisch unterworfen sein’.

²⁷ Clark explains the ‘sociale Frage’ as an agglomeration of ideas and themes that are commonly associated with progressive politics: ‘The Social Question embraced a complex of issues: working conditions within factories, the problems of housing in densely populated areas, the dissolution of corporate entities (eg guilds, estates), the vicissitudes of a capitalist economy based on competition, the decline of religion and morals among the emergent “proletariat”. But the central and dominant issue was “pauperization” the progressive impoverishment of the lower social strata’. Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: the Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), p. 452.

²⁸ Bruce Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 2.

individualism’²⁹ lies in the importance that Nietzsche attaches to the ‘creative energies inherent in the rarest, most superabundant individuals’.³⁰ When Nietzsche writes about education, he is exclusively concerned with the ‘höhere Exemplar’ (UB III, 6) – among whose number he evidently includes Goethe.

It is also necessary to address a point that is related to Nietzsche’s infamous misogyny. Throughout this thesis, I shall use the masculine pronoun and refer to ‘man’ or ‘men’ in contexts where, in the discussion of other thinkers, the term ‘human being’ would be appropriate. In Nietzsche’s case, to write of ‘humans’ when he is referring exclusively to the male gender would be to deny or obscure a very prominent – and once again odious – feature of his philosophy.

Every interpreter of Nietzsche faces the issue of whether, and to what extent, one can legitimately make use of the *Nachlass*. While I will certainly not go to Heideggerian lengths and claim that the true significance of Nietzsche’s philosophy is to be found in his notebooks,³¹ I will make extensive use of the *Nachlass* in the course of the thesis. In this approach I concur with Poellner, who points to the notebooks’ clarification and elaboration of numerous issues which are sometimes only covered by allusive references in the published works. Providing that we approach the *Nachlass* responsibly, there seems no cause to deprive ourselves of such a ‘valuable source of material’.³²

This thesis will not claim unmediated insight into Nietzsche’s ‘real’ intentions when he talks about Goethe, or try to reduce Nietzsche’s thought down to an essential distillate. As Wolfgang Müller-Lauter argues, one is likely to over-simplify or distort Nietzsche’s thought

²⁹ Keith Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 11.

³⁰ Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism*, p. 7.

³¹ ‘Was Nietzsche seit seines Schaffens selbst veröffentlicht hat, ist immer Vordergrund. [...] Die eigentliche Philosophie blieb als “Nachlaß” zurück’. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, 90 vols (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1985), 43, p.11.

³² Peter Poellner, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

by trying to dig down and expose its ‘hidden roots’.³³ It will instead offer an explicatory scheme that is based on the *Goethebild* that emerges from a close textual analysis of Nietzsche’s works and notebooks,³⁴ and in doing so demonstrate the enduring value of using this *Goethebild* as a prism through which to examine Nietzsche’s ideas.

³³ Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, *Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of his Philosophy*, trans. David J. Parent (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 2.

³⁴ In this approach I seek to mimic Staten, who describes his own project in the following way: ‘I do not claim to be excavating what Nietzsche really thought underneath the ellipses, obscurities, ambiguities, confusions, and contradictions, but mapping the textual topography within which all these take place, or take their place’. Henry Staten, *Nietzsche’s Voice* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 3.

Chapter Two

Nietzschean ‘Freiheit’ and Nineteenth-Century *Bildung*

Nietzsche addresses the theme of independence and its relation to *Bildung* in the third of the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, entitled *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* (1874), and in the five lectures of *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*. In these works, he contends that education and culture must be free to promote their ‘höchsten, edelsten und erhabensten Ansprüche’ (BA I). He also believes, however, that they enjoy no such freedom in contemporary Germany because they are exploited and subjugated by a variety of ‘Gewalten’ (UB III, 6) or ‘Mächten der Gegenwart’ (BA III).

This twofold argument is fundamental to both Nietzsche’s early writing about *Bildung* and the *Goethebild* that emerges from it. This chapter will therefore begin by explaining in detail what Nietzsche means when he describes ‘Freiheit’ or independence as essential to *Bildung*, and by showing what he considers the purpose of *Bildung* to be. It will propose that in Nietzsche’s view, education should facilitate a lifelong process of self-cultivation that is neither directed towards a predetermined goal nor inhibited by any external authority. In this context, independence signifies the retention of personal control over one’s own development and not cleaving to any single idea, person or entity that may impede it. In the case of culture, Nietzsche insists that art and artists should not be expected to serve a cause or to effect a specific change in the outside world. If culture is subordinated to a particular purpose, it is supposedly incapable of enhancing life in a wider and more profound sense. This analysis will prepare the way for Chapter Four, in which it will be shown how Nietzsche portrays Goethe as a paradigm of freedom in both these senses.

Having established the significance of ‘Freiheit’ for Nietzsche’s *Bildungsphilosophie*, it will then be necessary to identify the differences between his

ideal and the reality, as he perceives it, in *Gründerzeit* Germany. It is not within the scope of this thesis to offer an exhaustive account of attitudes towards education and culture in Germany during the nineteenth century, not least because they were by no means fixed or unanimously held. Nor will it be possible to address the expansive question of whether Nietzsche's response to these attitudes is either fair or practical. It is necessary, however, to examine his personal view of the people, events and institutions that he holds responsible for the 'Philisterbildung' (UB I, 2) that he decries in *David Strauss: Der Bekenner und Der Schriftsteller* (1873), because this view influences his own theory of *Bildung* and the portrayal of Goethe in his early work.

It may be argued that no philosophy can be isolated from the period in which it is written; in Nietzsche's case this is particularly true because of the way he conceives of the philosopher's task. His self-image as a critic of his age is apparent in both the title and the content of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, and over the course of these four essays he repeatedly insists that it is incumbent on any great man to expose the limitations of the period in which he lives. In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, for example, he writes:

Wenn jeder grosse Mensch auch am liebsten gerade als das ächte Kind seiner Zeit angesehen wird und jedenfalls an allen ihren Gebrechen stärker und empfindlicher leidet als alle kleineren Menschen, so ist der Kampf eines solchen Grossen *gegen* seine Zeit scheinbar nur ein unsinniger und zerstörender Kampf gegen sich selbst. Aber eben nur scheinbar; denn in ihr bekämpft er das, was ihn hindert, gross zu sein, das bedeutet bei ihm nur: frei und ganz er selbst zu sein (UB III, 3).

Nietzsche regards his work – and the work of the historical figures whom he most respects, such as Goethe – as a challenge to prevailing values and beliefs. In this passage he also explains why he thinks such dissent or nonconformity is so important: it is supposedly the only way in which a person can be ‘ganz er selbst’, a quality that Nietzsche identifies here as a prerequisite of greatness and which, as will become clear, is essential to both his thinking about *Bildung* and his broader philosophical project.

Nietzsche’s ideas are forged on the anvil of the times, but tend to subvert the status quo rather than reinforce it. If we are to understand these ideas fully, it is extremely helpful to know what Nietzsche was reacting against.¹ For the purpose of this study, the history of Goethe reception in the years between Goethe’s death in 1832 and the publication of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* in 1872 provides a valuable example of the type of *Bildung* that Nietzsche confronts and ultimately rejects. On numerous occasions in his early period, Nietzsche criticises contemporary writers who had themselves expressed strong reservations about Goethe and his work, and whose disapproval was influential in shaping critical responses to Goethe during the nineteenth century. It is not always their ambivalence towards Goethe that Nietzsche specifically condemns, and this chapter will not claim that his theory of *Bildung* is a simple rebuttal of Goethe’s posthumous treatment at the hands of literary critics and scholars.

It will argue, however, that knowledge of Goethe’s reception during this forty-year period is extremely useful because it is an example of what Nietzsche defines as ‘Philisterbildung’. It helps to clarify why Nietzsche differentiates Goethe from

¹ Abel insists that it is essential to analyse Nietzsche’s thought with reference to its philosophical and historical context if we are to understand it fully: ‘Wer nur auf Nietzsche fixiert ist, sieht auch ihn nicht recht’. Günter Abel, *Nietzsche. Die Dynamik der Willen zur Macht und die ewige Wiederkehr* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1984), p. 6.

modern writers, which in turn will help us to understand Nietzsche's own *Goethebild*, his theory of *Bildung* and the significance of individual autonomy to them both.

1. 'Freiheit' and Education

Nietzsche's early writing about education is closely connected to other aspects of his philosophy. In particular, it is bound up with his rejection of what Cooper describes as the 'Polonian' sense of self, which 'represents the person as a multiplicity of selves, only one of which is the "true" or "real" one'.² This theory describes the self as the innate core of each individual that lies waiting to be discovered; it constitutes who the person 'really is' and neither human will nor circumstance can change it. Nietzsche dismisses this idea out of hand, insisting that far from being immutable, the self is actually in a constant state of flux.³ He contends that many of the things that help to define one's identity, such as inclinations, preferences and beliefs, are not fixed at birth but acquired and continually modified during the course of one's life.

Nietzsche explicitly states that the self is made rather than unveiled in the opening section of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*. In keeping with this proposition, he urges his reader to abandon the introspective search for an authentic, inborn self⁴ and to concentrate instead on the process of self-cultivation. This process, he explains, is linked to our interaction with the outside world; if we want to understand how it

² David Cooper, *Authenticity and Learning: Nietzsche's Educational Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 8. Strong agrees that Nietzsche rejects this view of the self, which he refers to as the 'artichoke model of the person, where one could discover the real person, the heart, by peeling away the inessential layers'. Tracy B. Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. xix.

³ Cooper, *Authenticity and Learning*, p. 13. See also Leslie Paul Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 109-110.

⁴ Nietzsche writes in the same section: 'Wie kann sich der Mensch kennen? Er ist eine dunkle und verhüllte Sache; und wenn der Hase sieben Häute hat, so kann der Mensch sich sieben mal siebzig abziehen und wird doch nicht sagen können: "das bist du nun wirklich, das ist nicht mehr Schale"' (UB III, 1).

works, we need only look back at the history of our lives and the things we have experienced so far:⁵

Vergleiche diese Gegenstände, sieh, wie einer den andern ergänzt, erweitert, überbietet, verklärt, wie sie eine Stufenleiter bilden, auf welcher du bis jetzt zu dir selbst hingeklettert bist; denn dein wahres Wesen liegt nicht tief verborgen in dir, sondern unermesslich hoch über dir (UB III, 1).

As well as denying the primacy of an inherent essence (‘dein wahres Wesen liegt nicht tief verborgen in dir’),⁶ in this passage Nietzsche also highlights two crucial aspects of self-cultivation. Firstly, he states that it is influenced by our contact with ‘objects’ (in this context, the term ‘Gegenstand’ covers the entire spectrum of human experience and refers to people, events and ideas as well as material things), and particularly the way in which objects can affect our view of, and relationship to, other objects. A simple example of this is how newly obtained knowledge can force us to reconsider a once firmly held opinion of someone or something, or to switch our allegiance from one group to another. Nietzsche regards such shifts in our attitudes and affiliations as indicative of a continually evolving identity, rather than as temporary deviations from a ‘genuine’ self.

Secondly, he evidently does not view this process as teleological. He instructs his reader that the true self or ‘wahres Wesen’ lies ‘*unermesslich hoch über dir*’ [my emphasis], which implies that self-cultivation is neither deterministic nor directed towards any form of pre-conceived endpoint, but carries on throughout our life. As

⁵ Cooper writes that for Nietzsche, ‘self-understanding must come through understanding of the world in which one is placed [...] heuristically, people do better to focus, first, on what is well outside of them.’ Cooper, *Authenticity and Learning*, p. 14.

⁶ It should be stressed that Nietzsche is not claiming that men possess no innate characteristics and are therefore infinitely malleable. In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, for example, he acknowledges the existence in some men of a ‘Mittelpunkt’ or ‘Wurzelkraft’ (UB III, 2). He does argue, however, that we should not see our identity as irrevocably decided, and that the events of our life – which we should seek to control as far as possible – have a significant impact on the person we become.

Nehamas explains: ‘The creation of the self is not a static episode, a final goal which, once attained, forecloses the possibility of continuing to change and develop’.⁷ As long as the individual remains receptive to new ‘Gegenstände’, the self is able to grow further. To borrow Nietzsche’s imagery, one never succeeds in reaching the top of the stepladder.

This belief in the formative impact of ‘Gegenstände’ led Nietzsche to think about the nature of experience – how and why the contents of our life influence the person we become – and to examine the problem of how to engage with the world without being pliant. For he recognises that if ‘Gegenstände’ affect the way in which we develop, we are vulnerable to having beliefs, opinions and habits imposed upon us and therefore to having our personality shaped by the needs and interests of other people. In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, Nietzsche repeatedly warns that by conforming to conventional modes of thought and behaviour, one risks losing the ‘Einzigkeit’ (UB III, 1) that makes a person ‘schön und betrachtenswerth’ (ibid.) He accordingly insists that each individual must chart their own course through life, in order to safeguard their future self or ‘wahres Wesen’:

Niemand kann dir die Brücke bauen, auf der gerade du über den Fluss des Lebens schreiten musst, niemand ausser dir allein. Zwar giebt es zahllose Pfade und Brücken und Halbgötter, die dich durch den Fluss tragen wollen; aber nur um den Preis deiner selbst; du würdest dich verpfänden und verlieren. Es giebt in der Welt einen einzigen Weg, auf welchem niemand gehen kann, ausser dir: wohin er führt? Frage nicht, gehe ihn (ibid.).

To cherish any single person, idea or thing as a ‘Halbgott’ is inimical to the Nietzschean model of self-cultivation because the focus of our devotion can come to

⁷ Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 189. Thiele also stresses the importance to Nietzsche of ‘continuity in change’. Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul*, p. 3.

dominate our thinking and conduct, instead of being a mere constituent feature of a complex and evolving identity. This places a cap on our ability to develop further and in different ways, because our response to new ‘Gegenstände’ is governed, or at the very least limited, by our prior allegiance. We risk getting stuck on a particular rung of the stepladder, instead of continuing the climb.

Nietzsche also insists that we cannot abrogate responsibility for our personal development by allowing another person or group to dictate how we think and act. Among the ‘zahllose Pfade und Brücken’ that one uses at the cost of ‘deiner selbst’, Nietzsche emphasises two in particular. The first, and most obvious, is slavish imitation. It is self-evident that by unquestioningly following another person’s example, we cannot possibly claim to have ‘built our own bridge across the river of life’. The second is the adoption of a collective identity to the extent that it suppresses individuality. By primarily viewing oneself as ‘German’, ‘a businessman’ or ‘a liberal’, one can become trapped by a rigid classification which prescribes certain attitudes and prohibits others. Nietzsche argues that in basing our self-perception upon our membership of a particular group, we sacrifice our distinct self (‘du würdest dich verpfänden und verlieren’). In the preceding lines of the essay, he urges us to embrace ‘Freiheit’ and cautions against the parochialism that leads men blithely to accept the dogmas and prejudices of their immediate surroundings, and which places the question of their identity at the mercy of their temporal and spatial environment:

Es ist so kleinstädtisch, sich zu Ansichten verpflichten, welche ein paar hundert Meilen weiter schon nicht mehr verpflichten. [...] Ich will den Versuch machen, zur Freiheit zu kommen, sagt sich die junge Seele; und da sollte es sie hindern, dass zufällig zwei Nationen sich hassen und bekriegen, oder dass ein Meer zwischen zwei Erdtheilen liegt, oder dass rings um sie eine

Religion gelehrt wird, welche doch vor ein paar tausend Jahren nicht bestand.

Das bist du alles nicht selbst, sagt sie sich (ibid).

This precept of the ‘sovereign individual’⁸ and the belief that ‘nonconformity is the necessary condition of self-realization’⁹ have clear implications for education, in which the student is reliant to varying degrees on the knowledge of the teacher and is potentially susceptible to the latter’s influence.¹⁰ If it is imperative that we remain the ‘wirklichen Steuermänner dieses Daseins’ (UB III, 1), how can we possibly submit to another person’s authority, however benign or well-intentioned? Nietzsche offers a solution to this apparent dilemma in a passage from *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, in which he reveals how an educator can assist in the process of self-cultivation without dominating or impeding it: ‘Deine wahren Erzieher und Bildner verrathen dir, was der wahre Ursinn und Grundstoff deines Wesens ist, etwas durchaus Unerziehbares und Unbildbares, aber jedenfalls schwer Zugängliches,

⁸ David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity. Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault and the Ambivalence of Reason* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 37. Owen continues: ‘Nietzsche argues that it is through the morality of custom that man’s fear of the unknown is overcome, in so far as this form of morality hinders the acquisition of new experiences’ (ibid., p. 38).

⁹ Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th edn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 176.

¹⁰ In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, Nietzsche is referring to education in the broader sense of lifelong self-cultivation, rather than the years at school and university in particular. However, it is worth noting that at nineteenth-century German universities, professors retained considerable influence over their students despite the growing importance attached to independent research and other heuristic methods. As McClelland writes: ‘The successful seminar participant would end by surpassing the authority of the professor, at least in a limited sector of his expertise, rather than merely absorbing the authoritative information provided by the professor. Yet the student retained deference to the residual, traditional authority of the teacher, who remained a valued critic and, in a particular sense, a professional guide and patron [...] The seminar’s stress on mastery of method placed the student in a position comparable to that of the apprentice working under the close supervision of the master’. Charles E. McClelland, *State, Society and University in Germany 1700-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 179-181. This echoes an observation made by Friedrich Paulsen in his survey of German universities at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although Paulsen is keen to stress the academic freedom enjoyed by contemporary German students, he acknowledges that: ‘Natürlich fällt dabei den Professoren als den Älteren und in diesem Kampf Erprobten die Rolle der Führer, der Vorangehenden zu’. Friedrich Paulsen, *Die deutschen Universitäten und das Universitätsstudium* (Berlin: A. Asher & Co, 1902), p. 231.

Gebundenes, Gelähmtes: deine Erzieher vermögen nichts zu sein als deine Befreier’ (ibid.).¹¹

The description of the teacher as a ‘Befreier’ enshrines the principle of individual autonomy and points to a form of education which respects this principle while simultaneously providing guidance and support. Nietzsche’s liberator does not attempt to impose beliefs, values or ideas upon his student, or measure him against a preordained or inflexible standard. Instead, the ‘Befreier’ sets the student on the path of lifelong and unrestricted personal development, through which the latter forms his own unique character and *Weltanschauung*.

The assertion that the ‘Befreier’ views the self as ‘unerziehbar’ and ‘unbildbar’ further illustrates this difference between Nietzsche’s concept of self-cultivation and the type of education which aims to raise someone to a specified level of competence or virtue. As has been shown, Nietzsche certainly does not think that the self is unchangeable. He is arguing instead that it cannot be taught or passed on to us by someone else in the way that knowledge or tradition can be. He expands on this theme in the subsequent lines of the essay:

Und das ist das Geheimniss aller Bildung: sie verleiht nicht künstliche Gliedmaassen, wächserne Nasen, bebrillte Augen – vielmehr ist das, was diese Gaben zu geben vermöchte, nur das Afterbild der Erziehung. Sondern Befreiung ist sie, Wegräumung alles Unkrauts, Schuttwerks, Gewürms, das die zarten Keime der Pflanzen antasten will (ibid).

The deliberate shaping of a person’s character is compared here to giving that person glasses or a false nose: inculcated beliefs, values and customs act as a disguise that conceals our ‘true’ self, which for Nietzsche is the identity that we construct

¹¹ Nietzsche also opposes the idea of a revealed self in his final work, judging by the subtitle of subtitle of *Ecce homo* – ‘Wie man wird, was man ist’.

independently. Nietzsche insists that education should instead emancipate the individual from anything that restricts his freedom of thought and action, a task which he describes here as the ‘Wegräumung alles Unkrauts, Schuttwerks, Gewürms’.

Yet how does Nietzsche propose to achieve this ‘Befreiung’? It is not clear that independence of mind can be taught, or acquired by the student through practice or repetition. Nietzsche appears to agree, and consequently defines the role of the teacher by the capacity to inspire rather than instruct. This underpins the huge importance that he attributes to the ‘solitary’ or ‘untimely’ man as a role model, which he explains by relating the encouragement that he sought from historical figures whom he considered to have rebelled against convention and pursued their ‘einzigen Weg’:

Es heisst also wirklich in seinen Wünschen ausschweifen, wenn ich mir vorstellte, ich möchte einen wahren Philosophen als Erzieher finden, welcher einen über das Ungenügen, soweit es in der Zeit liegt, hinausheben könnte und wieder lehrte, *einfach* und *ehrlich*, im Denken und Leben, also unzeitgemäss zu sein, das Wort im tiefsten Verstande genommen (UB III, 2).

Being taught to think and live honestly is very different from being given a ready-made doctrine that one can follow to the letter. It demands that the educator be more a source of motivation than of knowledge, and for this reason Nietzsche values visible human qualities in his teachers – and particularly the courage to be ‘unzeitgemäss’ – far more than erudition or perspicacity. Such qualities enable educators to fulfil a totemic function, the sense of which is conveyed in another quotation: ‘Gewiss, es giebt wohl andre Mittel, sich zu finden, aus der Betäubung, in welcher man gewöhnlich wie in einer trüben Wolke webt, zu sich zu kommen, aber ich weiss kein besseres, als sich auf seine Erzieher und Bildner zu besinnen’ (UB III,

1). The educator, Nietzsche contends, should act as a catalyst for his student's endeavours, rather than supervise or regulate them.

This belief is evident in Nietzsche's attitude towards the philosophers and artists that he acknowledges as his intellectual predecessors. Although Nietzsche is certainly an 'inveterate and incorrigible hero-worshipper',¹² he is careful to ensure that his devotion does not descend into imitation. He aspires neither to copy Goethe's prose nor to recapitulate Schopenhauer's ontology, because he believes that great men – and it is fair to suggest that Nietzsche considered himself one – must develop a style and worldview that is distinctly their own. The personalities and works of one's antecedents may inspire the process of personal *Bildung*, but they cannot be allowed to dominate or inhibit it. In fact, we will see that Nietzsche's determination to think simply and honestly frequently leads him to find fault with the ideas of his mentors, while continuing to praise the courage and steadfastness with which they ploughed their own furrow.

It is necessary here to address an apparent paradox that Rosenow identifies in the doctrine of self-liberation expressed in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* and Nietzsche's emphasis on 'Gehorsam und Gewöhnung' (BA IV) in *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*. As Rosenow rightly points out, Nietzsche writes at length in the latter work of the importance of instilling obedience in those being educated, a demand which seems to contradict the idea of autonomous development.¹³ Rosenow claims that that the confusion is merely an example of the imperfections that characterise any rough draft. Nietzsche's theory of education, he suggests, remained a work in progress during the early 1870s: 'These paradoxes are more apparent than

¹² Nicholas Martin, 'Nietzsche's Goethe: In Sickness and in Health', *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 77/2 (2008), 113-124 (p. 114).

¹³ Eliyahu Rosenow, 'Nietzsche's Concept of Education', in *Nietzsche as Affirmative Thinker*, ed. Yirmiyahu Yovel (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), p. 124.

real: they adumbrate Nietzsche's concept of education, fully worked out in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* which Nietzsche considered to be his central work'.¹⁴

Such an interpretation, however, not only risks underestimating the importance of Nietzsche's early work, but also implies a degree of inconsistency which cannot be substantiated upon close reading. *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* deals with a different stage of education than that discussed in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, namely, the early years at school and university. The demands that Nietzsche makes of these institutions are distinct from the lifelong programme of self-development advocated in the third *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtung*. With regard to the education of schoolboys, Nietzsche undoubtedly believes in the importance of obedience. For how can one exercise independence of judgement prior to gaining the life experience which Nietzsche deems so essential to formulating a world view? As the philosopher sardonically remarks in the fifth lecture: 'Glückliche Zeit, in der die Jünglinge weise und gebildet genug sind, um sich selbst am Gängelbände führen zu können!' (BA V).

Nietzsche does not claim that school teaching should become more permissive. Yet he does demand that it should *prepare* one for a life of intellectual autonomy, and as such should be free of the influence of any party whose vested interest could interfere with or curtail this preparation. This grounding in culture provided by schools and universities precedes the influence upon the pupil of the 'liberating' philosopher. The philosopher's student is granted a far greater degree of freedom than the school pupil. In this case, Rosenow is correct when he states that: 'The essence of education is therefore the dialectical tension by means of which both

¹⁴ Ibid.

the educator and his disciples each discover their own self.’¹⁵ The philosopher should certainly be a capable guide, but he should not be regarded as infallible.

2. The ‘Wirklicher Mensch’ and ‘Productive Einzigkeit’

Despite his consistent advocacy of personal autonomy and unshakeable belief in the need to follow one’s own path, Nietzsche nevertheless stipulates two basic guidelines with regard to the form that this defiant individualism should take. The first concerns *how* one should be independent. While greatly respecting nonconformity and praising those who stood firm against the tide of ‘öffentliche Meinung’,¹⁶ Nietzsche also demands that this resistance should be carried out by actively confronting the world, rather than meekly withdrawing from it. Although much of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* can be read as a paean to the virtues of the ‘Einsiedler’ (UB III, 3), Nietzsche is careful to differentiate between the strong, independent-minded individualist and the recluse. His opposition to seclusion as a mode of untimeliness is a corollary of his dismissing introspection as a means of acquiring self-awareness. Self-cultivation, as Nietzsche understands it, cannot take place in hermetic isolation but demands engagement with the world, even – or especially – if this engagement is characterised by conflict.

The portrayal of Nietzsche’s eponymous educator reflects this belief. Nietzsche describes the circumstances of Schopenhauer’s upbringing as particularly advantageous: he praises his peripatetic childhood and resulting cosmopolitanism, the time spent working in his father’s merchant’s office and the scrupulous distance that

¹⁵ Ibid., p.127.

¹⁶ Nietzsche uses this term repeatedly throughout the first three *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. See for example UB II, 8: ‘Wer aber erst gelernt hat, vor der “Macht der Geschichte” den Rücken zu krümmen und den Kopf zu beugen, der nickt zuletzt chinesenhaft-mechanisch sein “Ja” zu jeder Macht, sei dies nun eine Regierung oder eine öffentliche Meinung oder eine Zahlen-Majorität, und bewegt seine Glieder genau in dem Takte, in welchem irgend eine “Macht” am Faden zieht’.

he maintained between himself and academia, which Nietzsche summarises as the resolution to study ‘nicht Bücher, sondern Menschen’ (UB III, 7). Such experiences supposedly ensured that Schopenhauer both escaped the affiliations and responsibilities that would have otherwise impeded his independent development, and was able to acquire the familiarity with life and the world which makes such development possible. The cumulative effect of these experiences is summed up by Nietzsche as the condition of ‘Freiheit’: ‘freie Männlichkeit des Charakters, frühzeitige Menschenkenntniss, keine gelehrte Erziehung, keine patriotische Einklemmung, kein Zwang zum Broderwerben, keine Beziehung zum Staate – kurz Freiheit und immer wieder Freiheit’ (UB III, 8).

Earlier in the essay, Nietzsche alludes to an aspect of ‘Freiheit’ that, as will be shown in the following chapters, he accords greater prominence in other works. Here it is mentioned almost as an afterthought, in a manner at odds with the importance that he ascribes to it elsewhere. Having spoken of the need for the individual spirit to be ‘befreit’ (UB III, 3) and to attain to a state of ‘Unumschränktheit’ (ibid.), he adds a vital caveat. This unlimitedness, he insists, should not descend into anarchy. While it is the duty of the individual to resist any heteronomous power that would threaten his independence, he is also obliged to impose his own boundaries and determine his own rules. Unlimitedness, Nietzsche contends here, equates to ‘schöpferische Selbstumschränkung’ (ibid.). Although he offers no explanation as to why he feels this to be the case, and moves on from this substantial qualification immediately after introducing it, his reference to ‘creative self-limitation’ hints at an argument that he expounds more fully in the context of his thinking about the purpose of knowledge, including in *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben* (1874). Self-

limitation, he suggests, is necessary if one is to be fruitful: as we will see, Nietzsche regards it as a precondition of both artistic creativity and self-cultivation.

Schopenhauer is the main point of reference in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* and the embodiment, as far as Nietzsche is concerned, of this disciplined, autonomous self-cultivation. Yet it is apparent that Nietzsche also has other men in mind as suitable models and that Goethe is foremost among them. When describing Schopenhauer's biographical good fortune, Nietzsche refers to his acquaintance with Goethe as a young man as a piece of 'unbeschreibliches Glück' (UB III, 7) that taught Schopenhauer the importance of autonomy as well as alerting him to the dangers of a 'scholarly culture':

Vermöge dieser Erfahrung wusste er, wie der freie und starke Mensch beschaffen sein muss, zu dem sich jede künstlerische Kultur hinseht; konnte er, nach diesem Blicke, wohl noch viel Lust übrig haben, sich mit der sogenannten 'Kunst' in der gelehrten oder hypokritischen Manier des modernen Menschen zu befassen? (ibid.).

Nietzsche suggests here that it was Schopenhauer's personal association with Goethe that was beneficial and which caused Schopenhauer to recognise the value of personal freedom and strength, rather than his familiarity with *Faust*, the *Gespräche mit Eckermann* or Goethe's scientific research. This reveals Nietzsche's view of Goethe as independent or free, and also firmly casts Goethe in the mould of a 'Befreier' by portraying his character as the crucial factor, rather than the substance of his thought or innate artistic talent.

The notion of the educator as a liberator and its underlying premise that education should embolden men rather than enslave them to a particular doctrine or creed adds a further dimension to Nietzsche's demand that men participate in life

rather than recoil from it. As well as being essential to their own development, the experiences of men such as Schopenhauer and Goethe furnished them with a credibility and value as teachers that, in Nietzsche's opinion, are denied to the scholar or career academic whose self-expression is limited to his writing:

Ich mache mir aus einem Philosophen gerade so viel als er im Stande ist ein Beispiel zu geben. [...] Aber das Beispiel muss durch das sichtbare Leben und nicht bloss durch Bücher gegeben werden, also dergestalt, wie die Philosophen Griechenlands lehrten, durch Miene, Haltung, Kleidung, Speise, Sitte mehr als durch Sprechen oder gar Schreiben (UB III, 3).

For Nietzsche it is axiomatic that if an educator is to inspire his students by virtue of his personal attributes, it is not enough merely to possess these attributes or to testify to their importance in his works; he must instead venture out into the world and display them in his deeds and demeanour. Elsewhere Nietzsche describes the task of setting an example through one's 'sichtbare Leben' as not only desirable, but an obligation. In a note from the *Nachlass* written in 1873, he stresses that as well as being responsible for his own self-cultivation, the philosopher¹⁷ has a duty to reveal the value of independence and personal freedom to others. The extract also provides a concise articulation of the principle that an educator or philosopher teaches people by remaining apart – but not hidden – from them:

¹⁷ Nietzsche often uses the terms 'philosopher' and 'educator' interchangeably, and in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* writes explicitly of the 'Philosoph als Erzieher' (UB III, 4). He also appears to conceive of his own philosophical project as a form of education. In a letter written in the same year that *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* was published, he writes: 'Ich kenne auch für mich kein höheres Ziel, als irgend wie einmal "Erzieher" in einem grossen Sinne zu werden: nur dass ich sehr weit von diesem Ziele bin. Inzwischen muss ich erst alles Polemische Verneinende Hassende Quälende aus mir herausziehen; und ich glaube fast, wir müssen das Alle thun, um frei zu werden: die ganze schreckliche Summe alles dessen, was wir fliehen, fürchten und hassen, muss erst zusammen gerechnet sein — dann aber auch kein Blick mehr zurück in's Negative und Unfruchtbare! Sondern nur noch pflanzen, bauen und schaffen! Nicht wahr, das hiesse "sich selbst erziehn!"' Letter to Emma Guerrieri-Gonzaga, 10th May 1874; KGB II/3, p. 224.

Der Philosoph ist einmal für sich, sodann für andre Philosoph. Es ist nicht möglich, es ganz allein für sich zu sein. Denn als Mensch hat er Beziehung zu andern Menschen: und ist er Philosoph, so muss er es auch in diesen Beziehungen sein. Ich meine: selbst wenn er sich streng von ihnen absondert, als Einsiedler, so giebt er damit eine Lehre, ein Beispiel und ist Philosoph auch für die Andern (NF 1873, 29, 205).

The idea that even ‘ungewöhnlich[e] Menschen’ (UB III, 3) require a ‘Wegweiser’ or ‘Zuchtmeister’ (UB III, 2) in the form of a similarly independent spirit is at the very crux of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*.¹⁸ The continued emergence of uncommon or solitary men depends, in Nietzsche’s view, on the willingness and ability of such men to assist each other from across the ages; by visibly demonstrating the resolve to be free and untimely, they act as a lodestar for the artists, philosophers and educators of subsequent generations.

Neither acuity of insight nor elegance of expression enable someone to fulfil this role in Nietzsche’s view, because he believes that systems and doctrines do not tend to liberate or produce untimely men; in fact, as has already been shown, he contends that they often shackle their adherents with a narrow and inflexible view of the world that stifles intellectual autonomy and curbs the process of self-cultivation. Nietzsche’s disdain for purely conceptual thinking that is divorced from the realities of life, which he disparagingly describes as ‘reine Wissenschaft’¹⁹ is linked to his conviction that to teach is not simply to write books or to transmit a fixed corpus of

¹⁸ The importance of this idea to Nietzsche is perhaps best displayed in an autobiographical passage in which he describes his own search for a suitable educator: ‘Wenn ich früher recht nach Herzenslust in Wünschen ausschweifte, dachte ich mir, dass mir die schreckliche Bemühung und Verpflichtung, mich selbst zu erziehen, durch das Schicksal abgenommen würde: dadurch dass ich zur rechten Zeit einen Philosophen zum Erzieher fände, einen wahren Philosophen, dem man ohne weiteres Besinnen gehorchen könnte’ (UB III, 2).

¹⁹ As an antidote to this kind of philosophy, Nietzsche advises contemporary thinkers to study Schopenhauer’s personality: ‘Also: ich wollte sagen, dass die Philosophie in Deutschland es mehr und mehr zu verlernen hat, “reine Wissenschaft” zu sein: und das gerade sei das Beispiel *des Menschen Schopenhauer*’ (UB III, 3) [emphasis added – JG].

knowledge, but to provide a model through the ‘muthige Sichtbarkeit eines philosophischen Lebens’ (UB III, 3). It explains his sharp censure of Kant, whom he contrasts to Schopenhauer – and implicitly to Goethe – as the archetypal ‘Universitätsphilosoph’²⁰ (UB III, 8):

Kant hielt an der Universität fest, unterwarf sich den Regierungen, blieb in dem Scheine eines religiösen Glaubens, ertrug es unter Kollegen und Studenten: so ist es denn natürlich, dass sein Beispiel vor allem Universitätsprofessoren und Professorenphilosophie erzeugte (UB III, 3).

The issue of individual autonomy is again raised here. Nietzsche argues that the combination of Kant’s Christian faith and his lifelong allegiance to the university in Königsberg severely compromised the integrity of his philosophy. The need to abide by theological doctrine or professional codes of conduct is incompatible with the rigorous honesty and independence that Nietzsche requires of his role models.²¹

Yet Nietzsche’s objection also relates to the task that he expects educators or philosophers to perform. He argues that Kant’s narrow pursuit of scholarship and theoretical speculation had left him hopelessly ill-equipped to teach in the Nietzschean sense: by missing out on the immersion in what Nietzsche vaguely describes as ‘die Dinge’, which Schopenhauer and Goethe both experienced and which no degree of erudition could replace, Kant supposedly sacrificed not only the full bloom of his genius but also much of his value to posterity. It consigned him, in

²⁰ Schopenhauer’s own contempt for academic philosophy is apparent in his satirical essay ‘Über die Universitäts-Philosophie’, published in his *Parerga und Paralipomena* (1851). Nietzsche refers to this essay in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*: ‘Schopenhauer würde, wenn er jetzt seine Abhandlung über Universitätsphilosophie zu schreiben hätte, nicht mehr die Keule nöthig haben, sondern mit einem Binsenrohre siegen’ (UB III, 8). See Arthur Schopenhauer, ‘Über die Universitäts-Philosophie’, in *Werke in zwei Bänden*, ed. Werner Brede (Munich: Hanser, 1977), 65-127.

²¹ Nietzsche addresses this problem – the way in which people strive to reconcile their thinking with pre-existing ideological or institutional loyalties – elsewhere in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*. For example: ‘Zu einem guten Theile ist sodann dem Gelehrten der Trieb beigemischt, gewisse “Wahrheiten” zu finden, nämlich aus Unterthänigkeit gegen gewisse herrschende Personen, Kasten, Meinungen, Kirchen, Regierungen, weil er fühlt, dass er sich nützt, indem er die “Wahrheit” auf ihre Seite bringt’ (UB III, 6).

Nietzsche's opinion, to the status of a 'scholar' (a term that is entirely pejorative in Nietzsche's usage)²² whose currency was logic rather than life and who therefore could never be taken seriously as a philosopher:

Ein Gelehrter kann nie ein Philosoph werden; denn selbst Kant vermochte es nicht, sondern blieb bis zum Ende trotz dem angeborenen Drange seines Genius in einem gleichsam verpuppten Zustande. Wer da glaubt, dass ich mit diesem Worte Kanten Unrecht thue, weiss nicht, was ein Philosoph ist, nämlich nicht nur ein grosser Denker, sondern auch ein wirklicher Mensch; und wann wäre je aus einem Gelehrten ein wirklicher Mensch geworden? Wer zwischen sich und die Dinge Begriffe, Meinungen, Vergangenheiten, Bücher treten lässt, wer also, im weitesten Sinne, zur Historie geboren ist, wird die Dinge nie zum ersten Male sehen und *nie selber ein solches erstmalig gesehenes Ding sein* (UB III, 7) [emphasis added - JG].²³

A man who deals exclusively in abstractions supposedly risks being reduced to one himself in the eyes of others. According to Nietzsche, Kant's failure to become a 'wirklicher Mensch' – a term that offers a viable précis of the aims and principles of Nietzschean self-cultivation – resulted in him being profoundly inadequate as an educator.

It should be noted that the young Nietzsche admired many of Kant's philosophical intuitions, praising him in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* for having demonstrated the limits of human reason and thereby achieving 'der Sieg über den im

²² For a detailed discussion of Nietzsche's opposition to scholarly aims and practices, see John Richardson's introduction to *Nietzsche*, ed. John Richardson and Brian Leiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 1-7.

²³ On the importance of 'life' as a fundamental principle in Nietzsche's theory of *Bildung*, see Thomas E. Hart, 'A Philosophy for Education', in *Nietzsche, Culture and Education*, ed. Thomas E. Hart (Ashgate: Farnham & Burlington, 2009), p. 113, and Hans Kluge, *Die Bildungsidee in den Schriften des jungen Nietzsches* (Inaugural-Dissertation der Hohen Philosophischen Fakultät der Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität zu Frankfurt, 1953), p. 13.

Wesen der Logik verborgen liegenden Optimismus' (GT 18). Nietzsche ascribes huge significance to this 'victory', which he believes had demonstrated the impossibility of solving the mysteries of the universe and which represented the essential first step in re-establishing a tragic culture that prioritised art and creativity over knowledge.²⁴ Yet this is not sufficient in itself to warrant Nietzsche's unqualified enthusiasm and it leads to his drawing a boundary between Kant's philosophy and the man himself.²⁵ Nietzsche's ability to make this distinction – to accord a writer, artist or philosopher a greater or lesser value than the work they produce – is extremely significant, and furthermore is entirely consistent with the notion of the educator as a liberator. It will be argued in Chapter Four that he employs this technique with Goethe, but to the opposite effect: while Nietzsche considers Goethe the man to be exemplary in many ways, he often finds fault with his work.

The second stipulation that Nietzsche attaches to the ideal of 'Freiheit' concerns *what* this independence should be directed towards. It was explained in the introduction to this thesis that as well as signifying the self-cultivation that the individual undertakes during the course of his or her life, the term *Bildung* also refers to the cultural or artistic output that should emanate from it. In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* and his other early works, Nietzsche firmly endorses this traditional view by insisting that it is not enough to live and develop autonomously; it is also necessary to

²⁴ 'Wenn dieser an die Erkennbarkeit und Ergründlichkeit aller Welträthsel, gestützt auf die ihm unbedenklichen aeternae veritates, geglaubt und Raum, Zeit und Causalität als gänzlich unbedingte Gesetze von allgemeinsten Gültigkeit behandelt hatte, offenbarte Kant, wie diese eigentlich nur dazu dienten, die bloße Erscheinung, das Werk der Maja, zur einzigen und höchsten Realität zu erheben und sie an die Stelle des innersten und wahren Wesens der Dinge zu setzen und die wirkliche Erkenntnis von diesem dadurch unmöglich zu machen [...] Mit dieser Erkenntnis ist eine Cultur eingeleitet, welche ich als eine tragische zu bezeichnen wage' (GT 18).

²⁵ Brobjer argues that Nietzsche radically 'breaks' from Kant – along with Schopenhauer and Wagner – in 1876, two years after the publication of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*. In my reading, it is clear that Nietzsche's ambivalence towards Kant developed significantly earlier and is characterised by a demarcation between the merits of Kant's thought and his supposed flaws as a human being. See Thomas H. Brobjer, 'Nietzsche as German Philosopher: His Reading of the Classical German Philosophers', in *Nietzsche and the German Tradition*, ed. Nicholas Martin (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 39-82.

make proper use of one's freedom by striving to enrich the existing culture, a process which he somewhat obliquely describes as the 'Physis nachzuhelfen' (UB III, 3). The extent to which he regards this commitment to culture as an ineluctable precondition of freedom is conveyed in the final section of the essay: 'Jene Freiheit ist wirklich eine schwere Schuld; und nur durch grosse Thaten lässt sie sich abbüssen' (UB III, 8).

Nietzsche identifies a potential conflict between this obligation to assist a communal culture²⁶ and the equally pressing need to maintain one's independence. He claims that the isolation which the solitary man must endure can cause his creative drive to wither or harden. This 'Verhärtung' (UB III, 3), as Nietzsche calls it, can lead the solitary man to withdraw into himself in the way that Nietzsche unequivocally condemns in his discussion of self-cultivation and which he once again warns against here:

Der Mensch zerreisst das Band, welches ihn mit seinem Ideal verknüpfte; er hört auf, auf diesem oder jenem Gebiete, fruchtbar zu sein, sich fortzupflanzen, er wird im Sinne der Cultur schwächlich oder unnütz. Die Einzigkeit seines Wesens ist zum untheilbaren, unmittheilbaren Atom geworden, zum erkalteten Gestein. Und so kann einer an dieser Einzigkeit ebenso wie an der Furcht vor dieser Einzigkeit verderben (ibid.).

Despite their apparent incompatibility, Nietzsche is adamant that neither the duty to be 'fruchtbar' nor the resolve to be independent can be dispensed with. He therefore proclaims the need for a 'productive Einzigkeit' (ibid.), while acknowledging that such an approach to life would prove intolerable or unattainable for the vast

²⁶ Although Nietzsche's theory of *Bildung* undoubtedly emphasises that the individual's primary responsibility is to himself and his own development, he also acknowledges the collective benefit of an enhanced culture when he says that it will be: 'Zunächst zwar auch nur für sich selbst; durch sich aber endlich für Alle' (UB III, 3).

majority.²⁷ This ideal requires that both the individual – including the process of self-cultivation by which the individual's identity evolves – and his contributions to culture remain free from subjugation²⁸ by the forces of 'Convention' (UB III, 1), or indeed by any kind of domineering power.

Yet Nietzsche believes that *Bildung* in nineteenth-century Germany had been co-opted by a variety of such powers that wanted to advance their own narrow interests. Throughout *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* he rails against the 'missbrauchter und in Dienste genommener Kultur' (UB III, 6) that supposedly surrounded him. He also attacks the alleged usurpers. They include the state²⁹ and politics in general, those seeking financial gain, people who value form over content – which Nietzsche understands as pretension and dilettantism – and academia.³⁰ Each of these 'Gewalten' (ibid.), Nietzsche contends, sought to arrogate *Bildung* to themselves. They encouraged the production of art and men that could assist the pursuit of their particular objectives and who, in Nietzsche's terminology, were 'durch und durch zeitgemäss' or 'courante' (ibid.).³¹

Their desire for conformity was supposedly accompanied by a corresponding dislike for *Bildung* that generates independent thinkers: 'Jede Bildung ist hier verhasst, die einsam macht' (ibid.). They countered this type of education, Nietzsche claims, by disparaging it as 'Egoismus' and 'Epikureismus' (ibid.). Yet he also argues that these forces were aided and abetted in their suppression of the autonomous individual by cowardly men who wanted to evade the task of self-cultivation. He

²⁷ 'Dies ist den Meisten etwas Unerträgliches: weil sie, wie gesagt, faul sind und weil an jener Einzigkeit eine Kette von Mühen und Lasten hängt' (ibid.).

²⁸ 'Nun sehe er zu, dass er sich nicht unterjochen lasse' (ibid.).

²⁹ For an excellent analysis of Nietzsche's hostility to the Prussian state's interference in culture, see Quentin P. Taylor, *The Republic of Genius: A Reconstruction of Nietzsche's Early Thought* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997), p. 23.

³⁰ Nietzsche identifies these culprits, and analyses them at length, in the sixth section of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*.

³¹ See also BA I where Nietzsche initially uses the term 'courante'.

contends that instead of celebrating their status as an ‘einmaliges Wunder’ (UB III, 1), the vast majority of his contemporaries were content to accept borrowed opinions because it was easier to do so; behaviour which Nietzsche describes as the ‘lässige Einhergehen in erborgten Manieren und übergehängten Meinungen’ (ibid.). He views this surrender to the orthodox as evidence of widespread ‘Bequemlichkeit’ and ‘Trägheit’ (ibid.), even if he concedes that to undertake the task of self-cultivation is ‘kecklich und gefährlich’ (ibid.). In this way he portrays the relationship between the ‘Masse’ (ibid.) and the corrupters of *Bildung* as mutually reinforcing: men keenly adhere to a given ideology or way of life because it spares them the struggle of formulating their own worldview and creating their own distinct identity, which in turn swells the authority and power of the ideology’s purveyor.

The problem also extends to the realm of art and culture. Nietzsche argues that men’s readiness to prostrate themselves before ‘Halbgötter’ (UB III, 1) made them see culture as a means of promoting their particular idol, rather than as an end in itself. Instead of emanating from a ‘productive Einzigkeit’, culture was now primarily seen as a tool that could be exploited for political and social ends. Nietzsche insists that this is a travesty of its real purpose and argues in *David Strauss: Der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller* that this ‘System der Nicht-Kultur’ (ibid.) or ‘Pseudo-Kultur’ (UB I, 11) was personified in modern Germany by the *Bildungsphilister* (UB I, 2).

The concepts of ‘Pseudo-Kultur’ and the *Bildungsphilister* are hugely important for this study because of the frequency with which Nietzsche invokes Goethe as a counterpoint to them. Just as it is necessary to examine the trends and phenomena that Nietzsche was consciously reacting against in order to interpret his philosophy, so it is vital to understand the concepts and people to which Goethe is being contrasted if we are to render an accurate judgement of Nietzsche’s *Goethebild*.

In particular, it needs to be shown how Nietzsche depicts both ‘Pseudo-Kultur’ and the *Bildungsphilister* as antithetical to the ideal of freedom or independence.

3. ‘Pseudo-Kultur’ and the Problem of ‘das Wirkliche’

In an extract from the *Nachlass* from 1872, Nietzsche bluntly announces his hostility towards a large group of writers, journalists and scholars. Under the heading ‘Anzugreifen’, but without any elaboration of precisely why he wants to attack them, Nietzsche compiles a list of people and organisations including *Junges Deutschland*, Georg Gottfried Gervinus, Julian Schmidt, Herman Grimm, Gustav Freytag, the city of Leipzig³² (home of *Grenzboten*, the liberal nationalist newspaper formerly co-edited by Schmidt and Freytag), the *Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland* and David Strauss (NF 1872, 19, 259). Although he explains neither the cause of his antagonism nor the links between the members of this large and disparate group, it is clear from the context of his published works that these are some of the writers – together with places and institutions that he associates with them – whom he describes in *David Strauss* as the ‘deutsche Zeitungsschreiber und Roman- Tragödien- Lied- und Historienfabrikanten’ (UB I, 1), and whom he believes to have been responsible for the construction and sanction of a German tradition of *Bildung* that he unequivocally rejects.

Nietzsche refers to several of these prospective targets in another note from the same period, which is entitled ‘Bildungsanstalten und ihre Früchte’. On this occasion, however, he reveals the source of his antipathy towards them. He also pointedly contrasts them with Goethe:

³² On the significance of Leipzig to German liberalism, see Helmuth Widhammer, *Die Literaturtheorie des deutschen Realismus 1848-1860* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1977), p. 9.

Es fehlt an einer *imperativischen Behörde* der Kultur. Selbst Goethe stand ewig allein. Verehrung des Wirklichen, als Gegensatz zu der Zucht des Klassischen: doch ist das Wirkliche allmählich transmutiert in die Spießbürgerei und die Plattdeutschelei. [...] Gutzkow als entarteter Gymnasiast. Das junge Deutschland als entlaufene Studenten. Julian Schmidt, Freytag, Auerbach. Opposition gegen die imperativische Welt des Schönen und Erhabenen: Protest der Photographie gegen das Gemälde [...] Anknüpfung des Gelehrtenthums an die politische Tagesschablone. Jahn und Grenzboten (NF 1871-2, 8, 113).

The worship of ‘das Wirkliche’, of which the Young Germans, Schmidt and Freytag are accused here, refers to what Nietzsche sees as the instrumentalisation and marginalisation of *Bildung* by mundane, everyday life. The belief that culture and education had been placed in the service of prosaic masters such as making money or political expediency – and that they had been severely vitiated as a result – is fundamental to Nietzsche’s early work. As has been demonstrated above, Nietzsche identifies a number of forces in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* that he believes had conscripted culture for their own specific purpose: ‘wie sie *sich* mit Hülfe der Kultur nützen, so matt und gedankenlos sind sie, wenn dieses ihr Interesse nicht dabei erregt wird’ (UB III, 6). In this note from the *Nachlass*, ‘das Wirkliche’ refers to two of these forces that are particularly pertinent to Nietzsche’s depiction of the *Bildungsphilister* and his view of Goethe. The first is the ascendancy of scholars and science, which will be examined in detail in the following chapter. The second, which will occupy the remainder of this chapter, is the intrusion of politics into the cultural sphere.

In a letter to his friend Carl von Gersdorff from 1870, Nietzsche writes: ‘Im Vertrauen: ich halte das jetzige Preußen für eine der Cultur höchst gefährliche Macht’.³³ It is a fear he articulates repeatedly in his early works, and in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* and *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* in particular. His specific concern relates to what he sees as the modern state’s³⁴ natural instinct for self-aggrandizement, which leads it to subordinate anything or anyone that could conceivably emerge as a rival to its authority.³⁵ In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, he writes that the level of a state’s interest in *Bildung* is ultimately determined by its ability to exert control over it, rather than a desire to nurture untimely men or to encourage a fertile culture:

Vorausgesetzt, dass er sich stark genug weiss, um nicht nur entfesseln, sondern zur rechten Zeit in's Joch spannen zu können, vorausgesetzt, dass sein Fundament sicher und breit genug ist, um das ganze Bildungsgewölbe tragen zu können, so kommt die Ausbreitung der Bildung unter seinen Bürgern immer nur ihm selbst, im Wetteifer mit andern Staaten zu Gute (UB III, 6).

³³ Letter to Carl von Gersdorff, 7th November 1870; KGB II/1, p. 155.

³⁴ It should be stressed that at that this stage in his life, Nietzsche does not regard the relationship between *Bildung* and the state as necessarily antagonistic. In fact, he envisages the ideal state playing an active part in supporting the interests of culture and facilitating its development. He argues, for example, that the relationship between the ancient Greek state and the arts was protective rather than paternalistic, and that the Hellenic man had reason to be thankful for its existence instead of resenting its intrusion: ‘Nicht Grenzwächter, Regulator, Aufseher war für seine Kultur der Staat, sondern der derbe muskulöse zum Kampf gerüstete Kamerad und Weggenosse, der dem bewunderten, edleren und gleichsam überirdischen Freund das Geleit durch rauhe Wirklichkeiten giebt und dafür dessen Dankbarkeit erntet’ (BA III). Chapter Six will demonstrate that in his later work, Nietzsche is more pessimistic about the prospect of the state and culture prospering simultaneously.

³⁵ See Taylor, *The Republic of Genius*, p. 23. Taylor emphasises the fact that Nietzsche did not oppose the existence of the state *per se*, and recognised its importance in mediating the potential clash of hostile groups both inside and outside its borders: ‘[Nietzsche recognises that] without the state – a central authority to order community life and regulate man’s behaviour – there can be no real human society, but only a Hobbesian state of nature’ pp. 29-30. Nietzsche makes this point in the third lecture of *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*: ‘Denn was weiß man schließlich von der Schwierigkeit der Aufgabe, Menschen zu regieren d.h. unter vielen Millionen eines, der großen Mehrzahl nach, gränzenlos egoistischen ungerechten unbilligen unredlichen neidischen boshaften und dabei sehr beschränkten und querköpfigen Geschlechtes Gesetz Ordnung Ruhe und Frieden aufrecht zu erhalten und dabei das Wenige, was der Staat selbst als Besitz erworben, fortwährend gegen begehrliche Nachbarn und tückische Räuber zu schützen?’ (BA III).

There is an obvious conflict between this type of state intervention and the ideal of untrammelled personal development that Nietzsche sets out in the first section of the essay. If the motive for a state's promotion of *Bildung* is simply to further its own aims and interests, the citizens of that state cannot possibly pursue their 'einzigen Weg' in the way that Nietzsche demands. For if they come to identify fully or even partially with the values of the ruler or government of the land in which they happen to live – whether as a result of inducement, coercion or genuine sympathy – they risk falling into the trap of parochialism that adorns men with views and opinions that are not their own and which Nietzsche strongly counsels against. Instead of liberating men, state-sponsored education tends, in Nietzsche's view, to promote docility and restrictive obedience.

In Prussia this problem was exacerbated by the degree to which professional or academic success was dependent on successful passage through the state-controlled school system.³⁶ Nietzsche contends that the allure of privileges such as university study or careers in the military and civil service, combined with the state's capacity to supply or withhold them, served to increase men's subservience and further curtailed their independence:

Was kann der Staat mehr thun, zu Gunsten eines Übermaßes von Bildungsanstalten als wenn er alle höheren und den größten Theil der niederen Beamtenstellen, den Besuch der Universität, ja die einflußreichsten militärischen Vergünstigungen in eine nothwendige Verbindung mit dem Gymnasium bringt, und dies in einem Lande, wo ebensowohl die allgemeine

³⁶ Albisetti explains how in nineteenth-century Prussia, 'a Gymnasium education had already become an important source of social status. [...] Most important was the exclusive right of Gymnasium graduates to enter the universities and, after the required years of study, to take state examinations for the civil service, the ministry, medical and legal practice, and secondary teaching'. James C. Albisetti, *Secondary School Reform in Imperial Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 25.

durchaus volksthümlich approbierte Wehrpflicht als der unumschränkste politische Beamtenehrgeiz unbewußt alle begabten Naturen nach diesen Richtungen hinziehn. (BA III).

In the hands of the state – and with the complicity of men who covet the opportunities that the state can provide – education is reduced to the status of vocational training or an apprenticeship that prepares men for a particular job or function. Not only does this instill a limiting deference towards the state,³⁷ but it also contradicts Nietzsche's concepts of self-cultivation and 'Befreiung' by trying to mould the individual to fit a pre-existing specification.³⁸ If a man aspires above all else to be a civil servant or soldier and strives to cultivate the attributes required for that occupation, or if he identifies the service of the state as his 'höchste Pflicht' (UB III, 4), he inevitably places a ceiling on his capacity for further personal development.

Modern accounts of Prussian education and popular attitudes towards it during the nineteenth century indicate the conflict between Nietzsche's ideal and the contemporary reality. Jakobs and Krause argue that in the years following 1848, education increasingly came to be seen as a mark of social standing because of the opportunities that it afforded: 'Zunehmend wurde die durch Staatliche Institutionen vermittelte und durch Diplome beglaubigte 'Bildung' zum Statussymbol, das berufliche Chancen, besondere Rechte und soziales Prestige verschaffte'.³⁹ Fuchs,

³⁷ Nietzsche argues, not unreasonably, that men who are trained and employed by the state are likely to be deferential to it. In the first lecture of *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* he refers to: 'Die nur zu häufige Ausbeutung dieser Jahre durch den Staat, der sich möglichst bald brauchbare Beamte heranzieht und sich ihrer unbedingten Fügsamkeit durch übermäßig anstrengende Examina versichern will' (BA I).

³⁸ Nietzsche does not begrudge the basic education necessary for survival or prosperity. What is crucial, in his view, is that this type of practical training which prepares men for the 'Welt der Not' should not be confused with genuine *Bildung*: 'Sehr viel muß der Mensch lernen, um zu leben, um seinen Kampf ums Dasein zu kämpfen: aber alles, was er in dieser Absicht als Individuum lernt und tut, hat noch nichts mit der Bildung zu schaffen. Diese beginnt im Gegenteil erst in einer Luftschicht, die hoch über jener Welt der Not, des Existenzkampfes, der Bedürftigkeit lagert' (BA IV).

³⁹ Jürgen Jakobs & Markus Krause, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman: Gattungsgeschichte vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag, 1989), p.145-6. Ringer also describes how education had

meanwhile, highlights the doctrinal changes that supplemented the state's *de jure* control of educational institutions and which directly contradict Nietzsche's notion of 'Freiheit': 'Whereas nature was replaced by culture at the beginning of the century, culture was replaced by politics at its end. Education was national and aimed at obedience, discipline, piety, authority of the teacher and subordination of the student'.⁴⁰

It is not only education that suffers from the state's hegemony, but also the culture that derives from it.⁴¹ In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, Nietzsche provides summary indications of why he considers culture to be the 'Grundgedanke' (UB III, 6) of education, rather than a logically rigorous exposition of its aesthetic or philosophical significance. He states, for example, that culture is responsible for the production of genius and great men ('die Erzeugung des Genius – das heisst das Ziel aller Cultur' (UB III, 3)) without explaining precisely how this causal relationship works. Elsewhere one finds vestiges of a metaphysical concept of culture, such as when he claims that artists and philosophers are capable of fulfilling nature's 'erlösungsbedürftigen Drange' (UB III, 7), or when he asserts that culture is a

become a symbol of social prestige by the end of the nineteenth century: 'Thus private and public concerns, social and institutional realities, came together to define a distinctive elite. [...] Against this background, it is possible to appreciate the importance of the universities in German society around 1885. Their influence and the esteem in which they were held stemmed from their close connection with the bureaucracies, from their active participation in the system of state examinations and privileges, and from their traditional role as guardians of pure learning'. Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 34-35. See also Fritz Ringer, 'Bildung: The Social and Ideological Context of the German Historical Tradition', *History of European Ideas*, 10 (1989), 193-202.

⁴⁰ Eckhardt Fuchs, 'Nature and *Bildung*: Pedagogical Naturalism in Nineteenth Century Germany', in *The Moral Authority of Nature*, ed. Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 177.

⁴¹ 'Es muß also eine eigne Bewandtniß haben, sowohl mit jener Staatstendenz, welche auf alle Weise das was hier 'Bildung' heißt fördert, als mit jener derartig geförderten Kultur, die sich dieser Staatstendenz unterordnet' (BA III).

‘verklärte Physis’ (UB III, 4). None of these remarks are accompanied by detailed clarifications.⁴²

What is certain, however, is Nietzsche’s unwavering conviction that culture cannot be placed in the service of an extrinsic authority. He insists that exalted tasks such as nurturing genius or ‘redeeming nature’ cannot be performed if culture is simultaneously expected to serve a domineering master: ‘Mag der Staat noch so laut sein Verdienst um die Kultur geltend machen, er fördert sie, um sich zu fördern und begreift ein Ziel nicht, welches höher steht als sein Wohl und seine Existenz’ (UB III, 6). As he writes in the third lecture of *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, the state should only be involved with culture if it can, or is willing, to offer ‘sorgsame und weise Obhut’ (BA III) rather than tyrannical control.

Nietzsche’s polemic is not solely aimed at the state, however, or indeed at any specific entity or ideology. In his early works he assails a wide range of people and institutions – including Gervinus, Schmidt, *Junges Deutschland* et al., whom he names in the *Nachlass* notes from 1871-2 – that he claims have made *Bildung* hostage to their own needs and ambitions. The relative merits or failings of these various forces and their particular preoccupations are not Nietzsche’s concern; he is equally hostile to anyone or anything that makes minions of culture and education. The intensity and scope of this antagonism is expressed in the essay *David Strauss: der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller*, in which Nietzsche also first characterises and vehemently denounces the figure of the *Bildungsphilister*.

⁴² A thorough analysis of the early Nietzsche’s aesthetic metaphysics would require a chapter of its own, and furthermore is not relevant to the current discussion. As will become clear over the course of this thesis, Nietzsche harboured significant reservations about Goethe’s understanding of aesthetics and therefore does not view him as a suitable model for his own theory of art. What he feels he shares with Goethe is the belief in culture’s sovereignty and the insistence that it cannot be subordinated to any of the ‘Mächten der Gegenwart’.

Nietzsche introduces the term *Bildungsphilister* at the beginning of the essay's second section, having used the first to outline his overarching theme of Germany's supposed cultural decay and to argue that it is a crisis of which the vast majority of his contemporaries are completely unaware. In this opening sketch of the 'Gattung von Menschen' (UB I, 2) whom, as will be shown below, he insists is principally to blame for the depth and urgency of this crisis, Nietzsche claims that the ubiquitous influence of the *Bildungsphilister* has not only led to ignorance of the 'beschämende Thatsache' (ibid.) that is modern Germany's terrible cultural 'Defekt' (ibid.), but has even produced the 'grösste Zufriedenheit' (ibid.) with the way things are – a satisfaction that Nietzsche evidently regards as gravely misplaced. Nietzsche argues that, in common with the state, the *Bildungsphilister* has achieved this hegemony by adapting the institutions of *Bildung* to satisfy his own requirements, thereby preventing the emergence of a vibrant, healthy form of *Bildung* and violating Nietzsche's rule that culture and education should be at liberty to work towards their own elevated objectives, free from external interference: 'alle öffentlichen Institutionen, Schul- Bildungs- und Kunstanstalten gemäss seiner Gebildetheit und nach seinen Bedürfnissen eingerichtet sind' (ibid.).

This manipulation and subjugation of culture by the *Bildungsphilister* originates, in Nietzsche's view, from a misunderstanding of what constitutes the 'Ernste des Daseins' (UB I, 8). To Nietzsche, culture, education and philosophy are the things that matter and must be prioritised accordingly; the *Bildungsphilister*, on the other hand, regards them as adjuncts to political and social affairs whose value is determined by their proximity to these more pragmatic concerns. In Nietzsche's view the *Bildungsphilister* therefore legitimises, and even demands, the intrusion of 'das Wirkliche' upon *Bildung*, thereby removing its essential freedom.

These ideas require detailed investigation, which will be greatly helped by a study of some of the real-life examples of the *Bildungsphilister* that Nietzsche provides in his published works and the *Nachlass*. Many of the German literary figures that he names and criticises, including Schmidt, Gervinus and the Young Germans, had been prominent contributors to the body of Goethe scholarship during the nineteenth century. Their attitude towards Goethe, and specifically their tendency to assess his work within the framework of their own political opinions and ambitions, is a valuable illustration of the type of utilitarian cultural approach that Nietzsche wishes to reverse. A discussion of both the genus of the *Bildungsphilister* and the relevant aspects of nineteenth-century Goethe reception will therefore help to illuminate, if not necessarily corroborate, Nietzsche's arguments.

4. The *Bildungsphilister*

The first of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* is, in part, an excoriation of David Strauss' book *Der alte und der neue Glaube* (1872). Yet it is far more than a repudiation of a specific work or an *ad hominem* attack on Strauss himself.⁴³ Although Strauss is named as the 'Philisterhäuptling' (UB I, 6), Nietzsche's attention in the essay is focused on a broad group of writers, scholars and critics that he considers to be both a symptom and cause of Germany's alleged cultural decline, and whose individual members he regards as prime examples of the *Bildungsphilister*.

In his initial description of this figure, Nietzsche claims that what distinguishes the *Bildungsphilister* from the conventional philistine is that far from

⁴³ Strauss died the year following the publication of Nietzsche's essay. In a letter to Gersdorff, Nietzsche expresses his strong regret at the thought that his work may have upset Strauss in the twilight of his life: 'Gestern hat man in Ludwigsburg David Strauss begraben. Ich hoffe sehr dass ich ihm die letzte Lebenszeit nicht erschwert habe und dass er ohne etwas von mir zu wissen gestorben ist. – Es greift mich etwas an'. Letter to Carl von Gersdorff, 11th February 1874: KGB II/3, p. 200.

being a self-confessed enemy of the arts, the *Bildungsphilister* in fact professes his passion for culture and even considers himself a ‘Musensohn’:

Der Bildungsphilister aber [...] unterscheidet sich von der allgemeinen Idee der Gattung ‘Philister’ durch Einen Aberglauben: er wähnt selber Musensohn und Kulturmensch zu sein; ein unbegreiflicher Wahn, aus dem hervorgehe, dass er gar nicht weiss, was der Philister und was sein Gegensatz ist: weshalb wir uns nicht wundern werden, wenn er meistens es feierlich schwört, Philister zu sein (UB I, 2).

One of Nietzsche’s principal aims in *David Strauss* is to demonstrate the profundity of this ‘Wahn’ and to emphasise the gulf that separates the *Bildungsphilister* from genuine culture. This intention appears in his repeated claim that the *Bildungsphilister* is unqualified to pass comment on art because he completely lacks aesthetic sensibility. In his opening description of the archetype, for example, Nietzsche declares: ‘Ist ihm [der Bildungsphilister] die Entscheidung frei gegeben zwischen einer stilgemässen Handlung und einer entgegengesetzten, so greift er immer nach der letzteren, und weil er immer nach ihr greift, so ist allen seinen Handlungen ein negativ gleichartiges Gepräge aufgedrückt’ (ibid.).

On other occasions Nietzsche uses mockery as a rhetorical device to accentuate the shortcomings of the *Bildungsphilister*. He ridicules the presumptuousness that the *Bildungsphilister* allegedly betrays in judging great authors, such as when he attacks Strauss and Gervinus for having had the audacity to offer an opinion of Goethe and *Faust*:

Warum haben Sie doch, Herr Magister, so moderige Kapitelchen geschrieben! Einiges Neue lernen wir zwar aus ihnen, zum Beispiel, dass man durch Gervinus wisse, wie und warum Goethe kein dramatisches Talent gewesen sei:

dass Goethe im zweiten Theile des Faust nur ein allegorisch-schemenhaftes Produkt hervorgebracht habe (UB I, 4).

The overriding concern here is not the substance of Strauss and Gervinus' verdict. In fact, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Four, Nietzsche himself is deeply ambivalent towards much of Goethe's drama and towards *Faust* in particular. What he objects to instead is the act of judgement itself, which he sees as emblematic of the broader claim made by the *Bildungsphilister* to the status of 'obersten Richters über alle deutschen Kulturprobleme' (UB I, 2). Nietzsche views this claim as entirely without merit: firstly, because he believes that the conclusions drawn by the *Bildungsphilister* are based on a conception of culture that is hopelessly flawed, and secondly because he viscerally opposes the notion of a supreme authority that sets fixed limits and objectives for culture.

According to Nietzsche, one of the egregious errors of this 'Philister-Kultur' (UB I, 8) is that it binds culture to the trajectory of political and social developments. He contends that the events of recent German history are accorded a disproportionate significance by the *Bildungsphilister*, and that this had led to culture being viewed as an auxiliary to what was happening in the realm of nations and governments. Nietzsche detects this tendency in Strauss, whom he accuses of attributing an eternal or transcendent significance to the particular situation of the age and place in which he lived, and of thereby revealing his indebtedness to Hegelian philosophy; a state of dependence which itself contradicts Nietzsche's ideal of freedom or independence:

Es wird Strauss seltsam klingen, wenn ich ihm sage, dass er auch jetzt noch zu Hegel und Schleiermacher in 'schlechthiniger Abhängigkeit' steht, und dass seine Lehre vom Universum, die Betrachtungsart der Dinge *sub specie biennii* und seine Rückenkrümmungen vor den deutschen Zuständen, vor allem aber

sein schamloser Philister-Optimismus aus gewissen früheren Jugendeindrücken, Gewohnheiten und Krankheits-Phänomenen zu erklären sei (UB I, 6).

The ironic modification of ‘*sub specie aeternitatis*’ draws attention to Strauss’ supposedly circumscribed world view. By imbuing the prevailing conditions of *Gründerzeit* Germany⁴⁴ with an exaggerated value – or by ‘grovelling before them’, as Nietzsche phrases it – Strauss allegedly reveals his unsuitability as a guardian or arbiter of culture. This is because an unqualified devotion to the present, or a particular aspect of it, such as an ideology, a nation or a political party, threatens to efface culture’s paramount importance. By bringing culture under the rubric of a particular era or place, it comes to be seen as nothing more than an extension or subsidiary of the dominant ethos in that specific location, rather than as a sovereign entity in its own right.

Nietzsche tackles this problem on the very first page of *David Strauss*. It has already been shown how, in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, he insists that men should avoid ‘patriotische Einklemmung’ (UB III, 8) and maintain a safe distance between themselves and the state in order to retain their independence or ‘Freiheit’. Here he demands a comparable autonomy for culture, while simultaneously lamenting the absence of such autonomy in contemporary Germany. He claims that Prussia’s military victory over France in the 1870-71 war and the ensuing nationalist fervour had led to an assumption that German culture was both thriving and demonstrably superior to its French counterpart.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Der alte und der neue Glaube* was published in 1872, the year following German unification.

⁴⁵ An example of the type of attitude that Nietzsche criticises can be found in Julian Schmidt’s *Bilder aus dem Leben unserer Zeit* from 1871: ‘Es sind nicht starke und mächtige Barbaren, die das Culturvolk der Franzosen besiegt haben, sondern eine in jeder Richtung der Cultur der Franzosen wenigstens ebenbürtige Nation, in den meisten Punkten, wie wir jetzt wohl ohne Überhebung sagen dürfen, ihnen überlegen’. Quoted in Peter Sprengel, *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Literatur 1870-*

Von allen schlimmen Folgen aber, die der letzte mit Frankreich geführte Krieg hinter sich drein zieht, ist vielleicht die schlimmste ein weitverbreiteter, ja allgemeiner Irrthum [...] dass auch die deutsche Kultur in jenem Kampfe gesiegt habe und deshalb jetzt mit den Kränzen geschmückt werden müsse (UB I, 1).

Nietzsche believes this claim to be entirely spurious, arguing that culture had nothing to do with the defeat of the French army: ‘Nicht einmal an dem Waffenerfolge hat sie [die deutsche Kultur] mitgeholfen’ (ibid.). He also regards it – and the wider elision of German culture with the interests and achievements of the body politic of which it is an example – as disastrous for the German *Geist*:

Dieser Wahn ist höchst verderblich: nicht etwa weil er ein Wahn ist—denn es giebt die heilsamsten und segensreichsten Irrthümer—sondern weil er im Stande ist, unseren Sieg in eine völlige Niederlage zu verwandeln: *in die Niederlage, ja Extirpation des deutschen Geistes zu Gunsten des deutschen Reiches* (ibid.).

The proximate cause of this ‘extirpation’, Nietzsche suggests, is the triumphalism that accompanies success in war and which threatens to conceal the urgent need for reform and renewal in German culture. The necessity of ‘Kampf’ and ‘Tapferkeit’ (ibid.) had supposedly been obscured by the belief that: ‘die beste Saat der Kultur überall theils ausgesäet sei, theils in frischem Grüne und hier und da sogar

1900: *Von der Reichsgründung bis zur Jahrhundertwende* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1998) p. 14. Sprengel explains that Schmidt saw the Prussian army’s victory as the denouement of a German emancipatory struggle against French culture which had begun with Lessing’s criticism of the French academy (ibid.).

in üppiger Blüthe stehe' (ibid.). Nietzsche disputes this jubilant assessment and aims to expose it as a fallacy so that culture may be reinvigorated.⁴⁶

This is not sufficient in itself, however. For he also wants to explain *why* this unjustified 'Glück und Taumel' (ibid.) had emerged. He contends that culture is falsely adjudged to be healthy and strong because it is bound in the popular consciousness to the fortunes of the nation state, instead of being assessed on the basis of its own discrete merits or failings. The exaggeration of German culture's worth is therefore portrayed as symptomatic of an approach to culture that sees it primarily as a servant of politics and society.

Nietzsche undoubtedly aspires to the creation of a distinctively German culture and writes admiringly of the German *Geist* in the opening pages of *David Strauss* (UB I, 2). Yet he is also adamant that this culture cannot be constructed upon nationalist foundations. He explains this idea in a note from the *Nachlass*, in which he also cites Schiller and Goethe as models to be emulated:

Die kosmopolitische Tendenz Schillers und Goethes entsprechend der orientalischen Tendenz. Das Deutsche muss sich erst bilden: Bildung nicht auf nationaler Grundlage, sondern *Bildung des Deutschen*, nicht Bildung *nach dem Deutschen*. Das Deutsche muss gebildet werden: das noch nicht existirt (NF 1872-73, 19, 284).

Once again, Nietzsche's thinking operates on both a practical and a diagnostic level.

His recommendation of a cosmopolitan outlook stems in part from his belief that

⁴⁶ Craig has shown how Nietzsche stood in opposition to a cultural discourse and historiography that were strikingly nationalist in tone: 'Reading them [the works of contemporary scholars and politicians] leaves one with the impression that a fair percentage of Germans were not content with the victory that had just been won, at least not as a mere feat of arms; they were intent on proving to themselves and others that it had been preordained, that it was a natural reward for German moral and cultural excellences, and that it was an earnest of other triumphs to come. [...] Nietzsche reminded his fellow countrymen that a victory can sometimes be more dangerous than a defeat and that no victory can be more ruinous than one that is misconstrued by those who win it'. Gordon A. Craig, *Germany 1866-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 35. Gray makes the same point in Ronald Gray, *The German Tradition in Literature 1871-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 21-27.

Germany lacks a robust artistic heritage on which to build a national culture. This idea clearly occupies his mind in the months prior to the publication of *David Strauss*, as he addresses it elsewhere in his notebooks from that period. In the winter of 1872-73, for example, he writes: ‘Über die Bildung eines deutschen Kunststils. Bevor dieser da ist, um zu einiger Bildung zu kommen, nur der kosmopolitische Weg da’ (NF, 1872-3, 19, 298).

Yet he also explains that the existing native culture is inadequate *because* it has been assimilated into the discourse of political nationalism. In another extract from the same year – in which he again invokes Goethe and Schiller in support of his argument – he denounces the pervasive influence of this discourse, which he links to the prominence of men such as Hegel and Heine: ‘Unglücksfälle der deutschwerdenden Kultur: Hegel Heine das politische Fieber, das das Nationale betonte. Stützen der deutschwerdenden Kultur: Schopenhauer – vertieft die Weltbetrachtung der Goethe-Schiller-Kultur’ (NF 1872, 19, 272). As is clear from his praise for men such as Goethe or Schopenhauer, Nietzsche admires a number of authors who happen to be German and is enthused by notions like the German spirit and German culture. What he cannot accept, however, is if a passion for German culture arises from considerations that are external to it. In these notes, Nietzsche’s usage of the term ‘national’ connotes the merging of German culture with the affairs of the polity, which he regards as unacceptable.

Nietzsche argues that the complacency or ‘unvergleichlich zuversichtlich[es] Benehmen’ (UB I, 1) of the *Bildungsphilister* – which, it has been argued, he sees as at least partly due to the conflation of German culture with the German state – affects his response to the German cultural canon in another way. The study of classical authors, Nietzsche insists, should generate ‘Enthusiasmus’ (UB I, 2): it should be a

catalyst for further striving and endeavour in the cultural sphere by stimulating artistic productivity and impelling future generations towards new and original achievements. Yet far from accepting the challenge thrown down by history's gauntlet and deriving inspiration from the great authors of the past, the *Bildungsphilister* supposedly uses his familiarity with the classics to disguise the constant need for innovation. Nietzsche derides this approach by pointedly contrasting it with the way that Goethe had made use of history: 'Durch das historische Bewusstsein retteten sie sich vor dem Enthusiasmus – denn nicht mehr diesen sollte die Geschichte erzeugen, wie doch Goethe vermeinen durfte' (UB I, 2).

Nietzsche believes that the origins of this cultural lethargy lie in self-interest. The *Bildungsphilister* does not mine great literature for 'enthusiasm' because he uses it to legitimise or sanction the works that he has already created instead. He stresses the direct connection between modern culture and the classics because he thinks it will validate his own claim to greatness: 'Wir haben ja unsere Kultur, heisst es dann, denn wir haben ja unsere "Klassiker", das Fundament ist nicht nur da, nein auch der Bau steht schon auf ihm gegründet – wir selbst sind dieser Bau. Dabei greift der Philister an die eigene Stirn' (UB I, 2). Nietzsche not only regards this claim as preposterous because of modern culture's supposed impoverishment, but as tending to promote artistic stasis: it neglects the importance of perpetual regeneration in art and culture and leads to the crisis of 'Epigonenthum' (BA V) in which all new art is peremptorily dismissed as inferior to what has gone before:

Mit solchen Bilderbüchern der Wirklichkeit in den Händen suchten die Behaglichen nun auch ein für alle mal ein Abkommen mit den bedenklichen Klassikern und den von ihnen ausgehenden Aufforderungen zum

Weitersuchen zu finden; sie erdachten den Begriff des Epigonen-Zeitalters,⁴⁷ nur um Ruhe zu haben und bei allem unbequemen Neueren sofort mit dem ablehnenden Verdikt “Epigonenwerk” bereit sein zu können (UB I, 2).

The ability of future generations to contribute is denied, as is the possibility that the classics may have a value that goes beyond endorsing the themes and style of existing writers. The culture of the past and future is therefore sacrificed to the ephemeral demands of the present, which contravenes Nietzsche’s belief that culture can neither be regarded as the exclusive possession of any single era, place or ideology, nor assigned a narrow, immutable purpose.⁴⁸

Although Nietzsche does not name those guilty of such historicism here, one thinks of Gervinus’ famous assertion regarding Weimar classicism at the end of the fifth volume of his *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*: ‘Der Wettkampf der Kunst ist vollendet; jetzt sollten wir uns das andere Ziel stecken, das noch kein Schütze bei uns getroffen hat, ob uns auch da Apollon den Ruhm gewährt, den er uns dort nicht versagte.’⁴⁹ Gervinus believed that the decline in aesthetic standards would be compensated by art’s new political engagement and its ability to effect social change, which he refers to in this passage as ‘das andere Ziel’. Nietzsche, of course, was by no means convinced of this. In fact, he consistently denigrates both the literature that

⁴⁷ Nietzsche’s use of this term of course evokes thoughts of Karl Immerman’s *Die Epigonen* (1836), which, in the words of Sammons, ‘gave a name to a generation that felt diminished in its succession to the age of Goethe’. Jeffrey L. Sammons, ‘The Nineteenth-Century German Novel’ in *German Literature of the Nineteenth-Century 1832-1899*, ed. Clayton Koelb (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), 183-206 (pp. 190-1).

⁴⁸ Iggers argues that in nineteenth-century Germany: ‘Historicism [...] was closely tied to the political and social outlook of a class, the academic *Bildungsbürgertum*. [...] Wittingly, and to some extent unwittingly, historicism provided a theoretical foundation for the established political and social structure of nineteenth-century Prussia and Germany’. Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), p. 17.

⁴⁹ Georg Gottfried Gervinus, *Schriften zur Literatur*, ed. Gotthard Erler (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1962) p. 314. Nietzsche is critical of Gervinus elsewhere in *David Strauss*, such as when he describes his opinions as bearing the ‘Stempel des Albernens’ (UB I, 4), and in the *Nachlass*, where he refers to ‘der platte und dumme Gervinus’ (NF 1869, 1, 37).

brought the realms of art and everyday life closer together and those whom he considers to have advocated and encouraged this correlation.

One finds such an attack in a note from 1872, where he suggests that Germans – whom he regards as collectively in thrall to the view of culture and society asserted by the *Bildungsphilister* – are not deserving of ‘true’ art and rebukes Gervinus for presuming that historical artworks should conform to the needs and standards of the present day:

Die Deutschen sind wahrer Kunstschöpfungen gar nicht würdig: denn irgend eine politische Gans, so eine Art Gervinus, setzt sich gleich mit anmaßlicher Brütengeschäftigkeit darauf, als ob diese Eier nur für sie gerade hingelegt wären. Der Vogel Phönix sollte sich hüten, seine goldenen Eier in Deutschland zu legen (NF 1872, 19, 199).

This accusation – that Gervinus and men of his ilk had misused and debased art by making it the captive of their own wants and desires – strongly identifies Gervinus with the *Bildungsphilister*, while Nietzsche’s mordant description of Gervinus as a ‘politische Gans’ once again illustrates his opposition to culture’s politicisation.

The demand that culture and politics be kept separate is a consistent thread running throughout Nietzsche’s early works and notebooks. In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* he deplores the pervasive obsession with the affairs of states and parties, and insists that in a well-ordered country, politics must remain the exclusive preserve of politicians: ‘Alle Staaten sind schlecht eingerichtet, bei denen noch andere als die Staatsmänner sich um Politik bekümmern müssen, und sie verdienen es, an diesen vielen Politikern zu Grunde zu gehn’ (UB III, 7). Earlier in the essay, he derides those who attach existential significance to political events, and particularly those who

claimed to have found a resolution to the questions and problems posed by life in the German unification of 1871:

Denn so stehe es: die Gründung des neuen deutschen Reiches sei der entscheidende und vernichtende Schlag gegen alles ‘pessimistische’ Philosophiren,—davon lasse sich nichts abdingen. [...] Jede Philosophie, welche durch ein politisches Ereigniss das Problem des Daseins verrückt oder gar gelöst glaubt, ist eine Spaass- und Afterphilosophie (UB III, 4).

In the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, Nietzsche often presents the converging relationship between politics and culture as self-evidently problematic, or locates the principal difficulty in the simple fact that politics tends to dominate and inhibit culture: culture is seen by those who are politically engaged as a means of pursuing political goals, and its own crucial purpose, whether producing men of genius or ‘redeeming’ nature, is ignored. Yet on occasion Nietzsche also offers a theoretical analysis that explores the mechanics of this subjugation and indicates *why* he considers the realms of culture and politics to be generally, though not necessarily incompatible. In an extract from 1873 entitled ‘Entstehung des Philisters der Bildung’, in which Julian Schmidt is explicitly named as a philistine and contrasted with Goethe, Nietzsche outlines an essential difference between culture and politics that relates to the forces that drive them:

Das Publikum des Almanachs ist das Stammpublikum, Abendzeitung. In den 50er Jahren die Realisten, Julian Schmidt. Allmählich entsteht das Publikum der populären Vorträge, als eine Macht, es hat Sympathien, Voraussetzungen usw. Der Philister hat kein Gefühl von den Mängeln der Kultur und von dem Experimentiren bei Schiller und Goethe (NF 1873, 27, 52).

In remarking on the importance that Goethe and Schiller attached to ‘experimentation’, Nietzsche points to their unwillingness to accept any single notion of culture – whether aesthetic, metaphysical or otherwise – as definitive or binding. By not sticking doggedly to an inflexible idea of what culture should be or what purpose it should serve, they permitted its continued development and enabled it to assist ‘life’. The journalist and his readership, by contrast – respectively the organ and consumer of politics – possess ‘Sympathien’ and ‘Voraussetzungen’ that culture is expected to accommodate, leaving it without an autonomous space in which to flourish. In the same way that Nietzsche portrays the state as inhibiting men by training them to perform a particular, restrictive function, so he argues that culture cannot possibly thrive under the ideological burden of its political or social usage.

Nietzsche frequently adduces journalism as proof of this appropriation of modern culture by ‘das Wirkliche’, the ‘Welt der Not’ or the ‘Mächten der Gegenwart’. In the first lecture of *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, he describes it as symbolic of the ‘Erweiterung und Verminderung der Bildung’ (BA I).⁵⁰ He then proceeds to argue that the discrepancy between journalism and authentic culture lies in the former’s preoccupation with the concerns and issues of the present day: ‘Im Journal kulminirt die eigenthümliche Bildungsabsicht der Gegenwart: wie ebenso der Journalist, der Diener des Augenblicks, an die Stelle des großen Genius, des Führers für alle Zeiten, des Erlösers vom Augenblick, getreten ist’ (ibid). This idea is reprised in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, where Nietzsche argues that the academy was suffused with the ‘spirit’ of journalism and had consequently been overwhelmed by the *Zeitgeist*:

⁵⁰ Nietzsche also highlights the supposed stylistic deficiencies of journalism: ‘Die Fabrikanten jener Zeitungen sind aber, ihrer ganzen Beschäftigung gemäss, am allerstärksten an den Schleim dieser Zeitungs-Sprache gewöhnt: sie haben im eigentlichsten Sinne allen Geschmack verloren, und ihre Zunge empfindet höchstens das ganz und gar Corrupte und Willkürliche mit einer Art von Vergnügen’ (UB I, 11).

Dagegen drängt sich immer mehr der Geist der Journalisten auf der Universität ein, und nicht selten unter dem Namen der Philosophie; [...] solche Anzeichen sprechen dafür, dass der Universitätsgeist anfängt, sich mit dem Zeitgeiste zu verwechseln (UB III, 8).⁵¹

Journalists and those influenced by journalism tend, in Nietzsche's view, towards the didacticism and intellectual provincialism that he wholly rejects. Their rigid attachment to fixed concepts or beliefs is in conflict with the essential dynamism of Nietzschean *Bildung*: it negates both the constant development that he associates with self-cultivation and his belief that a genuine culture cannot be bound to the 'nationalökonomischen Dogmen der Gegenwart' (BA I) because its vitality is underpinned by a comparable process of incessant change. The journalist, in Nietzsche's view, is a servant of his age and homeland; the true artist, educator or philosopher must aspire to transcend them both.

In a note from the *Nachlass* written in the same year that the *David Strauss* essay was published, Nietzsche invokes Goethe to illustrate this vital distinction: 'Nach Ruhe der Seele haben die Philosophen immer gestrebt: jetzt nach unbedingter Unruhe: so dass der Mensch in seinem Amte, seinem Geschäfte ganz aufgeht. Die Tyrannei der Presse wird sich kein Philosoph gefallen lassen: bei Goethe durften nur Wochennummern und Hefte erscheinen' (NF 1873, 30, 29). Nietzsche's choice of word is instructive: he compares the volume of information conveyed and instilled by the press to a 'tyranny', which stands in clear opposition to the idea of 'Freiheit', whether of culture or the individual. Goethe had supposedly recognised the need to

⁵¹ He makes a similar claim in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*: 'Wenn demnach die eigentliche Bildungskraft der höheren Lehranstalten wohl noch niemals niedriger und schwächer gewesen ist, wie in der Gegenwart, wenn der "Journalist", der papierne Slave des Tages, in jeder Bildungsrücksicht den Sieg über den höheren Lehrer davongetragen hat, und Letzterem nur noch die bereits oft erlebte Metamorphose übrig bleibt, sich jetzt nun auch in der Sprechweise des Journalisten, mit der "leichten Eleganz" dieser Sphäre, als heiterer gebildeter Schmetterling zu bewegen' (GT 20).

protect himself from this barrage of news and opinions, and by implication the need to separate himself from the transient concerns of his age; hence his decision to limit his consumption of journalism to periodicals and weekly publications.⁵²

The figure of the nineteenth-century journalist is strongly linked in Nietzsche's works with the figure of the *Bildungsphilister* because of their shared inclination to unite culture with the changing political, economic and social landscape of Germany. There is evidence to support Nietzsche's claim that the spheres of literature, journalism, academia and politics had moved closer together during the nineteenth century, even if one does not necessarily agree with his view of this development as pernicious.⁵³ Several of the people whom Nietzsche names and identifies as future targets in his notes from 1871-72, including Schmidt, Gervinus, Grimm and the writers of *Junges Deutschland*, were protean men of letters who combined, in various configurations, the roles of journalist, author, historian, critic and literary scholar. All of them were also politically active, although it should be noted that one cannot cite a common ideology as a potential cause of Nietzsche's rancour towards them. The works of *Junges Deutschland* were considered subversive and banned in 1835, while Herman Grimm was a keen supporter of Bismarck.

What links them in Nietzsche's mind is their shared role in bringing 'das Wirkliche' into the sovereign sphere of culture and turning the socio-political conditions of contemporary Germany into normative literary standards. To illustrate this more clearly, and in order to shed light on why Nietzsche so frequently

⁵² The significance of this passage is emphasised by Schlechta in Karl Schlechta, 'The German Classicist Goethe as Reflected in Nietzsche's Works', trans. Timothy F. Sellner, in *Studies in Nietzsche and the Classical Tradition*, ed. James C. O'Flaherty, Timothy F. Sellner and Robert M. Helm (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1976), p. 149.

⁵³ On the dramatic increase in numbers of both national and local newspapers in the aftermath of the 1848 revolution (and how this expansion promoted the discussion of political issues in the private sphere), see Eda Sagarra, *Tradition and Revolution: German Literature and Society, 1830-1890* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), p. 31.

juxtaposes Goethe with this younger generation of writers, it will be useful to trace their role in the history of Goethe reception during the years between the Restoration and 1871. In the course of these fifty years, the men that Nietzsche names variously renounced Goethe, tentatively rehabilitated him and enthusiastically embraced him.⁵⁴ More importantly, it is apparent that their respective attitudes – which, it must be noted, should not be considered as a fully representative sample of critical responses to Goethe⁵⁵ during the period – were significantly influenced by the changing social and political climate in Germany, and their views of the impact of these changes on culture.

5. The Nineteenth-Century Reception of Goethe

Hohendahl defines the developments in literary criticism between 1820 and 1870 as the ‘epoch of liberalism’.⁵⁶ While recognising the existence of conservative critics and historians during this period, he argues that their work was largely ignored after 1850 because of its overtly religious inclinations.⁵⁷ Kontje agrees with this assessment: ‘By

⁵⁴ For a discussion of Goethe reception during this period, see Karl Robert Mandelkow, *Goethe in Deutschland. Rezeptiongeschichte eines Klassikers* (Munich: Beck, 1980). Mandelkow highlights the clash between the classical autonomy of aesthetics and the politicisation of art during the nineteenth century: ‘die Diskrepanz zwischen dem der Suprematie und Autonomie des Ästhetischen verpflichteten klassischen Kulturentwurf und dem mit der Französischen Revolution eingeleiteten, nach der Julirevolution von 1830 auch für Deutschland akuten Prozeß der Politisierung aller Lebensbereiche, bleibt bis 1870 das zentrale Thema der Auseinandersetzung mit Goethe’ (p. 87).

⁵⁵ For an analysis of the evolution of literary criticism during the nineteenth-century, see in particular Harmut Steinecke, *Romantheorie und Romankritik in Deutschland: Die Entwicklung des Gattungsverständnisses von der Scott-Rezeption bis zum programmatischen Realismus* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1975); Bernd Peschken, *Versuch einer germanistischen Ideologiekritik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1972); Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *Building a National Literature: The Case of Germany 1830-1870* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989); Helmut Bock, ‘Deutscher Vormärz: Immer noch Fragen nach Definition und Zäsuren einer Epoche?’, in *Vormärz und Klassik*, ed. Lothar Ehrlich, Harmut Steinecke und Michael Vogt (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 1999), pp. 9-32; Fritz Martini, *Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus 1848-1898* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1962); Todd Kontje, *The German Bildungsroman: History of a National Genre* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993); and Max Bucher, *Realismus und Gründerzeit: Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1848-1880*, ed. Max Bucher, Georg Jäger, Werner Hahl and Reinhard Wittman (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1976).

⁵⁶ Peter Uwe Hohendahl, ‘Literary Criticism in the Epoch of Liberalism, 1820-70’, in *A History of German Literary Criticism, 1730-1980*, ed. Peter Uwe Hohendahl, trans. Franz Blaha (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), p. 179.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

the 1840s significant contributions to the understanding of the novel came almost exclusively from critics who were considered politically progressive'.⁵⁸ The corpus of secondary texts which Nietzsche encountered as a young man would have been dominated by the works of liberal writers, who from the 1820s onwards had come to see literature and literary criticism as a medium through which they could express their opposition to the existing political order. By acknowledging this nexus of literature and liberalism, both Hohendahl and Kontje testify to the significant influence of politics upon culture during this period, as well as identifying its preponderant ideological strand.

This ascendancy of broadly liberal German authors, including *Junges Deutschland* and the programmatic realists of the *Nachmärz*, dramatically altered the form and subject matter of German literature. Although these movements were clearly distinct from each other – Julian Schmidt, for example had explicitly rejected the *Jungdeutschen* as disciples of 'sick' Romanticism⁵⁹ – their cumulative effect was to bring the imaginative realm of literature far closer to the praxis of life than it had been at the beginning of the century. Between 1830 and 1848, as Krause and Jacobs argue, it came to be expected that 'der Roman müsse eine umfassende Darstellung der gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit bieten'.⁶⁰

The assertion that everyday life should provide art's raw materials found support in the educated middle class who responded positively to their way of life being dramatised, as Bruford illustrates: 'In mid-century the German novel reader [...] was losing his former liking for introverted heroes like K.P. Moritz's *Anton Reiser* and turning to authors like Freytag, Spielhagen, Auerbach and Keller, whose

⁵⁸ Kontje, *The German Bildungsroman: History of a National Genre*, p. 27.

⁵⁹ Bucher, *Realismus und Gründerzeit*, p. 42.

⁶⁰ Jacobs and Krause, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman: Gattungsgeschichte vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, p. 148.

works “reflect[ed] the new pride of the well-to-do middle class.”⁶¹ The relationship between the *Bürgertum* and the literary elite was symbiotic: the middle classes gladly read the novels and dramas which promoted their interests and by doing so they supported the aesthetic programme championed by Freytag and Schmidt in *Grenzboten*. The theory upon which this programme was based is neatly captured by Freytag’s choice of epigraph in his novel *Soll und Haben* (1855), which he borrowed from Schmidt: ‘Der Roman soll das deutsche Volk da suchen, wo es in seiner Tüchtigkeit zu finden ist, nämlich bei seiner Arbeit’.⁶²

Kontje shows how this new understanding of literature’s function led to a re-evaluation of the criteria upon which literature should be judged. This was initially instigated by men such as Wolfgang Menzel and Ludwig Börne who, instead of relying on textual analysis to search for immanent meaning, took their lead from the Enlightenment in assessing a work by its ability to influence public opinion.⁶³ As Steinecke makes clear: ‘Menzel betrachtet Literatur nicht länger als ein nur oder vorwiegend ästhetisches Phänomen, er sieht sie vielmehr in einer engen Beziehung zu allen Gebieten des Lebens, der Zeit und der Wirklichkeit.’⁶⁴

Their theory of criticism was accompanied by a revisionist stance towards the German cultural canon and towards Goethe in particular.⁶⁵ Menzel objected to what he saw as Goethe’s political quiescence and the failure of his works to impact upon the public sphere. He therefore urged his countrymen to turn away from Goethe in a campaign that, as Hohendahl maintains, was ‘based on a literary program that has no

⁶¹ Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation*, p. 172.

⁶² Gustav Freytag, *Soll und Haben* (Leipzig: G. Hirzel, 1920).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁶⁴ Steinecke, *Romantheorie und Romankritik in Deutschland*, p. 58.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

place for the concept of aesthetic autonomy, attaching itself instead to older rationalist traditions'.⁶⁶

The essence, if not the stridency, of Menzel and Börne's theory would prove influential for the subsequent generation of critics. Mandelkow argues that the stipulation of social impact – the need for works of fiction to help shape thinking and if possible to influence the course of events in the wider world – was readily adopted as the critical orthodoxy and set the tone for studies of Goethe over the next fifty years:

Die Nachgeschichte Goethes im zweiten Drittel des 19. Jahrhunderts ist *Wirkungsgeschichte* in jenem wörtlichen Sinne, der die Möglichkeiten der Urteilsfindung über den Gegenstand and die Reflexion auf seine bisherigen und seine gegenwärtigen Vermittelungen knüpft.⁶⁷

However, the vitriol of Menzel and Börne's often *ad hominem* polemic was largely absent in these later works. In its place emerged a growing consensus that saw Goethe as a high point of German artistic achievement but also as politically deficient.⁶⁸ The dichotomy posed by Menzel and Börne – one was either for Goethe or against him – was replaced by a more nuanced appraisal. Critics were therefore able to condemn Goethe's supposed lack of political engagement while simultaneously paying tribute to his artistic genius. Such a view is typical of both Heinrich Heine – a prominent member of *Junges Deutschland* – and Georg Gottfried Gervinus. Both men agreed that literature should seek to reflect and ideally influence political reality, but also recognised the legitimacy of judging Goethe against the standards and conditions of

⁶⁶ Hohendahl, "Literary Criticism in the Epoch of Liberalism, 1820-70", in *A History of German Literary Criticism, 1730-1980*, p. 223.

⁶⁷ Mandelkow, *Goethe in Deutschland*, p. 86.

⁶⁸ Sheehan also writes of 'the hostility expressed by young, liberal writers, who acknowledged the magnitude of Goethe's talent but decried the way he had chosen to use it'. James J. Sheehan, *German History 1770-1866* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 573.

turn of the century Weimar.⁶⁹ A subsequent attempt was made to historicise Goethe and his works, rather than to erase them from the German tradition.⁷⁰

Heine famously consigned Goethe to the past when he wrote that the age of the Goethean ‘Kunstperiode’ was over: ‘Die Endschaft der “goethschen Kunstperiode” [...] habe ich jedoch schon seit vielen Jahren vorausgesagt’.⁷¹ Yet he also criticises Menzel for the ‘Herbheit’ of his attacks on Goethe⁷² and emphasises the value of Goethe’s work if one assesses it independently of political and social considerations: ‘Keineswegs jedoch läugnete ich bey dieser Gelegenheit den selbstständigen Werth der goethschen Meisterwerke.’⁷³ As Hohendahl makes clear: ‘He [Heine] makes a distinction between Goethe’s epoch, to which he attributes an essentially aesthetic character, and his own. This leads him indirectly, despite his sharp criticism, to establish the former as a high point of German *Geistesgeschichte*.’⁷⁴

Gervinus adopted a similar position. As a confirmed liberal, he sought the political progress which he claimed Goethe had actively discouraged:

Das hatte Goethe in seiner Jugend, dem großen britischen Tragöden gegenüber, schon empfunden, daß es das mangelnde Staatsleben war, was unsere Literatur darneiderhielt [...] Noch im späten Alter war Goethe derselben Einsicht, nur wollte er der Nation ‘die Umwälzungen nicht wünschen, die in Deutschland klassische Werke hervorbringen könnten.’ *Wir* aber wünschen diese Veränderungen und Richtungen.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Steinecke, *Romantheorie und Romankritik in Deutschland*, p. 78.

⁷⁰ Mandelkow, *Goethe in Deutschland*, Vol. I, pp. 86-7.

⁷¹ Heinrich Heine, *Die romantische Schule*, in *Sämtliche Werke. Düsseldorfer Ausgabe*, ed. Manfred Windfuhr (Hamburg: Hoffman und Campe, 1979) Vol. 8/1, p. 125.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 154-5.

⁷⁴ Hohendahl, *Building a National Literature: The Case of Germany 1830-1870*, p. 142.

⁷⁵ Gervinus, *Schriften zur Literatur*, p. 312.

By stating the desire for political reform among the current generation, Gervinus implicitly affirms Menzel and Börne's rejection of aesthetic autonomy. Yet, as has already been shown, this does not preclude him from acclaiming the works of Goethe and Schiller in Weimar as the zenith of German culture or from arguing that he regards the literature of that period as the product of a golden age which will not be repeated.

Heine and Gervinus were therefore able to reconcile their admiration for Goethe's art with their political convictions. As Peschken explains, the evolution of Julian Schmidt's attitude towards Goethe and the legacy of Weimar appears to reflect the changes in his political ambitions – a development which in itself reveals Schmidt's rejection of aesthetic autonomy and prioritisation of the political.⁷⁶ In 1848 Schmidt was editor of *Grenzboten*, and his view of classicism at that time reflected the progressive ideals promulgated by the newspaper. He argued that the 'Innerlichkeit' and 'abstracte Subjectivität' of classicism led to resignation, and that a dogged faith in these concepts had left the German middle class politically supine.⁷⁷

Yet by the time of Bismarck's victory at Königgrätz in July 1866, which effectively marked the end of the Prussian constitutional crisis, Schmidt's enthusiasm for the prospect of a unified Germany had softened his demands for reform and the enfranchisement of the middle class.⁷⁸ This provided the opportunity for Goethe's partial redemption in Schmidt's mind: his view of Goethe as a betrayer of middle

⁷⁶ Peschken, *Versuch einer germanistischen Ideologiekritik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1972), pp. 89-91.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 76-77. See also Kontje, *The German Bildungsroman: History of a National Genre*, p. 27 and Michael Minden, *The German Bildungsroman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Minden's description of Schmidt's reaction to *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* captures the essence of Schmidt's broader antipathy towards Goethe: 'He criticised Goethe for making Wilhelm betray his own class. For Schmidt, the novel's neo-classical harmony depended upon an "Entsagung" (renunciation) which, far from being harmonious, was actually a subordination, an inglorious "Einordnung" (heartless integration) into the prevailing social structure. It had very little to do with genuine freedom, and a great deal to do with what Schmidt saw, polemically, as the political failure of the German middle class' (pp. 51-52).

⁷⁸ Peschken, *Versuch einer germanistischen Ideologiekritik* pp. 89-91.

class aspirations was supplanted by his new status as the cultural foundation stone of the new German nation.⁷⁹

When Nietzsche published his early works including *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, the configuration of the German literary tradition had seemingly been set in stone. Goethe stood at its apex, despite the numerous attempts during the previous half-century to impugn his reputation by some of the figures whom Nietzsche would later go on to attack. This criticism had been largely superseded by the image of Goethe as a father of the modern German nation. The victory in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 and the unification of Germany

⁷⁹ The ebb of Schmidt's revolutionary fervour was reflected across German society. Craig traces the origins of this change to the period before the Austro-Prussian war, in which Bismarck recognised an opportunity to exploit the liberals' desire for national unification that existed alongside their reformist agenda: 'As early as the first Prussian military victories at Düppel and Alsen in 1864, there were signs that Bismarck had been correct in believing that a vigorous foreign policy that promised to solve the national question would appeal even to many of those who had been most vehement in their opposition to the reform and expansion of the army; and by the spring of 1866 the strength of this appeal was perceptible in the gradual swing of liberal journals like the *Preußische Jahrbücher*, the *Grenzboten*, and the *Kölnische Zeitung* to support of the government's policy'. Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, pp. 7-8. Stern describes the general thawing of relations between liberals and Bismarck in the months prior to the battle of Königgrätz as being made possible by Bismarck's blandishments towards his former opponents: 'He [Bismarck] needed liberals as well in order to rally German public opinion to his side, to make plausible his credibility as a spokesman of German nationalism [...] he gradually approached the Prussian liberals, hoping to woo and separate some of them from the ideologues who would always remain his enemies. He made sweet overtures to the moderates, against a background of muffled battle drums'. Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron. Bismarck, Bleichröder and the Building of the German Empire* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977), p. 83. He goes on to show how this rapprochement was consolidated (with Bismarck now holding the balance of power) following the Prussian victory: 'The liberals split – with more than half the former opposition succumbing to Bismarck's success, disguising their surrender by rationalizations about the priority of power and unity over freedom, of the "logic of facts and events" over ideas and ideals'. (ibid., p. 93). Mommsen stresses the National Liberals' awareness of their own weakness as a decisive motive for reconciliation: '[The National Liberals] were only too well aware of the limits to their power, especially as far as popular support was concerned [...] [They] took it as read that their own social base was fragile and that they were right to be afraid of Bismarck'. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Imperial Germany 1867-1918. Politics, Culture and Society in an Authoritarian State* (London: Arnold, 1995), p. 8. Bucher, meanwhile, argues that the precipitate growth of trade and industry during this period (and the opportunities that this growth presented to the middle class) constituted a powerful consolation for the failure of the 1848 revolution and helped reconcile the middle class to the lack of real political change. This would seem to add substance to Nietzsche's claim regarding the growing influence of the 'Erwerbenden' (UB III, 6) on *Bildung*: 'Die Neugründung von 119 Aktiengesellschaften im Gebiet Preußens von 1851-57, die Vermehrung der deutschen Notenbanken von 9 auf 29 und die Verdoppelung des Notenumlaufs im gleichen Zeitraum belegen den Zusammenhang, der zwischen Reaktionsanpassung und liberalem Wirtschaftsoptimismus herzustellen ist'. Bucher, *Realismus und Gründerzeit*, p. 35. Sheehan also claims that: 'No aspect of nineteenth-century German history is more important than the economic expansion that took place during the century's middle decades'. Sheehan, *German History 1770-1866*, p. 731. Despite the different emphases of these accounts, they all point to an influential strand of liberal thought during the 1860s which valued national unity and prosperity above systemic political reform.

had calmed the demands of many liberal literary critics for greater participation in the political process. Instead, they tended to celebrate the founding of the new nation-state, and looked to Goethe as the outstanding example of their common heritage. As Martini explains: ‘Der Rückgriff zu Goethe wurde als eine “Wiederherstellung” wahrer, nationaler Dichtung empfunden; auch dann wenn man einzelnen Schöpfungen mit Vorbehalten fremd blieb’.⁸⁰ An example of this general recognition of Goethe’s significance can be found in a lecture that Herman Grimm delivered in Berlin in 1874: ‘Sein Name bezeichnet längst nicht mehr eine Person allein, sondern den Umfang einer Herrschaft’.⁸¹

Nietzsche believed that the Goethe revered by literary critics such as Grimm during the *Nachmärz* and *Gründerzeit* was essentially an artificial construct. He did not dispute Goethe’s superiority or seek to challenge the esteem in which he was held. He would also have agreed with Grimm’s assertion that Goethe’s work was not a trifling entertainment or momentary pleasure. Yet he believed that by installing Goethe as a symbol of the new state and thus placing him within the confines of the contemporary socio-political structure, critics had ignored or distorted the values of the man they idolised. He saw this inability to grasp what he saw as Goethe’s true worth and significance as a collective failure on the part of these critics, and it informs his opposition to them.

⁸⁰ Martini, *Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus 1848-98*, p. 53.

⁸¹ Quoted in Peter Sprengel, *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Literatur 1870-1900: Von der Reichsgründung bis zur Jahrhundertwende* (Munich; Beck, 1998), p. 66. This was not the first time that Grimm had linked Goethe explicitly to the welfare of the German nation. In his *Essays* of 1859, he expresses a similar sentiment: ‘Es fragt sich immer zuerst, welcher Gedanke ergriff die gesamte Nation, welche Männer waren es, die ihn zuerst empfanden, welche, die ihm freie Bahn brachen, und nach welcher Richtung riß er das Schicksal Deutschlands mit sich vorwärts? Die deutsche Geschichtschreibung muß an die höchsten Dinge anknüpfen, welche den Menschen bewegen. [...] Wenn wir von unsern großen Dichtern sprechen, so reden wir davon wie die Franzosen von ihrer Gloire und die Engländer von ihrem Reichtum. Goethe und Schiller sind nicht bloß Männer, deren Arbeiten uns ergößen oder momentan rühren, sondern wir betrachten sie als die Schöpfer der geistigen Höhe, auf der wir uns befinden’. Herman Grimm, *Essays* (Hanover: Rümpler, 1859), pp. 293-294.

It will be demonstrated in Chapter Four that the early Nietzsche's Goethe transcends national interests and political systems and stands instead as the paradigm for the two values which underpin Nietzsche's concept of *Bildung*: firstly the drive towards autonomous self-cultivation, or 'Freiheit'; and secondly the idea of a productive wholeness that manifests itself in creativity and action, which we have termed 'Fruchtbarkeit'.

6. The 'Suchende' and 'Findende'

At the end of *David Strauss*, Nietzsche anticipates the outrage and condemnation that he believes a critic of modern culture will have to endure:

Freilich wird die Philister-Kultur in Deutschland entrüstet sein, wenn man von bemalten Götzenbildern spricht, wo sie einen lebendigen Gott sieht. Wer es aber wagt, ihre Bilder umzuwerfen, der wird sich schwerlich scheuen, ihr, aller Entrüstung zum Trotz, in's Gesicht zu sagen, dass sie selbst verlernt habe, zwischen lebendig und todt, ächt und unächt, original und nachgemacht, Gott und Götze zu unterscheiden (UB I, 12).⁸²

The use of religious tropes emphasises what Nietzsche sees as the tenacity of the faith in the 'Philister-Kultur' and the effort that will be required to overcome it. Yet it also gets to the heart of *what* he thinks is wrong with culture in nineteenth-century Germany. By stating that it constitutes a series of 'bemalten Götzenbildern', Nietzsche argues that culture has been reduced to a series of canonical themes, motifs and techniques that are treated as inviolate. These idols – whether political

⁸² These comments are quite possibly informed by Nietzsche's recollection of the adverse reaction to *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, which was published the year before *David Strauss*. For an account of that reaction, and Wagner and Rohde's attempts to defend Nietzsche from the attacks of his most trenchant critic, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf, see Karlfried Gründer, *Der Streit um Nietzsches 'Geburt der Tragödie': Die Schriften von E. Rohde, R. Wagner und U. v. Wilamowitz-Möllendorf* (Hildesheim & New York: Georg Olms, 1989).

movements like liberalism and nationalism or the literary methods designed to endorse them, such as the realism championed by Schmidt and Freytag – had replaced culture as mankind’s chief priority, and culture had come to be seen as their inalienable property.

The zeal with which the *Bildungsphilister* supposedly promotes his ‘Götze’ is conveyed in an earlier passage from *David Strauss*, in which Nietzsche again uses religious imagery: ‘Der Philister als der Stifter der Religion der Zukunft – das ist der neue Glaube in seiner eindrucksvollsten Gestalt; der zum Schwärmer gewordene Philister – das ist das unerhörte Phänomen, das unsere deutsche Gegenwart auszeichnet’ (UB I, 4). This ‘religion of the future’ is grounded in the ‘Katechismus “der modernen Ideen”’ (UB I, 3), an all-encompassing term which Nietzsche uses to signify the array of ideological currents, social trends and technological advances that marked European life in the late nineteenth century. In his notebook from 1873, the year in which the essay was published, Nietzsche identifies the state as one of these ideas and also suggests a reason for the particular ardency with which these ideas are advanced: ‘An Stelle des “*Reich Gottes*” scheint “das Reich” getreten’ (NF 1873, 27, 40). The implication is that they have filled the vacuum left by the demise of religious belief and thus offered a solution to man’s ontological crisis by restoring meaning and purpose to the world. It was this that enabled these ‘Mächten der Gegenwart’ to claim, as Nietzsche writes in *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*: ‘Wir sind die Kultur! Wir sind die Bildung! Wir sind auf der Höhe! Wir sind die Spitze der Pyramide! Wir sind das Ziel der Weltgeschichte!’ (BA III).

Nietzsche also claims that a concomitant of the devotion displayed by adherents of these powers is a fierce intolerance of difference. This manifests itself in their strict regulation of culture, in which the *Bildungsphilister* summarily dismisses

anything that does not match his tastes: ‘an der Nichtübereinstimmung mit diesem Gepräge misst er das ihm Feindselige und Widerstrebende’ (UB I, 2). This hostility had supposedly spawned a widespread consensus or ‘stillschweigend[e] Convention’ (ibid.) in regard to art, the limits and pressures of which had resulted in ‘Gleichartigkeit’ (ibid.).

The consequence of this oppressive conformism is, in Nietzsche’s view, a contemporary culture that is anything but ‘lebendig’. He believes that for a culture to live and thrive, it must not only be autonomous, but must be characterised by constant change and evolution. The reification of the particular concerns and interests of the present day, and their designation as the eternal and irrefutable goals of culture, evidently contradicts this ideal of perpetual transformation and leads to stagnation and artistic complacency. He highlights the latter tendency, which he believes the *Bildungsphilister* to embody, in an extract in which he once again alludes to the importance of experimentation in culture: ‘Sein Auge erschloss sich für das Philisterglück: aus alle dem wilden Experimentiren rettete er sich in's Idyllische und setzte dem unruhig schaffenden Trieb des Künstlers ein gewisses Behagen entgegen, ein Behagen an der eigenen Enge, der eigenen Ungestörtheit, ja an der eigenen Beschränktheit’ (ibid.).

In *David Strauss* Nietzsche outlines his vision of an approach to culture that incorporates the ‘unruhig schaffenden Trieb des Künstlers’ through a process of ceaseless and unquenchable *searching*. He uses Goethe as his exemplar of the ‘Suchende’ (UB 1, 2), alongside other unnamed titans of art, and argues that the *Bildungsphilister* hates such restless spirits because they undermine his own claim to have found culture’s authentic purpose: ‘Denn er *sucht*, dieser deutsche Geist! und ihr

hasst ihn deshalb, weil er sucht, und weil er euch nicht glauben will, dass ihr schon gefunden habt, wonach er sucht' (UB I, 2).

Goethe's status as a 'Suchende' is confirmed in *David Strauss* by Nietzsche's approving citation from a letter that he wrote to Eckermann in March 1830: "“ich habe es mir ein halbes Jahrhundert lang sauer genug werden lassen und mir keine Erholung gegönnt, sondern immer gestrebt und geforscht und gethan, so gut und so viel ich konnte.”"(ibid.). Nietzsche again describes Goethe as a seeker in his notebooks from the period, in which he reiterates that culture has no incontrovertible basis or function: 'Er [der Kulturphilister] findet sich damit ab, daß es Klassiker giebt (Schiller Goethe Lessing) und vergißt, daß sie eine Kultur suchten, aber kein Fundament, auf dem man ruhen könnte, sind. Er versteht deshalb den Ernst noch lebendiger Kultursucher nicht' (NF 1873, 27, 65).

Men such as Goethe refuse to see themselves as anything other than seekers, Nietzsche argues, because they do not view culture as a riddle to be deciphered. They neither propose a new 'catechism' – much less insist that anyone else abide by it – nor hope to divine one from the prevailing conditions or 'enge Zustände' (UB I, 2) of the age in which they live. Instead, they are comfortable in the knowledge that no incontestable base exists upon which, and only upon which, a healthy German culture can be built, and therefore view the very process of searching as the only suitable foundation.

Yet the *Bildungsphilister* believes these men to be 'Findende': 'Was urtheilt aber unsere Philisterbildung über diese Suchenden? Sie nimmt sie einfach als Findende und scheint zu vergessen, dass jene selbst sich nur als Suchende fühlten' (ibid). As well as believing that culture had reached its apogee, the *Bildungsphilister* compounds his error by claiming that classical authors felt the same way. As has

already been shown, Nietzsche locates the source of this mistake in the self-interest of the *Bildungsphilister*: by invoking the authority of widely acclaimed writers from the past, he seeks to bolster and certify his own spurious claim to greatness. Nietzsche contrasts this inert and self-regarding notion of culture to the spirit of the ‘Suchende’ in an earlier section of *David Strauss*, in which he also paints the philistine as an impediment to the development of the creative, seeking individual who thirsts for the new and the different. He claims that the *Bildungsphilister* is:

das Hinderniss aller Kräftigen und Schaffenden, das Labyrinth aller Zweifelnden und Verirrten, der Morast aller Ermatteten, die Fussfessel aller nach hohen Zielen Laufenden, der giftige Nebel aller frischen Keime, die ausdorrnde Sandwüste des suchenden und nach neuem Leben lechzenden deutschen Geistes (UB I, 2).

This distinction between ‘searchers’ and ‘finders’ can usefully be applied to Nietzsche’s thinking about both culture and education. Nietzsche believes that both a healthy culture and a healthy human being – which should be the product of education – are characterised by perpetual questioning and exploration, and strongly opposes the self-satisfaction or indolence that leads men to accept a view of themselves or culture as definitive. He insists that neither the individual nor culture permit such simple or unyielding exposition because of their essentially fluctuant nature. Yet he also thinks that this crucial fact has been forgotten or ignored in contemporary Germany: men are trained to perform a narrow, specialised function or are expected to offer their unconditional support to a cause – such as a nation, ideology or political party – with which they can be easily and reductively identified, while culture has been assigned a specific task by a ‘zusammengehörige Gesellschaft’ (UB I, 1) of writers and critics that has led to its atrophy. It has already been demonstrated in this chapter that

Nietzsche often uses Goethe as a counterpoint to these trends, and this will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Four.

Before this detailed analysis of the early Nietzsche's *Goethebild*, however, it is necessary to identify and explain its other central theme in the broader context of Nietzsche's early philosophy. This relates to what Nietzsche regards as the fundamental intellectual error that underpins the corruption of education and culture described in this chapter. In *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche argues that men now prize truth over freedom, and often sacrifice the latter in pursuit of the former. This search was futile as far as Nietzsche is concerned, for he insists that truth in the transcendent, existential sense would forever remain elusive. It was also damaging, however, to the extent that men believed they had *found* truth – whether in the form of a political theory, philosophical system or way of life – and devoted themselves to it uncritically, forsaking both their own self-cultivation and the needs of culture in the process.

Nietzsche views Goethe as someone who recognised the limits of reason and who, rather than relying exclusively upon it, sought to integrate it into his personality alongside the other human faculties and to deploy it in acts and the production of artistic works. In order to illuminate this aspect of his *Goethebild*, we must first examine Nietzsche's critique of reason and understand its aims and implications. In particular, it is vital to show how this critique is inextricably linked to Nietzsche's thinking about culture.

Chapter Three

Nietzschean ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ versus Socratic Knowledge

The preceding chapter discussed Nietzsche’s argument that education and culture, which are subsumed by the idea of *Bildung*, had been made subservient to ‘das Wirkliche’ or the ‘Welt der Not’ in nineteenth-century Germany and consequently divested of their value. The ideal of self-cultivation had supposedly been displaced by a form of education that shackled men to a narrow view of the world or prepared them for a restrictive, humdrum role in modern society, while culture’s use as a political and social tool both demeaned it and prevented the continual development and regeneration that Nietzsche regards as essential to it. We have seen how he inveighs against the people and attitudes that he believes to have sustained this ‘Pseudo-Bildung’ (BA I), including the figure of the *Bildungsphilister*. It was also shown that Nietzsche often invokes Goethe as a symbol of both individual and cultural development, and of the independence or ‘Freiheit’ on which they both depend.

Yet there is another crucial aspect to Nietzsche’s *Goethebild*, which is related to what Nietzsche sees as the root cause of both education and culture’s degradation. Throughout his early work, and in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* in particular, Nietzsche contends that the crusade to have *Bildung* reflect the concerns of everyday life has its origins in a ‘dialektische Trieb zum Wissen’ (GT 17). This ‘drive’, he argues, stems from the belief that the human intellect is capable of grasping the true meaning of existence and devising an adequate logical scheme by which to explain it. Nietzsche describes this belief as a ‘Wahn’ (GT 18), whose pervasive influence had resulted in art – which he believes should enhance existence rather than try to decipher it – being expected to hasten the process of collective enlightenment by imparting knowledge or ‘truth’ rather than beauty. Man’s preoccupation with knowledge thus paved the way

for didactic art that promotes a particular point of view or version of reality – such as the politically engaged literature discussed in the previous chapter – which Nietzsche condemns for its relentless pursuit of clarity and its attendant neglect of ‘Mythus’ (GT 17). In addition to the denigration and exclusion of myth, Nietzsche claims that the thirst for knowledge had occasioned a scientific or scholarly approach to culture which valued textual analysis over artistic creativity.

Nietzsche’s critique of reason and knowledge in the years following his appointment at Basel cannot be properly evaluated without taking his work on *Bildung* into account. The relationship between these two aspects of his thought is hugely significant for this thesis, not only because of how they impact upon each other, but because of the way they coalesce in his image of Goethe. It is vital to investigate their interdependence, and in particular to demonstrate that Nietzsche’s desire to modify and redirect man’s use of reason is animated by his wish to revive culture, rather than by a purely destructive urge to eradicate the basis of human understanding. He insists that reason and knowledge have an abiding value, as long as they are used to stimulate creativity and action: an idea that he describes as ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ (UB III, 2), and for which he uses Goethe as a paradigm.

The chapter will begin with an overview of Nietzsche’s challenge to the prevailing conception of reason and knowledge in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. It will show how this challenge is explicitly linked to culture in the text through his discussion of Euripides, whose plays Nietzsche rejects for their prioritisation of ‘das Nützliche’ (GT 14) and ‘kühler Helle und Bewusstheit’ (ibid.), and their subsequent inability to accommodate mystery or uncertainty. Nietzsche’s opposition to art whose aim is the ‘Correctur der Welt durch das Wissen’ (GT 17) is undeniable; yet it is not equivalent to the view that art and reason are eternally irreconcilable, or to declaring

that the very notion of knowledge is illusory. This is confirmed by his reference to the possibility of a ‘künstlerisch[e]’ (GT 14) or ‘musiktreibend[e] Sokrates’ (GT 15), which is indicative of his desire for a more harmonious relationship between art and logic.

Despite this evidence, some critics have sought to equate Nietzsche’s critique of knowledge with a straightforward renunciation. It is necessary to address this strand of Nietzsche scholarship, and to show that not only does the imputation of extreme anti-rationalism to the early Nietzsche depend upon an interpretation of his epistemology that is severely problematic, but that it also requires the suppression or dismissal of much of his writing about *Bildung*. By removing Nietzsche’s theory of knowledge from the context of his broader philosophical project and treating it as a discrete, privileged entity, deconstructionist critics like Jean Granier, Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida have overlooked or underestimated the significance that Nietzsche attaches to man’s rational capacities and his belief that their successful rehabilitation is a prerequisite for the emergence of a healthy German culture.

In *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, Nietzsche clearly outlines a way in which reason and knowledge can contribute to cultural renewal, which depends upon the reconstitution of existing scholarly disciplines. Despite his position as Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Basel, or perhaps because of it, Nietzsche is sharply critical of contemporary academia. Specifically, he argues that its methods and practitioners are antithetical to the creative genius or ‘fruitful man’:

Wer nämlich zu beobachten weiss, bemerkt, dass der Gelehrte seinem Wesen nach *unfruchtbar* ist – eine Folge seiner Entstehung! – und dass er einen gewissen natürlichen Hass gegen den fruchtbaren Menschen hat; weshalb sich

zu allen Zeiten die Genies und die Gelehrten beföhdet haben. Die letzteren wollen nämlich die Natur tödten, zerlegen und verstehen, die ersteren wollen die Natur durch neue lebendige Natur vermehren (UB III, 6).

Nietzsche's basic objection is that the 'Gelehrte' sees knowledge as an end in itself and therefore lacks both the inclination and ability to improve the existing culture. Yet Nietzsche does not view knowledge as inevitably unfruitful, and in his early work he envisages a variety of ways in which it can be used for culture's benefit. He argues, for example, that the familiarity with antiquity supplied by classical philology allows one to identify the conditions in which culture can thrive, while in *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben* he describes 'monumentale Historie' (UB II, 2) as a technique for deriving inspiration from the past: an idea that prefigures his description of the educator as a 'Befreier' in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, which was discussed in the preceding chapter. Despite his professed envy for the animal that is tied to the 'Pflock des Augenblickes' and is consequently able to live '*unhistorisch*' (UB II, 1), Nietzsche repeatedly contends that historical knowledge is advantageous to the fruitful individual – of whom Goethe is a prominent example – as long as it is properly deployed.

The cumulative effect of these arguments will be to demonstrate that the early Nietzsche wants to place knowledge in the service of culture and life, rather than render it obsolete. This will provide the basis for the analysis of Nietzsche's *Goethebild* in the following three chapters by outlining one of its key features: the belief that Goethe was someone who recognised the limits and proper purpose of man's powers of reason, and who valued creativity and action – or 'Fruchtbarkeit' – above the endless search for knowledge as an end in itself.

1. Nietzsche's View of Knowledge and its Link to Culture

One of the central claims in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* is that the modern age is obsessed with knowledge and its possibilities, and that the source of this obsession can be found in Socrates' philosophy. In Nietzsche's opinion, Socrates mistakenly believed that the world is knowable and perfectible, and consequently insisted that we should seek to improve it through the application of logic. He describes this view as the: 'unerschütterliche Glaube, dass das Denken, an dem Leitfaden der Causalität, bis in die tiefsten Abgründe des Seins reiche, und dass das Denken das Sein nicht nur zu erkennen, sondern sogar zu *corrigieren* im Stande sei' (GT 15).

Nietzsche views the suggestion that the deepest secrets of the world could be revealed through an incremental process of 'Enthüllung' (ibid.) as nothing more than a 'tiefsinnige Wahnvorstellung' (ibid.). Yet he also argues that an exaggerated faith or 'wähnende Optimismus' (GT 18) in the efficacy of reason had become ubiquitous,¹ and that it appeared in his own age in the form of an unswerving dedication to science and scholarship (GT 18).² Nietzsche not only derides the adulation of knowledge and its academic tributaries, but also sees it as catastrophic: for he believes that the

¹ Nietzsche explicitly states that he believes Socrates' influence to have extended to the present day: 'Im Sinne dieser letzten ahnungsvollen Fragen muss nun ausgesprochen werden, wie der Einfluss des Sokrates, bis auf diesen Moment hin, ja in alle Zukunft hinaus, sich, gleich einem in der Abendsonne immer grösser werdenden Schatten, über die Nachwelt hin ausgebreitet hat' (GT, 15).

² It is important to note that Nietzsche uses the term 'Wissenschaft' to refer to the broader practice of academic inquiry rather than the natural sciences in particular. In the context of Nietzsche's discussion of culture and *Bildung*, the most appropriate translation is 'scholarship'. It denotes a *scientific approach* to art and culture which seeks to dissect rather than construct, and which manifests itself in pedantic arguments over variant readings. As Lemm argues: 'Nietzsche [...] treats historical and natural sciences together, because he considers them both to be based on a fundamental misconception, namely, the belief that life can be made transparent through rational explanations.' Vanessa Lemm, 'Animality, Creativity and Historicity: A Reading of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*', *Nietzsche Studien*, 36 (2007), pp. 169-200 (p. 172). Evans explains how 'Wissenschaft' signifies a 'discipline or organized body of knowledge' and can therefore be applied to a range of subjects. Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta Books, 1997), p. 45.

preoccupation with scientific progress had corroded man's sensitivity to the mystery and 'Instinct' (GT 13) that he sees as essential to the creation of art (GT 17).

In the case of Socrates, Nietzsche suggests that his deluded trust in the intellect was accompanied by an active dislike of art because it did not aspire to 'truth':

'Nur aus Instinct': mit diesem Ausdruck berühren wir Herz und Mittelpunkt der sokratischen Tendenz. Mit ihm verurtheilt der Sokratismus eben so die bestehende Kunst wie die bestehende Ethik: wohin er seine prüfenden Blicke richtet, sieht er den Mangel der Einsicht und die Macht des Wahns und schliesst aus diesem Mangel auf die innerliche Verkehrtheit und Verwerflichkeit des Vorhandenen. Von diesem einen Punkte aus glaubte Sokrates das Dasein corrigieren zu müssen (GT 13).

Socrates denigrated art because it offered illusion rather than insight. Nietzsche agrees that art is an illusion, but believes that it is a necessary deception which draws a veil over the chaos of an existence that defies all attempts at logical explanation. Whereas Socrates sees art as an unhelpful distraction from the task of exposing the world's inner workings and correcting its flaws, Nietzsche insists that art provides vital solace to the person who realises that the world is unknowable in any metaphysical or transcendental sense.³

Nietzsche describes Socrates' criticism of art and his implicit diminishing of Greek artists such as Homer, Pindar and Aeschylus as the 'fragwürdigste Erscheinung des Alterthums' (GT 13). Yet it is not only the disparagement and repudiation of art that he objects to. Nietzsche also challenges those writers who supposedly embrace

³ See, for example, the following passage from GT, 7: 'Hier, in dieser höchsten Gefahr des Willens, naht sich, als rettende, heilkundige Zauberin, die *Kunst*; sie allein vermag jene Ekelgedanken über das Entsetzliche oder Absurde des Daseins in Vorstellungen umzubiegen, mit denen sich leben lässt'.

art, but whose didacticism and tendentiousness he regards as a direct corollary of the Socratic worldview.

The link in Nietzsche's mind between the corruption of art by an 'optimistische Dialektik' (GT 14) and the treatment of culture as a means of popular instruction and political advocacy is revealed in his discussion of the decline of Attic tragedy, which occupies sections eleven to fifteen of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. Nietzsche locates the first traces of an 'enthüllende Tendenz' (GT 12) in art – or the desire to make art both logically comprehensible and capable of disseminating knowledge – in the plays of Euripides, whom he names as 'der Dichter des ästhetischen Sokratismus' (ibid.). He argues that Euripides shared Socrates' reverence for reason and desire to uncover truth, and that this had caused him to reject the chaotic, 'geheimnisvoll' (ibid.) side of art that Nietzsche names the Dionysian and which he identifies as one of two fundamental artistic drives. The other is the Apollonian, which Nietzsche contrastingly associates with the ideas of 'Bestimmtheit und Helligkeit' (GT 1) and which is artistically represented by the dialogue: 'Alles, was im apollinischen Theile der griechischen Tragödie, im Dialoge, auf die Oberfläche kommt, sieht einfach, durchsichtig, schön aus' (GT 9). Nietzsche insists that Attic tragedy represents the first and only occasion when these two apparently conflicting forces had been successfully united in an 'Ehebündniss' (GT 4) and as such it represents the 'Spitze und Absicht jener Kunsttriebe' (ibid.). He consequently views Euripides' attempt to create an 'undionysische Kunst' (GT 12) as a fateful error: by trying to negate the mystery of the Dionysian and demanding that drama be lucid above all else, Euripides supposedly brought the golden age of tragic Greek art to an end and initiated a decline in culture which had yet to be reversed.

Nietzsche claims that Euripides' proclivity for analytical thinking had led him to become frustrated with the works of earlier authors such as Aeschylus and Sophocles. He found them abstruse and morally ambiguous – an assessment with which Nietzsche at least partially concurs⁴ – and therefore inaccessible to the power of reason that he considered 'die eigentliche Wurzel alles Geniessens und Schaffens' (GT 11). This aversion to obscurity had impelled him to write plays whose meaning and plot development were clearly understandable, and whose composition was guided by the dictum: 'alles muss verständig sein, um schön zu sein' (GT 12). Nietzsche argues, however, that it is precisely this devotion to clarity and critical insight that undermines Euripidean drama: 'Von ihm könnte man sagen, dass die ausserordentliche Fülle seines kritischen Talentes, ähnlich wie bei Lessing, einen productiv künstlerischen Nebentrieb wenn nicht erzeugt, so doch fortwährend befruchtet habe' (ibid.). In contrast to Euripides, Sophocles and Aeschylus – whom Nietzsche variously describes as the 'grösste Dichternamen' (GT 11) and 'die grossen Meister' (ibid.) and whose work he posits as the apotheosis of ancient Greek drama – possessed an 'ungeheurer dionysischer Trieb' (GT 12) that enabled them both to accept the inscrutable and to incorporate it into their work.

Euripides' drive to make art intelligible is motivated, in Nietzsche's view, by his belief that the artist's duty is to educate and to turn his public into a 'zubereitete und aufgeklärte Masse' (GT 11), a belief that is itself based on the assumption that man can both know the world as it truly is and communicate that knowledge through schematic exposition. Euripides supposedly regarded his success in instilling

⁴ See GT 11: 'Und hier nun war ihm begegnet, was dem in die tieferen Geheimnisse der äschyleischen Tragödie Eingeweihten nicht unerwartet sein darf: er gewährte etwas Incommensurables in jedem Zug und in jeder Linie, eine gewisse täuschende Bestimmtheit und zugleich eine räthselhafte Tiefe, ja Unendlichkeit des Hintergrundes'.

‘Weisheit’ (GT 11) in his audience as a vital and positive distinction between his plays and those of Aeschylus:

Man lernte selbst bei Euripides sprechen, und dessen rühmt er sich selbst im Wettkampfe mit Aeschylus: wie durch ihn jetzt das Volk kunstmässig und mit den schlausten Sophisticationen zu beobachten, zu verhandeln und Folgerungen zu ziehen gelernt habe. [...] Wenn jetzt die ganze Masse philosophiere und mit unerhörter Klugheit Land und Gut verwalte, Prozesse führe u. s. w., so sei dies sein Verdienst (GT 11).

Nietzsche, however, objects vehemently to the concept of drama as a pedagogical device that requires the spectator to listen attentively to dialogue instead of being captivated by the events on stage.⁵ This opposition is partly on aesthetic grounds: he suggests, for example, that our sympathy for Euripides’ protagonists is diminished by the author’s repeated attempts to explain and justify his heroes’ actions (GT 14). Yet it is also due to what he sees as art’s elevated purpose. In the fifth section of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche directly challenges the notion of culture as an educational tool: ‘Denn dies muss uns vor allem, zu unserer Erniedrigung *und* Erhöhung, deutlich sein, dass die ganze Kunstkomödie durchaus nicht für uns, etwa unsrer Besserung und Bildung wegen, aufgeführt wird’ (GT 5). He then immediately indicates what he thinks art *is* for, by declaring that the world can only be justified as an aesthetic phenomenon, a claim that he repeats almost verbatim in the twenty-fourth section of the text: ‘nur als *aesthetisches Phänomen* ist das

⁵ Strong highlights Nietzsche’s objection to a practical or utilitarian vision of culture, and also illustrates the difference of approach that Nietzsche perceives between Aeschylus and Euripides: ‘The world of the dramatic representation may, in Nietzsche’s understanding, depict a situation familiar from the world beyond the theater, but it in no way attempts to comment on it. [...] Whatever effect the Aeschylean play has it must have by making its audience part of the resolution of the play, rather than by providing them with tools and recipes they might use in the world’. Tracy B. Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, 3rd edn (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 163.

Dasein und die Welt ewig *gerechtfertigt*' (ibid.). The task of the artist, Nietzsche insists, is nothing less than the very redemption of existence through a process of sublime transfiguration:⁶ by acting as a medium for the mysterious 'Urkünstler der Welt' (ibid.), instead of seeking to understand or explain it, the artist creates works that enable us to tolerate the 'Hässliche und Disharmonische' in our lives that we are unable to avoid (GT 24).

A clear tension exists between this exalted 'metaphysics of art'⁷ and the didactic or Euripidean work that strives to communicate a political, philosophical or moral message. For Nietzsche, one of the fundamental points of conflict between the two is in their respective choice of subject matter. Whereas pre-Socratic tragedy had typically been the province of the 'Halbgott' (GT 11) and had deliberately eschewed the 'treue Maske der Wirklichkeit' (ibid.), Euripides had chosen to write about everyday life and freely offered opinions about the condition of Greek society. Nietzsche sees this dramatisation of themes and characters that would be familiar to the public as a consequence of Euripides' desire to enlighten his fellow Greeks. If they were to learn from his plays, Euripides needed to present them with material which they would be capable of assessing on the basis of their own experience:

Der Mensch des alltäglichen Lebens drang durch ihn aus den Zuschauerräumen auf die Scene, der Spiegel, in dem früher nur die grossen und kühnen Züge zum Ausdruck kamen, zeigte jetzt eine peinliche Treue, die auch die misslungenen Linien der Natur gewissenhaft wiedergiebt [...] Und so

⁶ An excellent analysis of the meaning of the sublime in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* is provided by Matthew Rampley in *Nietzsche, Aesthetics and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Rampley argues convincingly that for Nietzsche, unlike Schopenhauer and other thinkers who had developed a theory of aesthetics, the sublime is divested of metaphysical connotations: 'the sublime is no longer simply a means of overcoming the limitation of human embodiment through the disclosure of the metaphysical super-sensuous truth underlying all phenomenal existence [...] the function of the sublime in Nietzsche is to dispel the aura of representation' (p. 91).

⁷ See GT 24.

hebt der aristophanische Euripides zu seinem Preise hervor, wie er das allgemeine, allbekannte, alltägliche Leben und Treiben dargestellt habe, über das ein Jeder zu urtheilen befähigt sei (ibid.).

In arguing that Euripides had made culture the mouthpiece of ‘die bürgerliche Mittelmässigkeit’ (ibid.), Nietzsche characterises him as the first example of an artist whose overreliance on reason was linked to – and to an extent the cause of – a prosaic, bourgeois conception of culture that prioritised the quotidian or ‘das Wirkliche’ over the sublime.

This admittedly exaggerated and unhistorical account of tragedy’s demise is presented in a superficially conventional form, particularly when compared to the latter part of the text in which Nietzsche outlines his vision of a German cultural renaissance under the aegis of Wagner. Yet its significance for Nietzsche extends far beyond the strictly historical concerns of academic philology. He is not satisfied by merely retelling or reimagining the story of antiquity.⁸ Instead he regards his engagement with the ideas and personalities of ancient Greece as a means of casting light on the problems faced by his own age:

Wir [müssen] uns jetzt freien Blicks den analogen Erscheinungen der Gegenwart gegenüber stellen; wir müssen mitten hinein in jene Kämpfe treten, welche, wie ich eben sagte, zwischen der unersättlichen optimistischen Erkenntniss und der tragischen Kunstbedürftigkeit in den höchsten Sphären unserer jetzigen Welt gekämpft werden (GT 16).

The nexus between the Hellenic and the modern is a recurring motif in Nietzsche’s early work. He urges his readers to examine the present through the prism of the

⁸ As Müller states: ‘Die Auseinandersetzung mit den Athenern hatte ohnehin [...] nie den Charakter einer thematischen Rekonstruktion des klassischen griechischen Denkens, sondern denjenigen eines Agons mit den Protagonisten dieses Denkens’. Enrico Müller, *Die Griechen im Denken Nietzsches* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2005), p. 246.

distant past – thereby adding another dimension to the ideal of being ‘unzeitgemäss’ – because he believes that the troubles afflicting contemporary German *Bildung* are analogous to, and rooted in, the destruction of tragic attitudes instigated by Socrates and Euripides.⁹

It is easy to identify the similarities between Nietzsche’s portrayal of Euripides and his characterisation of the nineteenth-century *Bildungsphilister*, which was discussed in the preceding chapter. Firstly, he ascribes to both an all-encompassing faith in the power of reason and the concomitant view that human existence is a problem to be solved. Nietzsche argues that the modern age had witnessed ontological systems, political theories and ideologies of various stripes – all based on what Nietzsche saw as specious claims about the nature of the world and the position of man within it – being hailed as rational answers to the questions posed by human existence that could no longer be explained away by religion. The various causes championed by the *Bildungsphilister* are examples of these putative solutions; it has been demonstrated that Nietzsche characterises the *Bildungsphilister* as the founder of a ‘Religion der Zukunft’ (UB I, 3) that is based on the ‘Katechismus der “modernen Ideen”’ (ibid.). Nietzsche names Strauss in particular as an example of a ‘Gläubiger’ (ibid.), or of someone who trusts in the universal validity of the conditions obtaining in nineteenth-century Germany and in their ability to provide the foundations for the ‘Weltstrasse der Zukunft’ (ibid.):

Sondern so reden allein jene Menschen, welche Strauss als seine ‘Wir’ uns vorstellt, und die uns, wenn sie uns ihren Glauben erzählen noch mehr langweilen, als wenn sie uns ihre Träume erzählen mögen sie nun ‘Gelehrte

⁹ He also affirms this link in section fifteen of the text: ‘die Griechen [haben] unsere und jegliche Cultur als Wagenlenker in den Händen’ (GT 15).

oder Künstler, Beamte oder Militärs, Gewerbtreibende oder Gutsbesitzer sein und zu Tausenden und nicht als die Schlechtesten im Lande leben' (ibid.).

According to Nietzsche, the modern, scientific age had displaced the faith in God, not with an attitude of scepticism and perpetual questioning, but with an equally devout and unwavering trust in the scope of its own abilities and in the truth of its worldview. A misguided confidence in the authority of their 'flausenhafte Begriffe' (UB III, 7) – among which Nietzsche includes 'Fortschritt', 'allgemeine Bildung', 'National', 'moderner Staat' and 'Culturkampf' (ibid.) – supposedly separates Strauss¹⁰ and the *Bildungsphilister* from an 'eigentliche Denker' (UB I, 3): a differentiation that confirms Nietzsche's enduring respect for rationality, providing that it is employed in the right way. The human intellect, he suggests, offers a medium for critical analysis and doubt that enables change and development. What he cannot accept is the invocation of reason to support grandiose claims to absolute truth or doctrines that aspire to 'universale Geltung und universale Zwecke' (GT 18). In *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche suggests that because Socrates conceived of reason as an accomplice in the search for truth rather than as a means of relentless intellectual exploration, he was unable to use it to examine the value or viability of the search itself: 'Andererseits aber war es jenem in Sokrates erscheinenden logischen Triebe völlig versagt, sich gegen sich selbst zu kehren; in diesem fessellosen Dahinströmen zeigt er eine Naturgewalt, wie wir sie nur bei den allergrössten instinctiven Kräften zu unsrer schaudervollen Ueberraschung antreffen' (GT 14).

In addition to this misguided view of reason as a panacea or a bulwark for pre-existing beliefs and prejudices, the *Bildungsphilister* also inherited Euripides' belief that art is a useful accessory to the process of explaining or 'solving' the problem of

¹⁰ See UB I, 3, where Strauss is described as 'zuversichtlich bis zum Cynismus'.

existence. As Witt argues, Nietzsche seeks to illustrate ‘the direct line that leads from Euripides’ introduction of mediocre everyday life and epic suspense onto the stage to nineteenth-century dramatic realism and naturalism’.¹¹ The previous chapter showed how popular awareness of political and social issues in Germany was promoted by the spread of realist literature. Writers like Julian Schmidt and Gustav Freytag aimed both to shape and reflect the concerns of their readership, and facilitated the discussion of civic issues in the public sphere by placing these issues at the centre of their work. It was also shown how partisans on both sides of the political divide had allowed their assessment of Goethe’s artistic merit to be determined by their own non-literary objectives: supporters of Bismarck hoped that Goethe’s legacy could confer cultural and historical legitimacy on the newly-founded German nation, while an earlier generation of progressives had derided Goethe for his alleged political apathy.

For Nietzsche, both the commitment to the public’s edification and the artistic involvement with themes from everyday life are reminiscent of Euripides’ aims and principles. In the seventh section of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, he makes a direct comparison between the two in the course of a discussion about the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy. Nietzsche emphatically rejects claims that the tragic chorus had demotic or populist origins, and argues instead – citing Schiller in support – that it was first introduced as a means of protecting the drama from the intrusion of the outside world:

Eine constitutionelle Volksvertretung kennen die antiken Staatsverfassungen in praxi nicht und haben sie hoffentlich auch in ihrer Tragödie nicht einmal ‘geahnt’ [...] Eine unendlich werthvollere Einsicht über die Bedeutung des Chors hatte bereits Schiller in der berühmten Vorrede zur Braut von Messina

¹¹ Mary Ann Frese Witt, ‘Introduction: Nietzsche as Tragic Poet and his Legacy’, in *Nietzsche and the Rebirth of the Tragic* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), p. 21.

verrathen, der den Chor als eine lebendige Mauer betrachtete, die die Tragödie um sich herum zieht, um sich von der wirklichen Welt rein abzuschliessen und sich ihren idealen Boden und ihre poetische Freiheit zu bewahren (GT 7).

The great tragedians, in Nietzsche's view, used the chorus as a theatrical barrier with which to exclude the 'wirkliche Welt'. Yet this 'living wall' had gradually been dismantled, in a process whose culmination was the modern tendency to invite the real world in as an honoured guest: 'Ich fürchte, wir sind dagegen mit unserer jetzigen Verehrung des Natürlichen und Wirklichen am Gegenpol alles Idealismus angelangt' (ibid.). Nietzsche returns to this theme in the next section, where he describes the wall of the chorus as having been besieged by an 'anstürmende Wirklichkeit' (GT 8), whose representative was the 'Culturmensch' (ibid.) – a metaphoric antecedent of the *Bildungsphilister* – who believed in the universal value of his 'einzige Realität' (ibid.) and therefore fought to have it placed on the stage. We should note the similarity between these passages and the extract from the *Nachlass* quoted in the previous chapter, in which Nietzsche berates Schmidt, Auerbach and the authors of *Junges Deutschland*, among others, for the 'Verehrung des Wirklichen' (NF 1871-2, 8, 113). He insists that the relationship between contemporary drama and society is an extension of Euripides' 'aesthetic Socratism', and that it is guided by the same erroneous principles, which it has refined and honed.

It is clear that Nietzsche's interest in knowledge and its limitations is inextricably linked to his philosophy of *Bildung*, and to the way in which 'rational art' was used to sustain politically, socially or nationally determined versions of 'truth' in the outside world. Yet although Nietzsche's pronounced antagonism towards the 'Trieb zum Wissen' is one of the most-discussed aspects of his philosophy, the debate

has sometimes failed to acknowledge how this antagonism is bound up with, and to a great extent conditioned by, Nietzsche's thoughts on culture and education.

The value and purpose of knowledge was a question that occupied Nietzsche for his entire working life, and his treatment of it is characterised by remarkable subtlety and complexity. It permeates his thinking on a wide variety of subjects, including metaphysics,¹² language,¹³ science, and history. Each of these diverse intellectual interests also affects his theory of knowledge, forming a web of reciprocal relationships whose nuances and intricate textures, when combined with the qualifications, revisions and alterations that are characteristic of Nietzsche's thought generally, make it very difficult to describe anything so fixed or readily categorizable as a 'true' Nietzschean epistemology. This is in addition to the fact that such an epistemology would appear to contradict many of his statements about truth and knowledge, as Schutte has pointed out: 'Nietzsche does not have a systematic theory of truth; if he did, he would be violating some of his major insights on the subject'.¹⁴

Yet there is an influential postmodern or deconstructionist strand of Nietzsche scholarship that has threatened to reduce Nietzsche's philosophy to just such a theory, whose purported aim is to establish 'how best to criticize metaphysics and whether it is possible to escape it',¹⁵ and whose supposed consequence, as Kuhn puts it, is the 'Zerstörung der überkommenen Auffassungen der Welt, die [...] die hergebrachten Konzeptionen des Erkenntnisvermögens und der Erkenntnistheorie außer Kraft

¹² See, for example, the section of *Götzendämmerung* entitled 'Wie die "wahre Welt" endlich zur Fabel wurde', in which Nietzsche outlines his view of the emergence and demise of the belief in a fixed, suprasensible reality. He divides this process into six stages, beginning with the Platonic Idea and concluding with mankind being collectively disabused of this 'längste[r] Irrtum' (GD, 'Fabel') – a phenomenon which he describes as the 'Höhepunkt der Menschheit' (ibid.).

¹³ Notably in his unpublished essay, *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge in aussermoralischen Sinne*, which will be discussed below.

¹⁴ Ofelia Schutte, *Beyond Nihilism. Nietzsche Without Masks* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 11.

¹⁵ Douglas Smith, *Transvaluations. Nietzsche in France 1872-1972* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 225.

setzt'.¹⁶ Postmodernist readings often ascribe overriding significance to Nietzsche's idea of perspectivism, which he only fully develops in his later works, and to his thoughts on the limits of language as a means of disclosing information about the world. In his explanation of perspectivism, which belongs with the death of God, the eternal recurrence and the *Übermensch* as one of his most famous hypotheses, Nietzsche demands that philosophers call off the hunt for the primary, universally valid truth. Such a truth could never be discovered, Nietzsche argues, because it did not exist. He articulates this view most clearly in the third essay of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887):

Es giebt *nur* ein perspektivisches Sehen, *nur* ein perspektivisches 'Erkennen'; und *je mehr* Affekte wir über eine Sache zu Worte kommen lassen, *je mehr* Augen, verschiedene Augen wir uns für dieselbe Sache einzusetzen wissen, um so vollständiger wird unser 'Begriff' dieser Sache, unsre 'Objektivität' sein (GM III, 12).

This doctrine contradicts one of the basic tenets of German Idealism, and indeed of western philosophy since Plato, which had differentiated between the world as man perceives it and 'actual' reality. Kant, for example, described this as the contrast between the phenomenon, or the way in which objects appeared to the human senses, and the noumenon or *Ding-an-sich*, which could not be accessed cognitively and constituted the underlying, objective nature of things.¹⁷ Schopenhauer broadly accepted this distinction but used different terminology to explain it: for him, human

¹⁶ Elisabeth Kuhn, *Friedrich Nietzsches Philosophie des europäischen Nihilismus* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1992), p. 122.

¹⁷ For a detailed, critical explanation of Kant's epistemological claim, see Ralph C. S. Walker, 'Kant on the Number of Worlds', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 18 (2010), 821-43.

apprehension is limited to *Vorstellung*, or the ‘representation’ of things, while he renamed transcendent, metaphysical truth as *Wille*.¹⁸

In rejecting the *Ding-an-sich*, the *Wille* and all other philosophical designations for the ‘real’ world, Nietzsche’s perspectivism also necessarily rejects the correspondence theory of truth, in which man’s perception of things happens to coincide with their unadulterated essence. For Nietzsche, such a theory demanded a type of person or method of perception which was simply inconceivable: the ‘reines, willenloses, schmerzloses, zeitloses Subjekt der Erkenntniss’ (GM III, 12). He insists that to perceive is to impose one’s own interpretation on the thing that is perceived, and that the act of interpretation is creative rather than simply receptive. The observer therefore can not help but invest the object of his attention with his own values, beliefs or prejudices:

Hüten wir uns vor den Fangarmen solcher contradiktorischen Begriffe wie ‘reine Vernunft’, ‘absolute Geistigkeit’, ‘Erkenntniss an sich’:—hier wird immer ein Auge zu denken verlangt, das gar nicht gedacht werden kann, ein Auge, das durchaus keine Richtung haben soll, bei dem die aktiven und interpretirenden Kräfte unterbunden sein sollen, fehlen sollen, durch die doch Sehen erst ein Etwas-Sehen wird, hier wird also immer ein Widersinn und Unbegriff vom Auge verlangt (ibid.).

The rejection of objectivity and disbelief in the possibility of communal knowledge has been cited by many twentieth-century commentators, and by some postmodernists in particular, as Nietzsche’s most important contribution to philosophy. Writers such as Granier and de Man argue that by highlighting the strictly personal nature of knowledge and undermining its traditional associations with detached, impartial

¹⁸ On Nietzsche’s relationship with both the traditions of German Idealism and Plato, see Robert Holub, *Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York: Twayne, 1995), p. 4 and p. 68.

analysis and directly communicable facts, Nietzsche decisively breaks from all that had gone before. Nietzsche the iconoclast predominates in these interpretations, often at the expense of his work in fields beyond epistemology, including culture and education.

The importance of perspectivism to Nietzsche's later philosophy is not to be disputed. Nevertheless, some scholars have allowed their awareness of this 'mature' epistemology to influence their analysis of Nietzsche's earlier statements about knowledge. In their desire to highlight Nietzsche's radicalism and to posit perspectivism as his 'authentic' attitude to truth, they have exaggerated or misrepresented the position that he adopts in both *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge in aussermoralischen Sinne* (1873). In so doing, they focus predominantly on the young Nietzsche's engagement with the Western philosophical tradition, his ideas about the viability of language as a method of conveying truth and his distaste for metaphysics. Nietzsche undoubtedly made significant claims about truth and knowledge in these works and was already sceptical of philosophical systems that sought to establish a rigidly normative view of existence. Yet one risks misconstruing these early claims by isolating them from Nietzsche's cultural critique, as well as underestimating the importance of this critique and the extent of Goethe's influence on the young Nietzsche.

Jaspers has illustrated the problem of trying to reduce Nietzsche's philosophy to a single idea or overarching theme: 'Es werden einzelne Lehren Nietzsches isoliert, systematisiert, und als seine eigentliche Errungenschaft herausgestellt [...] Auf jedem dieser Wege zeigt sich zwar ein Zusammenhang in Nietzsches Denken, aber nicht

sein Denken selbst und im Ganzen'.¹⁹ In promoting a specific element of Nietzsche's thought as somehow definitive or genuine, one fails to convey its complexity and diversity. Young makes a similar point in the introduction to his study of Nietzsche's philosophy of art, with a maxim that offers a valuable guiding principle to approaching Nietzsche's vast body of work: 'Philosophy is distinguished by the fact that everything is connected with everything else. Of Nietzsche's philosophy this is even more true than usual'.²⁰ In his study of Nietzsche's metaphysics, Djurić, rightly claims that it is impossible to understand Nietzsche's 'practical philosophy' if one separates it from his critique of culture:

Diese Kritik [der modernen Kultur] ist mit der Kritik der praktischen Philosophie wie auch mit der herrschenden ästhetischen Anschauungen am engsten verbunden. Vielleicht kann man sie sogar überhaupt nicht verstehen, wenn man diesen breiteren Zusammenhang aus den Augen verliert.²¹

In both his published work and the *Nachlass* from the first half of the 1870s, Nietzsche clearly regards the problem of *Bildung*'s supposed instrumentalisation and deterioration as inseparable from the nostrum of knowledge. It is his opposition to *both* the demeaning of culture and the view of knowledge as a 'Universalmedizin' (GT 15) that provides the cornerstone of his early thought, and his choice of Goethe as an exemplary figure reflects his belief that Goethe is a potential antidote to both of these maladies. Nietzsche's criticism of the 'sokratische Lust des Erkennens' (GT 18) in these two texts is shaped as much by his belief that the culture of nineteenth-century Germany was hopelessly debased as it is by his hostility towards

¹⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche. Einführung in das Verständnis seines Philosophierens*, 3rd edn (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1950), pp. 12-13.

²⁰ Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 1.

²¹ Mihailo Djurić, *Nietzsche und die Metaphysik* (Berlin & New York: De Gruyter, 1985), p. 12.

philosophical convention, and his thoughts on the limitations of knowledge must be analysed with this context in mind.

What becomes apparent, and will be discussed in greater detail below, is that the early Nietzsche repeatedly insists that knowledge – and the faculty of reason that is its correlate – have a pivotal role to play in stimulating creativity and reinvigorating German culture. This argument exists alongside, and is entirely compatible with, his claim that an immoderate ‘*Trieb zum Wissen*’ had been catastrophic for culture since the time of Socrates and Euripides. To reject knowledge and the concept of truth entirely, however, would be to nullify the argument and to undermine much of his thinking about *Bildung* in the process. It is therefore necessary to demonstrate the weaknesses of postmodern readings of the young Nietzsche – and of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge in aussermoralischen Sinne* in particular – that either regard his critique of knowledge as the single most important element of his early philosophy or treat the position that he adopts in the early 1870s as indistinguishable from his later perspectivism.²²

2. Postmodernist Approaches to Nietzsche’s View of Knowledge

An example of a reading that accords undue precedence to Nietzsche’s more sweeping statements about knowledge can be found in an essay by Granier.²³ He begins by successfully identifying the key thread of Nietzsche’s theory of

²² A number of scholars have sought to extricate Nietzsche from his association with the more extreme claims of postmodernism. See in particular Peter Berkowitz, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1995); Jessica Berry, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); John Richardson, *Nietzsche’s System* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Ted Sadler, *Nietzsche: Truth and Redemption. Critique of the Postmodernist Nietzsche* (London and Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: The Athlone Press, 1995); and John T. Wilcox, *Truth and Value in Nietzsche: A Study of his Metaethics and Epistemology* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1974). Berry is particularly insightful regarding the incompatibility of Nietzsche’s cultural agenda and dogmatic metaphysical assertions (See in particular p. 62).

²³ Jean Granier, ‘Perspectivism and Interpretation’, in *The New Nietzsche. Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. David B. Allison (Cambridge, Mass and London: The MIT Press), pp. 190-200.

interpretation, comparing it to the manner in which an artist paints a landscape or a musician reads a musical score. The result is not a slavish reproduction of topographical features or notes on a page, but a work in which the imprint of the interpreting artist is clearly apparent.²⁴

The problem in Granier's analysis comes when he conflates Nietzsche's perspectivism and his earlier theory of interpretation: 'The Nietzschean notion of perspectivism overlaps that of interpretation, and Nietzsche often regards them as synonymous'.²⁵ As was shown above, Nietzsche tackles the problem of interpretation – that it is creative, rather than passive or detached – in the same section of the *Genealogie* in which he defines perspectivism. Yet Granier decides not to use this passage in support of his point, instead citing a section from *Über Wahrheit und Lüge* which Nietzsche wrote in 1873:

Denn zwischen zwei absolut verschiedenen Sphären wie zwischen Subjekt und Objekt giebt es keine Causalität, keine Richtigkeit, keinen Ausdruck, sondern höchstens ein *ästhetisches* Verhalten, ich meine eine andeutende Uebertragung, eine nachstammelnde Uebersetzung in eine ganz fremde Sprache. Wozu es aber jedenfalls einer frei dichtenden und frei erfindenden Mittel-Sphäre und Mittelkraft bedarf (UWL 1).

This failure to distinguish between the theory of interpretation outlined in *Über Wahrheit und Lüge* and Nietzsche's later perspectivism reveals two fundamental problems that are typical of analyses that portray the early Nietzsche as resolutely averse to any practicable definition of knowledge. The first is that such analyses are often severely weakened, or explicitly contravened, by other claims that Nietzsche makes about knowledge in this period. These claims are often ignored or downplayed,

²⁴ Ibid., p.191.

²⁵ Ibid.

thus granting Nietzsche's 'war on truth' a privileged status that is difficult to justify. The second, which is arguably even more important to this thesis, has been identified by Berkowitz: that by placing undue emphasis on Nietzsche's writing about the relationship between language, interpretation and knowledge, one 'drastically shifts the actual center of gravity of his books'.²⁶ It was demonstrated in the preceding chapter that the early Nietzsche's discussion of *Bildung* is sustained and impassioned. *Über Wahrheit und Lüge*, by contrast, is a sixteen-page essay which was not published during Nietzsche's lifetime. To privilege this preliminary foray into epistemology over everything else that Nietzsche was writing in the early 1870s would seem dubious at best, and at worst deliberately misleading.

We shall address the problem of exegetical accuracy first. In *Über Wahrheit und Lüge* and other works from this period Nietzsche strikes a conspicuous note of caution regarding knowledge of the 'real' world. Although he considers it highly unlikely that mankind could ever acquire such knowledge, he is careful not to rule out the possibility altogether and criticises Kant for having done so: 'Gegen Kant ist dann immer noch einzuwenden, daß, alle seine Sätze zugegeben, doch noch die volle *Möglichkeit* bestehen bleibt, daß die Welt so ist, wie sie uns erscheint' (NF 1872, 19, 125). Nietzsche here avoids the radical and somewhat inflexible assertions that appear in his later discussion of perspectivism in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* – 'Es giebt *nur* ein perspektivisches Sehen, *nur* ein perspektivisches "Erkennen"' – which in turn tends to refute Granier's claim that his theories of interpretation and perspectivism are effectively synonymous. Nietzsche's desire to leave his options open is entirely consistent with his abiding interest in creativity and his attendant opposition to categorical affirmations or denials of any kind.

²⁶ Berkowitz, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist*, p. 3.

This open-mindedness is evident elsewhere in *Über Wahrheit und Lüge*. In the essay Nietzsche also seeks to expose the limitations of the concept as a medium of knowledge. He suggests that the concept was devised by man to denote a range of closely related experiences or things, and that it has since been relied upon by scientists, philosophers and historians as an intellectual tool with which to convey their discoveries to the wider world. In order to bring objects within the scope of the concept, however, we must ignore their unique characteristics and specific attributes. According to Nietzsche, we therefore cannot presume that our simplified descriptions correspond to the reality of the things or phenomena which they seek to explain:

Jeder Begriff entsteht durch Gleichsetzen des Nicht-Gleichen. [...] Das Uebersehen des Individuellen und Wirklichen giebt uns den Begriff, wie es uns auch die Form giebt, wohingegen die Natur keine Formen und Begriffe, also auch keine Gattungen kennt, sondern nur ein für uns unzugängliches und undefinirbares X (UWL 1).

Yet Nietzsche immediately qualifies this remark with the caveat that he cannot know for certain that concepts differ from reality, simply because such insight is denied to him as it is to all men:

Denn auch unser Gegensatz von Individuum und Gattung ist anthropomorphisch und entstammt nicht dem Wesen der Dinge, wenn wir auch nicht zu sagen wagen, dass er ihm nicht entspricht: das wäre nämlich eine dogmatische Behauptung und als solche ebenso unerweislich wie ihr Gegentheil (ibid.).

Nietzsche does not grant his own opinions a privileged status and therefore carefully avoids falling into the trap of rejecting dogmatic assertions with one of his own.²⁷

²⁷ This point is well made by Berry in *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*, p. 52.

This aversion to any kind of absolute statement precludes him from insisting – at least at this early stage of his philosophical development – that there is nothing beyond the world of appearance and, more importantly, that all knowledge is illusory. Nor can he legitimately claim that if something does exist, it will inevitably differ from the world that we perceive.²⁸

Other commentators who accept that Nietzsche's theory of knowledge represents a turning point in the history of Western philosophy have also noted that he does not dismiss the notion of truth entirely. Rorty, who is strongly convinced of Nietzsche's epistemological radicalism, warns that: 'To say that we should drop the idea of truth as out there waiting to be discovered is not to say that we have discovered that, out there, there is no truth'.²⁹ Nietzsche is calling our priorities into question, but he does not demand that his new reading of the world should be treated as authoritative. In fact, as Rorty goes on to point out, to try to do so would be to completely negate the object of Nietzsche's argument:

The Western philosophical tradition thinks of a human life as a triumph just insofar as it breaks out of the world of time, appearance, and idiosyncratic opinion into another world – into the world of enduring truth. Nietzsche, by contrast, thinks the important boundary to cross is not the one separating time from atemporal truth but rather the one which divides the old from the new.

²⁸ Figal also doubts that Nietzsche categorically dismissed the notion of absolute truth, but for slightly different reasons. He plausibly argues that the act of interpretation can not take place in a vacuum, and that it indicates the presence of an underlying 'reality' which is being interpreted (even if that reality cannot be adequately described): 'Wenn man überhaupt versteht, daß etwas eine Interpretation ist, versteht man auch, daß hier 'etwas' interpretiert wird und eine Realität in vermittelter Weise erscheint. [...] Die 'richtige', also die nicht interpretierte Welt könnten wir uns noch nicht einmal vorstellen. Aber damit hat der Gedanke von etwas jenseits der Interpretation nicht seine Bedeutung verloren.' Günter Figal, 'Nietzsche's Philosophie der Interpretation', *Nietzsche Studien* 29 (2000), p. 1-11. (pp. 5-6.)

²⁹ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 8. See also Richard Rorty, 'The Contingency of Language', *The London Review of Books* (17 April 1986), pp. 3-6; and 'The Contingency of Selfhood', *The London Review of Books* (8 May 1986), pp. 11-15.

He thinks a human life triumphant just insofar as it escapes from inherited descriptions of the contingencies of its existence and finds new descriptions.³⁰

To insist that knowledge is impossible would be to try to enter the realm of ‘enduring truth’, which Nietzsche considers neither realistic nor desirable. If man bases his behaviour on beliefs about the state of the world that are both inflexible and unverifiable, he places unnecessary restrictions on the scope of his thought and action. Nietzsche sees the attempt to find ‘new descriptions’ as the lifeblood of our continued progress; progress which he defines not in the Hegelian sense of an inexorable march towards a final goal or revelation, but as the opposite of stagnation and complacency.³¹

This brings us to the second problem with some postmodern interpretations of Nietzsche’s early work. By portraying Nietzsche as a purely destructive thinker whose greatest accomplishment is the supposed demolition of all claims to knowledge, authors such as Granier and de Man ignore Nietzsche’s belief that knowledge is integral to the creativity that he values so highly and which he writes about at great length in other works from the first half of the 1870s. This bias in favour of Nietzsche’s ‘subversive function’³² is evident in Paul de Man’s *Allegories of*

³⁰ Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p. 29.

³¹ Danto is another commentator who argues that the young Nietzsche did not repudiate the idea of ultimate truth, even if he thought that it would remain beyond our grasp: ‘At this point [the years immediately after Nietzsche’s appointment at Basel] Nietzsche was supposing that there might be an order or structure in the world which we were incapable of capturing.’ Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 38. Danto also shares Rorty’s conviction that this reluctance to deny truth completely is symptomatic of Nietzsche’s desire to embrace the rich diversity of life rather than reject a particular interpretation of it: ‘He tried to construct a philosophy consistent with the extraordinary openness he felt was available to man, or at least a philosophy that would entail this openness as one of its consequences’ (ibid., pp. 12-13).

³² Clayton Koelb, ‘Reading as a Philosophical Strategy: Nietzsche’s The Gay Science’, in Clayton Koelb (ed.), *Nietzsche as Postmodernist: Essays Pro and Contra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 143-160 (p. 145). Koelb recognises the problems in concentrating exclusively on Nietzsche’s supposed epistemological revolution and aims to ‘draw out a slightly different implication of the position taken in the lecture notes on rhetoric and in “On Truth and Lie” that focuses attention on its inventive rather than its subversive function in Nietzsche’s philosophical project.’

Reading.³³ Like Granier, he contends that by the time that Nietzsche came to write *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, he had already decisively dismissed the idea of any kind of objective truth. Yet he recognises the problem posed by Nietzsche's declaration that not only does the Dionysian represent the 'geheimnisvollen Ur-Einen' (GT 1), but also that it is accessible to man. Nietzsche believes that Dionysian knowledge is terrible; he compares it to the experience of Hamlet, who is unable to act having learnt the truth of things: 'In diesem Sinne hat der dionysische Mensch Aehnlichkeit mit Hamlet: beide haben einmal einen wahren Blick in das Wesen der Dinge gethan, sie haben *erkannt*, und es ekelt sie zu handeln; denn ihre Handlung kann nichts am ewigen Wesen der Dinge ändern' (GT 7).

De Man circumvents this difficulty by describing *Die Geburt der Tragödie* as 'an extended rhetorical fiction devoid of authenticity'.³⁴ He makes much of a remark at the beginning of section eighteen, in which Nietzsche describes the Socratic, Apollonian and Dionysian as 'drei Illusionsstufen' (GT 18):

After having been consistently distinguished from each other by a qualitative differential system founded on the polarity between illusion and nonillusion, the Dionysian, Apollonian and Socratic modes are at least once, in what seems like a casual aside, differentiated in a purely quantitative system, in terms of their distance, as illusion, from a literal meaning.³⁵

De Man is right to point out the apparent incongruity of Nietzsche's statement. Yet it is not clear that one can use this quotation in order to advance a radically new reading of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* or to question the sincerity of its arguments. De Man neglects to incorporate a later passage from the same section, in which Nietzsche

³³ Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading. Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 1979.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

praises Kant for having revealed the inability of human cognition to penetrate the true essence of things and mankind's tendency – which, as has been discussed above, Nietzsche derides as 'Optimismus' (GT, 18) – to equate his superficial perceptions with this essence:

Wenn dieser [Optimismus] an die Erkennbarkeit und Ergründlichkeit aller Welträthsel, gestützt auf die ihm unbedenklichen aeternae veritates, geglaubt und Raum, Zeit und Causalität als gänzlich unbedingte Gesetze von allgemeinsten Gültigkeit behandelt hatte, offenbarte Kant, wie diese eigentlich nur dazu dienten, die blosse Erscheinung, das Werk der Maja, zur einzigen und höchsten Realität zu erheben (ibid.).

This extract reveals that, in 1872, Nietzsche still entertained the idea of an underlying reality, even if he agrees with Kant and Schopenhauer that man could not apprehend it via the intellect.

De Man concedes that the essentially rhetorical nature of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* 'cannot be read as such out of the original text'³⁶ and therefore tries to bolster his argument with reference to contemporaneous *Nachlass* fragments.³⁷ He claims that Nietzsche's description of the underlying state of existence as Dionysian is a 'tactical necessity',³⁸ and locates supposedly conclusive proof in *Über Wahrheit und Lüge*: 'This essay flatly states the necessary subversion of truth by rhetoric as the distinctive feature of *all* language'.³⁹ As evidence he quotes Nietzsche's famous declaration from that work: 'die Wahrheiten sind Illusionen, von denen man vergessen hat, dass sie welche sind' (UWL 1) and suggests that the first stage of the 'Nietzschean deconstruction' is to demonstrate the ineluctable 'figurality of *all*

³⁶ Ibid., p. 99.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 100.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 117.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 110 (My emphasis).

language'.⁴⁰ De Man seems to imply that as well as discounting the possibility of an underlying metaphysical truth, Nietzsche also doubts our ability to share simple observations and judgements regarding everyday life due to the unreliability of language as a medium. Language, in de Man's selective reading of Nietzsche, is inevitably rhetorical and therefore unreliable.⁴¹

A similar case is made by Derrida, who accentuates Nietzsche's heterodox approach to language without considering how it impacts on his work in other fields, or indeed how Nietzsche's work on culture, art and education may be seen to qualify his apparent defiance of linguistic convention: 'Nietzsche relaxes the limits of the metaphorical to such an extent that he attributes a metaphoric capacity to *every* phonic enunciation'.⁴² Elsewhere he suggests that Nietzsche needs to prove the arbitrariness of language if he is to fully emancipate himself from metaphysics: 'Nietzsche has to appeal to philosophical schemes (for example, the arbitrariness of the sign, or the emancipation of thought as concerns a language), in his critical operation against metaphysics'.⁴³ This necessity, in Derrida's view, has the result of opening up Nietzsche's work to an infinite number of interpretations. Derrida appears to consider it a foregone conclusion that Nietzsche's war against ontological speculation is paramount, and that he would be willing to relinquish claims made elsewhere in order to prosecute this campaign through attacks on language and the viability of knowledge.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 111 (My emphasis).

⁴¹ In contrast to De Man, Berry argues persuasively that Nietzsche could not insist on the necessarily rhetorical nature of language without fatally weakening his own line of reasoning: 'How would Nietzsche avoid running afoul of his own critique if his objective in "On Truth and Lie" was to defend, say, "*the necessary subversion of truth by rhetoric*" as the distinctive feature of all language" or any other overarching, systematic theory of truth or of discourse? The short answer is that he could not'. Berry, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*, p. 57.

⁴² Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Brighton: The Harvester Press Limited, 1982), p. 227 (My emphasis).

⁴³ Ibid., p. 179.

Quite apart from the question of whether it is plausible to dismiss an entire book as an ‘extended rhetorical fiction’, as de Man claims, and insist that its genuine meaning is to be found in an interpretation of notes which Nietzsche did not intend to publish, it would also appear that de Man does not adhere to his own advice that one should take a ‘detour outside the main text’⁴⁴ when interpreting *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. Derrida likewise fails to acknowledge the broader context of Nietzsche’s philosophical undertaking during his first years at Basel. In works from the same period as *Über Wahrheit und Lüge* (such as the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and the lectures of *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*), Nietzsche makes substantive claims about the values of modern society, educational institutions, the purpose of history, the overbearing presence of the Prussian state and the decline of culture, among many other things. Why, it must be asked, would he peremptorily undermine these accounts by arguing that the means he was using to convey them were hopelessly inadequate? If language were inherently untrustworthy and therefore incapable of transmitting even the most superficial form of knowledge – and reason and knowledge were therefore reduced to irrelevance – how can Nietzsche reasonably expect anyone to heed his urgent criticism of culture and education in nineteenth-century Germany?⁴⁵ An implacable belief in the inefficacy of words may well have led Nietzsche to abandon not only his crusade to revitalise *Bildung*, but his career as a writer. Yet, as Koelb points out: ‘*On Truth and Lies* did not precipitate a paralyzing crisis in Nietzsche’s own project of writing’.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ De Man, *Allegories of Reading*, p. 99.

⁴⁵ Wilcox raises a similar question, and describes his own view as follows: ‘The position which will be defended here is that Nietzsche’s cognitivism is dominant; there is so much rationalism in his thought and rhetoric, in his avowals and in his polemics, that it cannot be overlooked or explained away’. Wilcox, *Truth and Value in Nietzsche*, p. 98.

⁴⁶ Koelb, ‘Reading as a Philosophical Strategy: Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science*’, p. 147.

Nietzsche clearly believes that both language and the knowledge that it is capable of communicating are of value to mankind, even if it cannot penetrate the essence of existence.⁴⁷ This view of Nietzsche's thought is actually corroborated by a careful reading of *Über Wahrheit und Lüge*, even before we consult Nietzsche's other works from the early 1870s. At the beginning of the essay's second section, Nietzsche confirms that the vaunted man of action requires reason as a guy rope in order not to be swept away. Unlike the scholarly man, however, he does not view knowledge as an end in itself or as a means of mitigating the terror of existence:

Wenn schon der handelnde Mensch sein Leben an die Vernunft und ihre Begriffe bindet, um nicht fortgeschwemmt zu werden und sich nicht selbst zu verlieren, so baut der Forscher seine Hütte dicht an den Thurmbau der Wissenschaft, um an ihm mithelfen zu können und selbst Schutz unter dem vorhandenen Bollwerk zu finden (UWL 2).

This passage illustrates the fundamental dichotomy that is present in so much of Nietzsche's writing in the early 1870s. It is the distinction between the man he refers to here as 'der Forscher' – whom he elsewhere names the 'Gelehrte' (UB I, 1), 'der theoretische Mensch' (GT 15), 'der Kritiker' (UB II, 5) or 'der wissenschaftliche Mensch' (BA II) – and the 'handelnde Mensch'. The theoretical man or scholar conceives of existence – or a particular aspect of it – as a purely intellectual challenge that can be figured out through the rigorous application of logic and the acquisition of knowledge. The active man, by contrast, is dedicated to enhancing both his life and his surroundings through creative endeavour instead of vainly struggling to rectify the world's imperfections. Yet as the above quotation from *Über Wahrheit und Lüge*

⁴⁷ This is the view offered by Clark: 'To use language metaphorically, he (Nietzsche) seems to assume, is to say something that fails to correspond to the actual nature of an object, but communicates nevertheless how that object appears given certain workings of the human imagination'. Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 78.

reveals, Nietzsche suggests that the actions of the dynamic individual are necessarily grounded in reason and concepts. It will be shown in the next chapter that Nietzsche views Goethe as an example of this type, and that this goes some way to explaining the early Nietzsche's often reverential attitude towards him.

By ignoring the myriad other concerns which inform Nietzsche's early work, De Man, Granier and Derrida offer an analysis which is both reductive and misleading. In focusing exclusively on Nietzsche's supposed overthrow of the epistemological order, they obscure the significance that he attaches to the image of man as a '*künstlerisch schaffendes Subjekt*' (UWL 1). This description appears in *Über Wahrheit und Lüge* – the essay which has typically provided a foundation for postmodernist accounts of Nietzsche's thought – and constitutes the crucial link between this more conventionally philosophical treatise and the critique of culture and education that Nietzsche was conducting around the same time.

Nietzsche reminds us that far from being an intrinsic feature of existence, language is in fact a construct of the human intellect which satisfies a number of our most basic requirements. One such need is the desire to interact socially, which language facilitates by establishing a shared system of designations (UWL 1). A second is the wish to impose a form of order on the world through the use of concepts, even if this order is strictly superficial and fails to correspond to the way things actually are. Nietzsche repeats on numerous occasions in the first half of the essay that this human impulse is both ineradicable and indispensable, and describes the intellect (of which language is a tool and which is therefore ultimately responsible for this process of systemisation) as '*ein Mittel zur Erhaltung des Individuums*' (ibid.).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ In the same work Nietzsche argues that the ability to organise our sense impressions is what separates mankind from animals: 'Alles, was den Menschen gegen das Thier abhebt, hängt von dieser Fähigkeit ab, die anschaulichen Metaphern zu einem Schema zu verflüchtigen, also ein Bild in einen Begriff aufzulösen'. (UWL, 1). He also insists that man's attempts to marshal the chaos of existence

The faculty of reason, he suggests, provides a measure of comfort to mankind by devising a taxonomical scheme that helps us make sense of the phenomenal world. Nietzsche never underestimates the importance of this scheme, even if he is acutely aware of its limitations: ‘Sie [die Wahrheit] ist durch und durch anthropomorphisch und enthält keinen einzigen Punct, der “wahr an sich”, wirklich und allgemeingültig, abgesehen von dem Menschen, wäre’ (ibid.).

Nietzsche is therefore both aware and tolerant of language’s pragmatic origins. Yet he also aims to demonstrate that language depends just as much on man’s fundamental urge to create. In his attempt to render existence comprehensible, man comes up with names for the things and events that he experiences. Nietzsche insists that there is nothing inevitable about the words that are chosen and no necessary correlation between an object and its appellation. The terms that we use in our everyday life are nothing but metaphors which have become engrained through centuries of use and which are testament to man’s imaginative powers.⁴⁹ This is not, he argues, a problem in itself: it is, in fact, a manifestation of a basic human impulse:

Jener Trieb zur Metapherbildung, jener Fundamentaltrieb des Menschen, den man keinen Augenblick wegrechnen kann, weil man damit den Menschen selbst wegrechnen würde, ist dadurch, dass aus seinen verflüchtigten Erzeugnissen, den Begriffen, eine reguläre und starre neue Welt als eine Zwingburg für ihn gebaut wird, in Wahrheit nicht bezwungen und kaum

are remarkable, even if they remain unavoidably anthropocentric: ‘Als Baugenie erhebt sich solcher Maassen der Mensch weit über die Biene: diese baut aus Wachs, das sie aus der Natur zusammenholt, er aus dem weit zarteren Stoffe der Begriffe, die er erst aus sich fabriciren muss. Er ist hier sehr zu bewundern—aber nur nicht wegen seines Triebes zur Wahrheit, zum reinen Erkennen der Dinge’. (ibid.).

⁴⁹ Schrift summarises Nietzsche’s argument well: ‘There is no originary presence at the inception of language; instead, at the origin stands the primal force (*Urkraft*) of the artist whose creative power is recognized in the primal process (*Urprozess*) of world-production as an infinite regress of images’. Alan D. Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation. Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (New York & London: Routledge, 1990), p. 125.

gebändigt. Er sucht sich ein neues Bereich seines Wirkens und ein anderes Flussbette und findet es im Mythos und überhaupt in der Kunst (UWL 2).

Nietzsche wants to show that art and science flow from the same creative source. Yet unlike art – and specifically tragic art – science lacks the power to enhance or transfigure existence. He therefore contends, *pace* Socrates, that it is time to reorder the hierarchy of human capacities.

In *Über Wahrheit und Lüge*, Nietzsche continues by saying that our preponderant creative drive makes us want constantly to reshape the world ('die vorhandene Welt [...] ewig neu zu gestalten', UWL 2). This image of perpetual reconstruction is at odds with the aims of the scientist or scholar who hopes to penetrate the unchanging essence of existence. Nietzsche therefore insists that the intellect should be placed in the service of the creative drive which can, in his view, have a palpable impact on our lives and the world around us.⁵⁰ Similarly, the practitioners of knowledge – whether historians, philologists or academics in other fields – should assist the process of cultural renewal by helping artists like Goethe. The various ways in which Nietzsche envisages this assistance taking place will be discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.

Nietzsche makes it clear that we do not have to abandon the intellect – in fact we could not even if we wished to – but we should lower our expectations of its capabilities. Reason's advocates may have dramatically overreached in the claims that they made for it, but this does not lead Nietzsche to the conclusion that the use of reason is pointless. Instead, he wishes to discriminate between the kinds of knowledge that we can reasonably aspire to – and make effective use of – and the transcendental truth that will remain forever beyond our grasp. This point is well illustrated by

⁵⁰ This point is well made by Sadler: 'The difference which Nietzsche has in mind is that art strives for beauty, whereas the "artistic" activity of science serves utility'. Sadler, *Nietzsche: Truth and Redemption. Critique of the Postmodernist Nietzsche*, p. 31.

Schacht, in an article that seeks to counter violently ‘anti-cognitivist’ readings of Nietzsche.⁵¹ It is crucial, he argues, to distinguish between elemental or metaphysical truth and the more mundane facts which help us in our everyday lives. He suggests that scholars and critics of Nietzsche have tended to merge the two, and in doing so have accorded extreme views to Nietzsche that cannot be reconciled with other aspects of his thought: ‘Certain of his more radical-sounding pronouncements about truth [...] have commonly been taken [...] to signal his repudiation of the very idea as well as the value of truth – taking knowledge over the side with it.’⁵² Schacht contends that Nietzsche deliberately divided knowledge into grades, in order to direct man towards those types of knowledge that he could reasonably expect to obtain and make use of: ‘his campaign against *things knowledge cannot be* was fuelled not only by his recognition that there are things *other than* knowledge that matter more in human life, but also by his further conviction that it is imperative to turn attention to the various sorts of *humanly possible* knowledge’.⁵³ Nietzsche understood that this more prosaic form of knowledge could not be frivolously discarded, and in fact he had no wish to do so. He simply demands that it facilitate human agency instead of dominating and inhibiting it. The fruitful man requires a framework upon which to build his works of genius: what Nietzsche demands is that this framework does not become a prison. The next section will now show precisely how Nietzsche thinks the fruitful man can make use of knowledge’s architecture to serve the needs of culture.

⁵¹ Richard Schacht, ‘Nietzsche’s Cognitivism’, *Nietzsche Studien*, 29 (2000), pp. 12-40. The term ‘anti-cognitivist’ is Schacht’s. See also Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (London and New York: Routledge, 1983), pp. 52-53, and Clark, who writes of the need to ‘distinguish a metaphysical from a common-sense version of the correspondence theory [of truth] and take him to reject only the former’. Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pp. 31-2.

⁵² Schacht, ‘Nietzsche’s Cognitivism’, p. 12.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

3. 'Der Philosoph als Arzt der Kultur': Reason and Intuition

Even in *Über Wahrheit und Lüge*, which is his most overtly 'subversive' work on knowledge, the early Nietzsche makes it clear that we cannot do without knowledge if we are to avoid being 'swept away' ('fortgeschwemmt'). Elsewhere, however, he goes far beyond this rather limited estimation of its value, by contending that knowledge is a potent source of inspiration for the fruitful individual and that it is therefore essential to culture's revival.

This belief is evident in the way that Nietzsche defines the task of philosophy in his early writing. In a *Nachlass* note from the same year in which *Die Geburt der Tragödie* was published, he claims that he wants to deter philosophy from the 'unbeschränkten Erkenntnißtrieb' (NF 1872, 19, 27) that pushed it towards metaphysical speculation. Nietzsche often dismisses metaphysics as little more than otiose guesswork and is generally sceptical of philosophers whose thinking strays beyond the parameters of human experience. He tends to argue that ontological system-building should be discarded in favour of assisting culture, although he also points to a way in which traditional philosophical approaches can themselves be viewed as cultural artefacts if we change the standards by which we assess them. When Nietzsche praises the abstract conceptual frameworks that thinkers have traditionally used to communicate their vision of the world, it is on the basis of their aesthetic attributes rather than their cogency or viability: 'Daß ein *unbeweisbares* Philosophiren noch einen Werth hat, mehr als meistens ein wissenschaftlicher Satz, hat seinen Grund in dem aesthetischen *Werthe* eines solchen Philosophirens, d.h. durch Schönheit und Erhabenheit' (NF 1872, 19, 76). Philosophy, he suggests, should be judged according to its beauty rather than its logical rigour and regarded as a feat of inspiration rather than deductive reasoning. It can only contribute to culture as a

‘Kunstwerk’ (NF 1872, 19, 39), rather than as a pseudo-scientific explanation of existence, and should therefore be viewed as a life-serving illusion that is actually threatened by science: ‘Denn wissenschaftlich betrachtet, ist es eine Illusion, eine Unwahrheit, die den Trieb nach Erkenntniß täuscht und nur vorläufig befriedigt. Der Werth der Philosophie in dieser Bändigung liegt nicht in der Erkenntnißsphäre, sondern in der Lebenssphäre’ (NF 1872, 19, 45).

In these instances, Nietzsche describes how philosophy should be thought of as art. Elsewhere, however, he depicts the philosopher’s role as primarily diagnostic rather than creative: ‘Der Philosoph soll *erkennen*, was *noth thut*, und der Künstler soll es *schaffen*’ (NF 1872, 19, 23). This idea is also clearly articulated in a note from 1873: ‘*Der Philosoph als Arzt der Kultur*’ (NF 1873, 23, 15). As Breazeale points out, the image of the philosopher as cultural physician is repeated throughout Nietzsche’s oeuvre.⁵⁴ Yet it is particularly prominent in Nietzsche’s years at Basel. Philosophy’s task, Nietzsche argued, was to ascertain and promote the conditions in which culture could thrive. It should also expose the exploitation or degradation of culture by vested interests, as Nietzsche sought to do in his early works: ‘Der Philosoph der Zukunft? Er muß das Obertribunal einer künstlerischen Kultur werden, gleichsam die Sicherheitsbehörde gegen alle Ausschreitungen’ (NF 1872, 19, 73).

In a fragment entitled ‘*Was soll jetzt die Philosophie?*’, Nietzsche expands on this theme and juxtaposes it to philosophy’s metaphysical tradition: ‘1. Unmöglichkeit der Metaphysik. 2. Möglichkeit des Dinges an sich. Jenseits der Wissenschaften. 3. Die Wissenschaft als Rettung vor dem Wunder. 4. Die Philosophie gegen den Dogmatismus der Wissenschaften. 5. *Aber nur im Dienste einer Kultur*’ (NF 1873, 23, 7) [emphasis added - JG]. In another note from 1872 he once again warns against the

⁵⁴ Daniel Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth. Selections from Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the early 1870’s* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press Inc., 1979), p. 69.

temptations of metaphysics, arguing that it is detrimental to a developing culture: ‘Ihr sollt nicht in eine Metaphysik flüchten, sondern sollt euch der *werdenden Kultur* thätig opfern! Deshalb bin ich streng gegen den Traumidealismus’ (NF 1872, 19, 154). This explicit condemnation of metaphysics further weakens the deconstructionist claim that the early Nietzsche rejects truth entirely: to surmise that truth is categorically unattainable is to make the type of metaphysical assertion which would undermine Nietzsche’s own project, and from which he clearly distances himself.

It is not only philosophy that Nietzsche would place in the service of culture. He also demands that the ultimate goal of all ‘wissenschaftliche[n] Ausbildungen’ (NF 1869, 3, 60) – including the academic disciplines of history and philology – should be to encourage artistic productivity. On numerous occasions throughout his early works, Nietzsche presents the existing relationship between scholarship and art as conflicting and even antithetical.⁵⁵ He views this contrast as an example of the difference between barren knowledge and creative activity: while the scholar’s impulse is to dissect and analyse – an impulse which, according to Nietzsche, is all too often regarded as possessing inherent worth – the artist or productive man strives to add to what already exists. Nietzsche regards the latter as the true man of culture, but claims that in the modern age culture is generally confused with empty learnedness:

Unsere ganze moderne Welt ist in dem Netz der alexandrinischen Cultur befangen und kennt als Ideal den mit höchsten Erkenntnisskräften

⁵⁵ See, for example, BA II, where Nietzsche discusses a hypothetical observer of German education: ‘Er wird nämlich finden, daß das Gymnasium nach seiner ursprünglichen Formation nicht für die Bildung, sondern nur für die Gelehrsamkeit erzieht’. Later in the same lecture he argues that: ‘der wissenschaftliche Mensch und der gebildete Mensch gehören zwei verschiedenen Sphären an’. There is also a lengthy polemic against scholars in the sixth section of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, which will be analysed in greater detail in the next chapter.

ausgerüsteten, im Dienste der Wissenschaft arbeitenden *theoretischen Menschen* [...] In einem fast erschreckenden Sinne ist hier eine lange Zeit der Gebildete allein in der Form des Gelehrten gefunden worden (GT 18).

Nietzsche links the orientation of intellectual life in nineteenth-century towards the ‘unfruitful’ scholar rather than the genius⁵⁶ with the rapid rise in the number of university departments and specialist academic fields during the course of the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ He argues that this fragmentary system is a further example of the expansion and dilution of education that was described in the previous chapter in relation to Nietzsche’s dislike of journalism: ‘Die Arbeitsteilung in der Wissenschaft strebt praktisch nach dem gleichen Ziele, nach dem hier und da die Religionen mit Bewußtsein streben: nach einer Verringerung der Bildung, ja nach einer Vernichtung derselben’ (BA 1). The partition of knowledge supposedly democratized education by furnishing men of ‘second or third-rate talent’ (‘aus der Reihe der zweiten und dritten Begabungen’, BA IV) with the opportunity to accrue prestige and professional success that would previously have been denied to them: ‘Denn so in die Breite ausgedehnt ist jetzt das Studium der Wissenschaften, daß, wer, bei guten, wenngleich nicht extremen Anlagen, noch in ihnen etwas leisten will, ein ganz spezielles Fach betreiben wird, um alle übrigen dann aber unbekümmert bleibt’

⁵⁶ See UB III, 6: ‘Er nämlich zu beobachten weiss, bemerkt, dass der Gelehrte seinem Wesen nach *unfruchtbar* ist—eine Folge seiner Entstehung!’

⁵⁷ Silk and Stern characterise the development of philology in Germany in the following way: ‘In 1777 [Friedrich August] Wolf, then a prospective student at Göttingen, had to fight to be allowed to enrol for philology: there *was* no such ‘subject’ then. A generation later, such battles are a thing of the past. Classical philology is a subject and institutionalized as such. Research is conducted by specialists in organised fashion, often in university programmes, on a systematic basis; knowledge accumulates, philological periodicals and societies multiply to absorb and facilitate the accumulation. And as knowledge expands, the next tendency is towards specialization within ‘the subject’ itself. Language, literature, thought, art, politics and society become separate territories and are occupied by separate specialists, until it becomes increasingly hard to find any scholars with pretensions to competence over the whole field.’ M.S. Silk and J.P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 13. See also Müller, *Die Griechen im Denken Nietzsches*, p. 6.

(BA 1).⁵⁸ Nietzsche attaches no significance to the scholar's discoveries; in part because of his unabashed elitism, but also because he does not value the acquisition of knowledge as an end in itself. This puts him, by his own reckoning, at odds with the prevailing spirit of the age, whose valorization of the 'Trieb zum Wissen' had led to the scholar being esteemed so highly that it harmed the genius: 'Gewiss, dass auch jetzt noch in sehr vielen Dingen die Schätzung des Gelehrten zu hoch ist und deshalb schädlich wirkt, zumal in allen Anliegenheiten des werdenden Genius' (UB III, 6).

Yet in spite of this evident disdain for the theoretical man or devotee of knowledge – of whom the scholar is a prominent example – Nietzsche does not advocate the wholesale abolition of academic disciplines or institutions. Instead he wishes to moderate and recalibrate them. This idea is alluded to in a *Nachlass* fragment from 1872 that reiterates his support for a consciously anthropocentric form of knowledge which renounces any claim to transcendent or ultimate truth: 'Es handelt sich nicht um eine Vernichtung der Wissenschaft, sondern um eine *Beherrschung*' (NF 1872, 19, 24). As well as implying restraint, which is an important aspect of Nietzsche's discussion of knowledge, 'Beherrschung' also signifies the idea of control or mastery. Nietzsche suggests we should put knowledge to work rather than place it on a pedestal, and specifically claims that traditional fields such as philology and history can play a crucial role in the development of a genuinely fruitful culture if we alter our approach to them. In his opinion these areas of study are customarily limited to the interpretation and classification of history's raw material, such as objects, documents and events; a process to which he attributes no innate value.

⁵⁸ See also UB III, 6: 'Wer gegenwärtig als Lehrer ein Gebiet zu erschliessen weiss, auf dem auch die geringen Köpfe mit einigem Erfolge arbeiten können, der ist in kürzester Zeit ein berühmter Mann: so gross ist sofort der Schwarm, der sich hinzudrängt'.

Yet he does envisage a way in which traditional subject areas such as history and philology can be assimilated into his theory of *Bildung*, which depends on them aiding life and culture in the present day. It is important to outline this aspect of his thought here, for it further emphasises the importance to the early Nietzsche of uniting reason and intuition in order to be productive, which is vital to his image of Goethe. As will be shown in the next chapter, Nietzsche portrays Goethe as a prudent user of history who treated it as a spur to his own productivity.

4. Nietzsche's Approach to History

At the end of the foreword to *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil*, Nietzsche outlines his view of philology in a sentence that recalls the demands he makes of philosophy: 'denn ich wüsste nicht, was die classische Philologie in unserer Zeit für einen Sinn hätte, wenn nicht den, in ihr unzeitgemäss – das heisst gegen die Zeit und dadurch auf die Zeit und hoffentlich zu Gunsten einer kommenden Zeit – zu wirken' (UB II, Vorwort). The study and interpretation of antiquity, he argues, should seek both to illuminate the limitations of the modern era and offer a guide as to how they can be overcome, rather than satisfy itself with the mere accumulation and systematisation of knowledge about the ancient world.

Nietzsche evidently reached this conclusion before his official academic career had even begun. In his inaugural lecture at Basel in 1869 entitled *Homer und die klassische Philologie*, Nietzsche states that he regards philology as a composite of history, science and aesthetics. He describes the latter of these three elements as the application of criteria derived from the study of ancient Greece to present-day culture, anticipating the vision of philology that he would later set forth in *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil*:

Aesthetik endlich, weil sie aus der Reihe von Alterthümern heraus das sogenannte "klassische" Alterthum aufstellt, mit dem Anspruche und der Absicht, eine verschüttete ideale Welt heraus zu graben und der Gegenwart den Spiegel des Klassischen und Ewigmustergültigen entgegen zu halten (HKP).

The aesthetics of philology had supposedly been abandoned, however, and the discipline had come to be exclusively associated with science.⁵⁹ Nietzsche believes that the methods and aims of this purely scientific philology – such as textual analysis or determining the position of works within an established canon – are entirely insufficient for culture. Siemens describes the conflict between the techniques that Nietzsche had learned as a schoolboy at Pforta and the more expansive notion of *Bildung* to which he had subsequently committed himself: ‘In reality [...] philology as Nietzsche came to learn and practice it was an historical and linguistic *Wissenschaft* concerned with textual critique, and the tension between this work and the holistic *Bildungs*-claim is a central preoccupation of Nietzsche’s writings throughout the 1870s’.⁶⁰

The ability to enhance culture rather than simply acquire knowledge of it lies at the very heart of this ‘holistic *Bildungs*-claim’. In Nietzsche’s view, the modern philologist is characterised by the same dogged pursuit of knowledge that typifies the modern scholar or theoretical man whom Nietzsche criticises throughout his early

⁵⁹ ‘Und wiederum pflegen die einzelnen Vertreter jener Wissenschaft die ihrem Können und Wollen entsprechendsten Richtungen immer als die Centralrichtungen der Philologie zu begreifen’ (HKP).

⁶⁰ Herman Siemens, ‘Nietzsche and the “Classical”’: Traditional and Innovative Features of Nietzsche’s Usage, with Special Reference to Goethe’, in *Nietzsche and Antiquity: His Reaction and Response to the Classical Tradition*, ed. Paul Bishop (Rochester: Camden House, 2004), p. 393. See also Aldo Venturelli, ‘Das Grablied: Zur Entwicklung des jungen Nietzsche’, *Nietzsche Studien*, 27 (1998), 29–51. Venturelli argues that Nietzsche’s disaffection with philology was already evident when he was a student at Leipzig: ‘Zwar war Nietzsche schon während seiner Studienjahre in Leipzig mit der Beschränkung seines Fachs auf historische Kritik unzufrieden. Er war zunehmend daran interessiert, eine Brücke zwischen der philologischen Betrachtungsweise und philosophischen Überlegungen zu schlagen’. (p. 48).

works. What these individuals share, in Nietzsche's opinion, is the inability to have an 'outward effect' on the world ('nach aussen wirk[en]', UB II, 5), which means that they are supposedly incapable of being fruitful. In the fifth section of *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, Nietzsche offers a detailed description of these 'Historie Gierigen' (ibid.), in which he employs a number of relatively straightforward, and sometimes rather crass metaphors to illustrate his point. He refers to the men who conduct endless research into the past without putting their findings to use as 'Eunuchen' (ibid.) and 'Neutra' (ibid.); designations that clearly imply the failure of such men to propagate themselves through works and deeds. Nietzsche also describes the purely historical man as 'walking through deserts' ('sein Weg durch Wüsten führt', ibid.) and as being dragged down into himself by the cumulative burden of his learning ('es versinkt in sich selbst, ins Innerliche, das heisst hier nur: in den zusammengehäuften Wust des Erlernten', ibid.).

In this passage Nietzsche also recalls his argument from *Die Geburt der Tragödie* – which has been discussed above – when he claims that the cause of the historical man's 'unfruitfulness' is the elimination or 'banishment' of his instincts by history ('die Austreibung der Instincte durch Historie', ibid.). The scholar, Nietzsche argues, aspires to the type of 'reine Objectivität' (ibid.) that is consistent with the standards of rigour and accuracy upon which academia prides itself. The removal of this basic creative impulse, however, supposedly ensures that nothing emanates from him ('kein Geschehen', ibid.).

Nietzsche expresses similar ideas in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, where he compares the critic or scholar's inwardness to a hunger that leaves him without the necessary strength to carry out actions or deeds: 'er bleibt doch der ewig Hungernde, der 'Kritiker' ohne Lust und Kraft, der alexandrinische Mensch, der im Grunde

Bibliothekar und Corrector ist und an Bücherstaub und Druckfehlern elend erblindet' (GT 18). Throughout his early works, Nietzsche returns time and again to this idea that the scholar or Socratic man's fundamental problem is this failure, or unwillingness, to be the *transformative* power that culture requires if it is to be constantly renewed and thereby serve life.

Nietzsche is equally persistent, however, in his claim that knowledge has a pivotal role to play in the regeneration of culture. He refers briefly to this principle at the conclusion of *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil*, without providing a detailed explanation: 'der Begriff der Cultur als einer neuen und verbesserten Physis, ohne Innen und Aussen, ohne Verstellung und Convention, der Cultur als einer Einhelligkeit zwischen Leben, Denken, Scheinen und Wollen' (UB II, 10).⁶¹ This emphasis on the synthesis of culture's inner and outer forms, which he also expresses as the unity of life and thought,⁶² indicates that he views knowledge as a key constituent of culture. However, it is clear that if culture is to be a 'new and improved physis' – which recalls Nietzsche's description of art's transfigurative power in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* – then this knowledge must be directed outwards towards activity and the creation of art instead of merely being retained and categorised. It should act, Nietzsche insists, as an 'umgestaltendes, nach aussen treibendes Motiv' (UB II, 4).

Nietzsche is broadly hostile to the disaggregation of knowledge, because it seems to imply that knowledge is an end in itself and satisfies only the 'wissensgierige, durch Wissen allein zu befriedigende Einzelne, denen Vermehrung

⁶¹ It was shown in the preceding chapter how Nietzsche employs similar imagery in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, where he describes the task of culture as the achievement of a 'verklärten Physis' (UB III, 3).

⁶² In the foreword to *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil*, Nietzsche treats life and action as effectively synonymous: 'Das heisst, wir brauchen sie [Historie] zum Leben und zur That, nicht zur bequemen Abkehr vom Leben und von der That oder gar zur Beschönigung des selbstsüchtigen Lebens und der feigen und schlechten That. Nur soweit die Historie dem Leben dient, wollen wir ihr dienen' (UB II, Vorwort).

der Erkenntniss das Ziel selbst ist' (UB II, 4). Silk and Stern have shown how Nietzsche adamantly refused to restrict himself to a single area of study – whether Greece, music or philosophy – because all of these things informed his view of life and affected the way in which he communicated that view through his works. Each subject formed only part of an ecumenical programme of learning with which he furnished his creative powers:

The creative work to which his life will be devoted is the expression of a sensibility which makes it increasingly distasteful, and eventually impossible, to keep any one area of experience permanently apart from any other. Even that commonplace academic distinction between 'intellectual' and 'emotional' becomes ever more unreal. [...] This was accompanied by a [...] growing resentment of philology as currently practised. The very qualities that had recently prompted him to opt in its favour were now distasteful: its methodical impersonality and the inherent compartmental separateness from life that its impersonal, scientific character presupposed.⁶³

Nietzsche claims that the 'qualities' of modern philology and history had come to be valued above the genius and the 'Bereicherer und Mehrer des ererbten Schatzes' (UB II, 10) upon whom they were parasitic. Nevertheless, he identifies a continued use for these disciplines, as long as they are able to rediscover their 'aesthetic' function, and serve culture and life rather than the other way round.

They could do so, Nietzsche argues, by acting as diagnosticians and investigating the circumstances and conditions that have proved conducive to the emergence of a healthy culture in the past. It has been demonstrated how Nietzsche himself used philology in this fashion, when he sought to illustrate what he saw as the

⁶³ Silk and Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy*, pp. 18-23.

numerous links between the decline of tragedy in ancient Greece that was precipitated by Socrates and Euripides, and the modern German ‘Pseudo-Kultur’ presided over by the *Bildungsphilister*. This connection between ancient Greece and nineteenth-century Germany is heavily emphasised towards the end of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, where Nietzsche portrays the modern theoretical man as a direct consequence of Socrates’ war on myth:

Man stelle jetzt daneben den abstracten, ohne Mythen geleiteten Menschen, die abstracte Erziehung, die abstracte Sitte, das abstracte Recht, den abstracten Staat: man vergegenwärtige sich das regellose, von keinem heimischen Mythos gezügelte Schweifen der künstlerischen Phantasie: man denke sich eine Cultur, die keinen festen und heiligen Ursitz hat, sondern alle Möglichkeiten zu erschöpfen und von allen Culturen sich kümmerlich zu nähren verurtheilt ist—*das ist die Gegenwart*, als das Resultat jenes auf Vernichtung des Mythos gerichteten Sokratismus (GT 23).

Although the Hellenic period was the ostensible object of discussion in his first published work, Nietzsche clearly believed that the scope of his analysis extended beyond the particularities of ancient Greece. As Ries argues: ‘Es geht Nietzsche [...] niemals nur um eine adäquate Deutung der Vergangenheit, sondern stets auch um eine Selbstdeutung der Gegenwart, welche sich für ihn an dem Maßstab des älteren Griechentums messen lassen muss’.⁶⁴

⁶⁴Wiebrecht Ries, ‘Tragische Welterfahrung contra wissenschaftliche Weltbetrachtung. Nietzsches Beitrag zum Dilemma der Modernität’. in *Nietzsche: Radikalaufklärer oder radikaler Gegenauflärer?*, Renate Reschke (ed.) (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004), p. 103. See also James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 5; Richard T. Gray, ‘Skeptische Philologie: Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Nietzsche und eine Philologie der Zukunft.’ in *Nietzsche Studien* 38 (2009), p.43; Christian J. Emden, ‘The Invention of Antiquity: Nietzsche on Classicism, Classicality and the Classical Tradition’, in Bishop (ed.), *Nietzsche and Antiquity. His Reaction and Response to the Classical Tradition* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), p. 380; Christa Davis Acampora, ‘“The Contest between Nietzsche and Homer”: Revaluing the Homeric Question’, in *Nietzsche and the German Tradition*, ed. Nicholas Martin (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2003), p. 89.

Nietzsche's own philological practice therefore demonstrates a way in which academic disciplines and the human capacity for knowledge can assist culture on their own terms, although he is adamant that they cannot be viewed as ends in themselves. Nietzsche is also interested, however, in the manner in which the fruitful individual can use knowledge as a source of inspiration to stimulate his own activity directly. Nietzsche expresses the concern in *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil* that an individual's boldness and determination to act can be crushed under the weight of history's scrutiny. Nietzsche again cites Goethe in order to illustrate the single-mindedness required for the accomplishment of era-defining achievements: "Wie der Handelnde, nach Goethes Ausdruck, immer gewissenlos ist, so ist er auch wissenlos, er vergißt das Meiste, um Eins zu thun, er ist ungerecht gegen das, was hinter ihm liegt und kennt nur Ein Recht, das Recht dessen, was jetzt werden soll' (UB II, 1).

Nietzsche believes that the 'paralysis' ('die Lebenskräfte gelähmt [...] werden' UB II, 5) of his age is the result, at least in part, of his contemporaries seeking history's imprimatur before acting. He argues that their resultant fear and hesitancy is damaging to both the individual concerned and other people who may have benefitted from his acts:

Wer sich nicht auf der Schwelle des Augenblicks, alle Vergangenheit vergessend, niederlassen kann, wer nicht auf einem Punkte wie eine Siegesgöttin ohne Schwindel und Furcht zu stehen vermag, der wird nie wissen, was Glück ist, und noch schlimmer: er wird nie etwas tun, was andre glücklich macht (UB II, 1).

This criticism recalls Gervinus' attitude towards Goethe and Weimar Classicism that was described in the last chapter, and which Nietzsche ridicules in the *David Strauss* essay. By treating classical artists as 'Wachsfiguren' (UB I, 4) and thus revering them

without reaping the benefit of familiarity with them, the *Bildungsphilister* failed to learn the most important lesson that the classics have to teach us: that culture depends upon continued striving and ‘Thätigkeit’ (UB II, Vorwort), and that our admiration for historical figures should encourage, rather than hinder, such activity.

Nietzsche attempts to address this problem by defining three separate attitudes towards history which he believes can revitalise the present: monumental, antiquarian and critical. The first recognises the imperative to seek inspiration for one’s own deeds in those of earlier great individuals. Nietzsche feels this to be of particular importance when the genius’ own era is deficient and precludes him from using his contemporaries as exemplars. He cites an opinion that Goethe held of Schiller as an example: ‘So gehörte sie [die Geschichte] Schillern: denn unsere Zeit ist so schlecht, sagte Goethe, dass dem Dichter im umgebenden menschlichen Leben keine brauchbare Natur mehr begegnet’ (UB II, 2). According to Nietzsche, the antiquarian attitude to history is the inclination to preserve and revere the past, which at first sight appears to resemble the pointless and harmful accumulation of knowledge which Nietzsche so reviles. However, he argues that reverence for the past has its uses ‘wo er [jener antiquarisch-historische Verehrungssinn] über bescheidne, rauhe, selbst kümmerliche Zustände, in denen ein Mensch oder ein Volk lebt, ein einfaches rührendes Lust- und Zufriedenheits-Gefühl verbreitet’ (ibid.). It achieves this by instilling a sense of pride in a population in their culture, which serves to nourish and improve it. Finally, a critical approach to history (‘kritische Historie’) is also endorsed by Nietzsche. This is when an individual dismantles an element of the past in order to assist his development. Nietzsche suggests that this approach can help us to develop a ‘second nature’:

Wir bringen es im besten Falle zu einem Widerstreite der ererbten, angestammten Natur und unserer Erkenntniss, auch wohl zu einem Kampfe einer neuen strengen Zucht gegen das von Alters her Angezogene und Angeborne, wir pflanzen eine neue Gewöhnung, einen neuen Instinct, eine zweite Natur an, so dass die erste Natur abdorrt (ibid.).

This passage re-emphasises Nietzsche's belief in the potential for the ceaseless development of the individual. One does not have to submit meekly to convention, though it would be wrong to think that it can be cast off without a conscious intellectual effort. Self-discipline facilitates the adoption of what Nietzsche describes as a new 'instinct', or the ability to view the world from a new vantage-point.

Yet even these three potentially fruitful attitudes to history may be damaging if they are used carelessly or excessively. For example, Nietzsche argues that those who make use of monumental history may succumb to the 'Epigonenthum' (BA V) that denies and clings stubbornly to the relics of the past; a problem that Magnus, Stewart and Mileur neatly describe as the 'intimidating prestige of precedent'.⁶⁵ Nietzsche describes the attitude that accompanies this corrupted monumental history as follows: 'Denn sie wollen nicht, daß das Große entstehe: ihr Mittel ist, zu sagen, 'seht, das Große ist schon da!' (UB II, 2) Similarly, Nietzsche states that an overly reverential antiquarian attitude could produce a blind, uncritical veneration of established precedents, while excessive use of critical history can be to the detriment of the artistic unity. Nietzsche recognises that a people can not wholly alienate themselves from their origins in generations past:

Es ist ein Versuch, sich gleichsam a posteriori eine Vergangenheit zu geben, aus der man stammen möchte, im Gegensatz zu der, aus der man stammt –

⁶⁵ Bernd Magnus, Stanley Stewart and Jean-Pierre Mileur, *Nietzsche's Case. Philosophy as/and Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 50.

immer ein gefährlicher Versuch, weil es so schwer ist eine Grenze im Verneinen des Vergangenen zu finden, und weil die zweiten Naturen meistens schwächer als die ersten sind (UB II, 3).

Each of these three attitudes therefore brings potential dangers. In the first section of *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil*, however, Nietzsche points to a solution for engaging with history: although he suggests that it depends on inherited attributes rather than a learned technique or skill. Nietzsche introduces the notion of ‘plastische Kraft’ (UB II, 1) when discussing the amount – as opposed to the type – of historical knowledge that an individual can productively make use of. He describes this ‘plastic power’ in the following way: ‘ich meine jene Kraft, aus sich heraus eigenartig zu wachsen, Vergangenes und Fremdes umzubilden und einzuverleiben, Wunden auszuheilen, Verlorenes zu ersetzen, zerbrochene Formen aus sich nachzuformen’ (ibid.).

For Nietzsche, plastic power therefore signifies both our ability to incorporate historical knowledge within our personality – without being dominated by it – and how effectively we can channel this knowledge towards our own growth and activity. Nietzsche does not attempt to recommend an amount or degree of knowledge that we should not exceed, because he claims that it depends entirely on the individual: ‘Je stärkere Wurzeln die innerste Natur eines Menschen hat, um so mehr wird er auch von der Vergangenheit sich aneignen oder anzuwingen’ (ibid.).

This passage is remarkable for the extent to which it prefigures a description of Goethe that appears in *Götzen-Dämmerung*, which Nietzsche wrote fourteen years after completing *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil*. As we will see in Chapter Six, Nietzsche argues in this late work that Goethe had an unusual and highly enviable capacity to assimilate the various currents and tendencies of his age within his character, and to

then transcend them through a continual process of self-cultivation. Although Nietzsche does not link these two passages explicitly, the similarity between them is truly striking. This is, as will be shown in Chapters Five and Six, but one example of the correlation between Nietzsche's early work on *Bildung* and his later philosophy.

5. The Fruitful, Knowledgeable Individual

The aim of Nietzsche's theory of knowledge is to advance his cultural agenda. In his eyes art should be prioritised because it enhances life – even if it depends on illusion to do so, as Nietzsche claims in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* – while the pursuit of truth and knowledge, whether in the form of scientific research, metaphysical speculation or textual exegesis, tends to diminish the creative power upon which this enhancement ultimately depends. Yet despite the claims of some postmodernist critics, Nietzsche does not repudiate the very idea of knowledge. On the contrary, he argues that certain types of knowledge – and specifically certain attitudes towards the purpose of knowledge – can be extremely beneficial.

At the end of his polemical attack on scholars in the sixth section of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, Nietzsche proceeds to outline the way that they can assist culture. It depends on these men – whom he describes as 'aus der Reihe der zweiten und dritten Begabungen' (UB III, 6) – being willing to abandon their own claims to greatness and their desire for recognition, and instead devote themselves to the protection and nurturing of the genius:

Diese Einzelnen sollen ihr Werk vollenden – das ist der Sinn ihres Zusammenhaltens; und alle, die an der Institution theilnehmen, sollen bemüht sein, durch eine fortgesetzte Läuterung und gegenseitige Fürsorge, die Geburt

des Genius und das Reifwerden seines Werks in sich und um sich vorzubereiten (ibid.).

Nietzsche therefore grants the scholar a continued validity, provided that he is able to redefine his task. Elsewhere, however, Nietzsche makes it clear that he regards the unity of reason and intuition *within* the individual as the ideal to which he truly aspires. This is perhaps most famously articulated in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, when he expresses his hope that a ‘music-making Socrates’ will one day appear: ‘Hier nun klopfen wir, bewegten Gemüthes, an die Pforten der Gegenwart und Zukunft: wird jenes “Umschlagen” zu immer neuen Configurationen des Genius und gerade des *musiktreibenden Sokrates* führen?’ (GT 15). In an earlier note, he even equates this music-making Socrates with the tragic individual: ‘Der tragische Mensch als der musiktreibende Sokrates’ (NF 1870, 8, 13).

Yet in both the *Nachlass* and his inaugural lecture at Basel, Nietzsche suggests that this ideal had already appeared in Germany, but had since been lost. In a note from 1875, Nietzsche describes Goethe, along with the Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi, as a ‘philologist-poet’ who had used historical knowledge to engender his creativity. Yet this type of man no longer exists, according to Nietzsche, because he had been replaced by the ‘scholarly philologist’: ‘Der Untergang der Philologen-Poeten liegt zu gutem Theile in ihrer persönlichen Verderbniss; ihre Art wächst später weiter, wie z. B. Goethe und Leopardi solche Erscheinungen sind. Hinter ihnen pflügen die reinen Philologen-Gelehrten nach’ (NF 1875, 5, 17). Nietzsche clearly indicates here that he regards Goethe as an example of the rare individual who successfully harnessed his thirst for knowledge, to the benefit of his cultural productivity and fruitfulness. Nietzsche therefore seems to suggest that Goethe

represents the synthesis of the two drives that, since the time of Euripides and Socrates, had too often been regarded as mutually incompatible.

In a *Nachlass* note of 1872, Nietzsche writes that any single drive – whether towards religion, myth or knowledge – has a pernicious effect if it becomes overly powerful: ‘Jede Kraft (Religion, Mythos, Wissenstrieb) hat, in einem Übermaße, barbarisirende, unsittliche und verdummende Wirkungen, als starre Herrschaft. (Sokrates)’ (NF 1872, 23, 14). Both knowledge and instinct, he suggests, are crucial to the health and welfare of the individual, and to stimulating the ‘Ausströmen der innersten Kraft’ (UB III, 2) that Nietzsche regards as one of our most important and worthwhile duties, and which corresponds to the idea that has been described in this chapter as ‘Fruchtbarkeit’.

In his study of Nietzsche’s ‘aristocratic radicalism’, Detwiler states that Nietzsche did not see any difficulty in the idea of a philosopher who was both logically rigorous and creative: ‘In Nietzsche’s view, the genuine philosopher is at the same time, and without any inherent contradiction, an artist who creates out of himself a new horizon for mankind and man of science who is genuinely committed to the highest level of cognitive adequacy in his own thinking’.⁶⁶ Having demonstrated the importance of this notion for Nietzsche, and having examined the significance that he attaches to ‘Freiheit’ or independence in the previous chapter, it is now possible to look at the way in which Nietzsche links Goethe with these two themes in his early works.

⁶⁶ Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism*, p. 19.

Chapter Four

The Early Nietzsche's Goethe – 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit'

The previous chapters identified and explained two key features of Nietzsche's theory of *Bildung*. The first, which was the focus of Chapter Two and is encapsulated by the term 'Freiheit', is the belief that both culture and the individual must develop autonomously and not be delimited by political, social, or philosophical affiliations. The second, discussed in the preceding chapter, is the idea that as well as being independent, both individuals and culture should be productive or 'fruchtbar'; they should not be mere repositories or conduits of knowledge, but be geared towards creativity and action. Nietzsche also recognises, however, that knowledge provides a necessary basis for the fruitfulness or 'Thätigkeit' (UB II, Vorwort) that he demands.

Nietzsche's contention that neither 'Freiheit' nor 'Fruchtbarkeit' were valued in his own era has also been demonstrated: men and culture were all too often constrained by the dictates of politics, patriotism or their profession, while the pursuit of reason and knowledge and the increasing professionalisation of universities had led to the prioritisation of scholarly interpretation over artistic creativity. Nietzsche also argues that the quixotic 'Suche der Wahrheit' (GT 15) had contributed to the instrumentalisation of culture by justifying it as part of the task of 'Enthüllung'; the belief that mankind's ultimate obligation was to uncover truth – which he claims had first been articulated by Socrates and Euripides – provided both motive and validation for those who claimed that art should communicate empirical knowledge of the outside world or be an agent of change within it.

As well as establishing the importance of these two ideas – 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit' – for the early Nietzsche and demonstrating their relevance to his view of conditions and attitudes in contemporary Germany, the opening chapters have also

offered some preliminary insights into the way in which Nietzsche portrays Goethe – or what Nietzsche perceives Goethe to stand for – as a remedy for the ‘allgemeine Krankheit’ (UB III, 4) afflicting German *Bildung*. Goethe has already appeared in numerous extracts as a kind of anti-*Bildungsphilister*, such as when he is described in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* as a ‘freier und starker Mensch’ (UB III, 8) – in implicit contrast to the docile, malleable individual who unthinkingly absorbs the doctrines and values of a particular group instead of developing his own – or when he is designated as an ‘*imperativische Behörde der Kultur*’ (NF 1871-2, 8, 113) and juxtaposed with Gutzkow, Schmidt, Freytag and Auerbach in a note from the *Nachlass*. Furthermore, it was indicated that Nietzsche sees Goethe as a welcome exception to the dominant Socratic or academic (‘*gelehrtenhafte*’ (UB III, 3)) culture; he names him together with Leopardi as an example of the ‘Philologe-Poet’ (NF 1875, 5, 17) whose learning is directed outwards towards artistic creativity, and whose opposite is the introverted, analytical ‘Philologe-Gelehrter’.

The object of this chapter is to discuss in greater detail how the early Nietzsche regards Goethe as a model for a revived concept of *Bildung*, and to show how he links him with the ideas of ‘*Freiheit*’ and ‘*Fruchtbarkeit*’. Throughout his published works and notebooks of the first half of the 1870s, Nietzsche paints a consistent and sharply defined picture of Goethe as an independent, self-reliant individual. He does so by repeatedly pointing to the gulf that separates Goethe from Nietzsche’s diagnosis of contemporary Germany and what he considers to be its governing national ethos. It was demonstrated in the preceding chapters that throughout *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, Nietzsche portrays the political, social and cultural values of his native land as inimical to autonomous personal development.

His general suspicion of orthodoxy or ‘uniformer Glaube’ (UB I, 8) is combined with a particular hostility towards the cluster of ideals, beliefs and preferences that, in his view, constitute the ‘Rosenkranz öffentlicher Meinungen’ (UB I, 9) of nineteenth-century Germany. This chapter will show that by stressing Goethe’s fundamental and irreconcilable apartness from Germany and Germans – which Nietzsche sometimes indicates by referencing Goethe’s own criticism of his compatriots – Nietzsche also radically distances Goethe from the ‘Meinungen’ that supposedly define them and which are, as Nietzsche so often states, profoundly at odds with his concept of *Bildung*.

As well as highlighting Goethe’s detachment from the German national tradition and character – thereby emphasising Goethe’s personal freedom and independence – Nietzsche also usually depicts him as fruitful or productive. He expresses frequent approval of Goethe’s recognition that art and culture are supreme among human interests, as opposed to politics, commerce, the welfare of the nation state or any of the other concerns that Nietzsche invariably associates with the *Bildungsphilister*, and which he sarcastically refers to as the ‘Ernst des Lebens’ (UB I, 2) or ‘Ernst des Daseins’ (GT Vorwort).¹ Moreover, it will be shown that Nietzsche customarily describes Goethe as someone whose pursuit of knowledge was driven by the urge to create rather than to know. This view reflects Nietzsche’s belief that Goethe is one of the ‘fruchtbaren Menschen’ (UB III, 6) whom Nietzsche opposes to the unfruitful scholar in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*.

¹ The closing two sentences of the first foreword to *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, addressed to Richard Wagner, express Nietzsche’s contempt for contemporaries who treat everyday affairs as the serious business of life, and culture as mere idle relief from this seriousness: ‘Vielleicht aber wird es für eben dieselben überhaupt anstößig sein, ein ästhetisches Problem so ernst zu nehmen, falls sie nämlich in der Kunst nicht mehr als ein lustiges Nebenbei, als ein auch wohl zu missendes Schellengeklingel zum “Ernst des Daseins” zu erkennen im Stande sind: als ob Niemand wüsste, was es bei dieser Gegenüberstellung mit einem solchen “Ernst des Daseins” auf sich habe. Diesen Ernsthaften diene zur Belehrung, dass ich von der Kunst als der höchsten Aufgabe und der eigentlich metaphysischen Tätigkeit dieses Lebens im Sinne des Mannes überzeugt bin, dem ich hier, als meinem erhabenen Vorkämpfer auf dieser Bahn, diese Schrift gewidmet haben will’ (GT Vorwort).

Before beginning this analysis, however, it is necessary to investigate a particular feature of Nietzsche's engagement with Goethe that epitomises his concept of *Bildung*. On the vast majority of occasions where Nietzsche mentions Goethe during this period, he treats Goethe the man and Goethe the artist as discrete entities. His use of this technique is not specific to Goethe; it was demonstrated in Chapter Two that it is apparent in his approach to Kant, and it will be shown below that Nietzsche also employs it when writing about Schopenhauer.²

This philological method is of great significance for this thesis, because it makes it easier for Nietzsche to praise the philosophers and writers that he admires while simultaneously recognising flaws in their ideas, or in the execution of their ideas.³ The willingness to criticise the work of his intellectual and cultural forebears is wholly consistent with Nietzsche's view of education as 'Befreiung' (UB III, 1). We have seen that Nietzsche has no desire to inherit fully-formed doctrines from any of the figures standing in his 'Reihe von grossen heroischen Gestalten' (UB I, 2); he respects these exemplary characters because he believes they were 'Suchende' (ibid.), whose constant striving meant that they did not have all-encompassing theories to be adopted or ratified by future generations. He claims that to revere their ideas unquestioningly or to ascribe to the 'heroic figures' themselves the abstract universality of a 'platonische Idee' (UB III, 5) would be both to misrepresent them and to fail to understand the nature of the education they provide (ibid.). Such veneration leads, in Nietzsche's view, to the loss of personal independence, because in unreservedly affirming another person's world-view, one enslaves oneself to it. It is

² Adrian Del Caro contends that the division of artist and work also characterises Nietzsche's approach to Hölderlin. See Adrian del Caro, 'Dionysian Classicism, or Nietzsche's Appropriation of an Aesthetic Norm', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50.4 (1989), 589-605 (p. 599).

³ This is not to suggest, of course, that Nietzsche only found fault with the work of his predecessors in order to preserve his independence. However, his decision to separate the work from its creator has the consequence of allowing him to maintain this critical distance by ensuring that he does not have to adopt an 'all or nothing' approach.

also an example of the unfruitful historicism that he attacks in *David Strauss* as the crisis of the ‘Epigonen-Zeitalters’ (UB I, 2). This is the opposite of what Nietzsche claims should be derived from an educator, which is the courage to establish a ‘neuer Kreis von Pflichten’ (UB III, 5) through ‘regelmässige Thätigkeit’ (ibid.). This task incorporates the ideals of ‘Freiheit’ and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’, and is inextricably linked to the process of self-cultivation by Nietzsche’s claim in the first section of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* that the events of our life have a decisive influence on the person we become.⁴ Nietzsche’s stipulation that ‘new duties’ are a necessary consequence of education is crucial: it not only precludes the simple acceptance or imitation of what has gone before, but also implies an active confrontation with the titans of the past.

Nietzsche’s assessment of Goethe’s work undoubtedly meets this criterion. He not only refuses to see Goethe as the embodiment of eternally valid artistic norms, but also harbours deep-rooted doubts about Goethe’s literary creations. It will be shown below that Nietzsche’s ambivalence manifests itself in two ways: the first is direct, sometimes trenchant criticism, while the second is a milder but nonetheless conspicuous selectiveness in his dealing with Goethe’s writing. When Nietzsche praises Goethe’s works, his approval tends to focus on a very small section of Goethe’s vast oeuvre. This selectiveness has the effect of suggesting either indifference or dislike towards the works that he glosses over; yet it also makes it easier for Nietzsche to deploy Goethe as a representative model for his own ideas.

Many scholars have acknowledged Nietzsche’s criticism of Goethe while simultaneously recognising that Goethe is one of Nietzsche’s most prominent

⁴ ‘Stelle dir die Reihe dieser verehrten Gegenstände vor dir auf, und vielleicht ergeben sie dir, durch ihr Wesen und ihre Folge, ein Gesetz, das Grundgesetz deines eigentlichen Selbst. Vergleiche diese Gegenstände, sieh, wie einer den andern ergänzt, erweitert, überbietet, verklärt, wie sie eine Stufenleiter bilden, auf welcher du bis jetzt zu dir selbst hingeklettert bist’ (UB III, 1).

intellectual influences. However, the distinction that Nietzsche draws between Goethe and his work has been less remarked upon, as has the compatibility between Nietzsche's criticism of Goethe and the concepts of 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit' that underpin his theory of *Bildung*.

Before embarking on a detailed analysis of the link between Goethe, 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit' in Nietzsche's early writing, it is necessary to survey Nietzsche's criticism of Goethe; to show how scholars have responded to this criticism and how they have assessed Nietzsche's overall view of Goethe and Goethe's works; and to demonstrate that Nietzsche's response to Goethe's works is wholly consistent with the idea of fruitful, autonomous self-cultivation.

1. Nietzsche's Criticism of Goethe

Almost every aspect of Nietzsche's life and work has provoked a wide variety of interpretations and approaches. His *Goethebild* is no exception. The sheer number of references to Goethe in Nietzsche's published books, letters and the *Nachlass*,⁵ combined with their diversity in terms of both tone and context, has ensured consistent scholarly interest in the relationship between two of Germany's most famous writers.

Two features of this relationship are often noted. The first is that Goethe's influence on Nietzsche's philosophy is both extensive and enduring. Walter Kaufmann describes Goethe as 'ever present'⁶ in Nietzsche's thinking, a sentiment

⁵ Goethe's name, or derivatives of it, appear more than six hundred and fifty times in Nietzsche's writing. www.nietzschesource.org, accessed 2nd June 2012. Eckhard Heftrich points out that although the frequency with which a person, concept or object appears in a given text is not necessarily a reliable indication of its overall importance to the author, it is unlikely to be purely coincidental in regard to Nietzsche's repeated mention of Goethe: 'So häufig auch bei Nietzsche der Name Goethes fällt, so selten geschieht es, daß er nur beiläufig erwähnt wird.' Heftrich, 'Nietzsches Goethe: Eine Annäherung', in *Nietzsche Studien*, 16 (1987), 1-20 (p. 10).

⁶ Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, p. 131.

echoed by Erich Heller who points to the regularity with which Goethe is mentioned and Nietzsche's effusive gratitude towards him: 'There is no *internal evidence* either to refute the intellectual sincerity of Nietzsche's repeated assertions that there could not be any bypassing of Goethe when it came to tracing his own intellectual ancestry'.⁷ Del Caro contends that Nietzsche's open admiration of Weimar Classicism represents a rare willingness on Nietzsche's part to acknowledge an intellectual debt,⁸ while a more recent study by Paul Bishop and R. H. Stephenson has argued that Nietzsche's thought cannot be fully understood without an appreciation of its structural basis in Goethe and Schiller's work.⁹ In their examination of the relationship between Nietzsche and Weimar classicism, Bishop and Stephenson contend that both Goethe and Schiller's unswerving commitment to culture and their attempts to conceptualise it in the form of a 'perennial aesthetic'¹⁰ had a hugely formative impact on Nietzsche's own attitude towards culture.¹¹

The second commonly cited feature of Nietzsche's *Goethebild* is that its generally positive slant is qualified by severe criticism, which cannot be overlooked or simply explained away as one of Nietzsche's frequent acts of intellectual apostasy. This criticism is centred on three arguments, which, as the following chapters will demonstrate, Nietzsche returns to throughout his writing. In the name of chronological discipline and clarity, this chapter will focus on criticism that appears in Nietzsche's early period, although it will be necessary on occasion to refer to Nietzsche's later works and notebooks for the sake of clarification.

⁷ Erich Heller, 'Nietzsche and Goethe', in *The Importance of Nietzsche: Ten Essays* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 33.

⁸ Del Caro, 'Dionysian Classicism, or Nietzsche's Appropriation of an Aesthetic Norm', p. 589.

⁹ Paul Bishop and R. H. Stephenson, *Friedrich Nietzsche and Weimar Classicism* (New York: Camden House, 2005).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹¹ 'When this perspective, the *Kulturkampf* or 'cultural struggle' waged by Goethe and Schiller, is overlooked, the framework, and hence the structure, of Nietzsche's thinking is distorted to the point of unintelligibility' (*ibid.*, p. 1).

The first of these three arguments relates to Nietzsche's repeated accusation that Goethe had misunderstood the nature of antiquity. The fundamental importance of pre-Socratic Greece to Nietzsche as a model and catalyst for cultural renewal was demonstrated in the previous chapter. A note from 1869 succinctly captures the extent of his passionate admiration for ancient Greek culture and the powerful precedent it had set: 'Das *Griechenthum* hat für uns den Werth wie die Heiligen für die Katholiken' (NF 1869, 1, 29). Another extract, meanwhile, offers a similarly concise summary of *why* Nietzsche ascribes such value to it: 'Wirklich ist die hellenische Tragödie nur das Vorzeichen einer höheren Kultur: sie war das Letzte, was das *Griechenthum* erreichen konnte, auch das Höchste. Diese Stufe war das Schwerste, was zu erreichen war. Wir sind die Erben' (NF 1870, 5, 94). This active engagement with ancient Greece as both a touchstone and a harbinger of renewed cultural greatness is a constant throughout Nietzsche's works,¹² which means that his criticism of Goethe cannot be taken lightly; especially when we consider the extent to which Nietzsche defines his own vision of Greece by its divergence from the nineteenth-century stereotype that Goethe had helped to establish.¹³

A note from 1870, written when Nietzsche was gaining recognition as a prodigiously gifted young philologist apparently on the verge of a brilliant career, contains an outline of his teaching schedule for the forthcoming term at Basel. In this plan, which includes seminars on the history of Greek literature and the relationship

¹² Porter attests to the unwavering importance of antiquity for Nietzsche, and also shows that Nietzsche uses his early philological insights in his later writing: 'It is indisputable that Greek and Roman antiquity remains as central to Nietzsche's thinking in 1888 as it was in 1868. What is less well recognized is that in his later writings Nietzsche continues to treat the same problems that he had treated in his earlier writings, and often in the same ways'. Porter, *The Future of Philology* (p. 2).

¹³ Müller argues that this traditional view was remarkably tenacious: 'Klassizismus, Philhellenismus und Humanismus waren im neunzehnten Jahrhundert feste Bestandteile des kulturellen Selbstverständnisses. Der sich zur Weltanschauung verdichtende Humanismus räumte nicht allein den Meisterwerken griechischer Plastik und Literatur normativen Charakter ein. Seine Vertreter interpretierten sich zu weiten Teilen als legitime Nachfolger eines absolut gesetzten griechischen Menschenbilds'. Müller, *Die Griechen im Denken Nietzsches*, p.6.

between state and society in the Hellenic period, he states that he will devote weeks seven and eight to: ‘Das *klassische* Alterthum (gegen Wolf, Winckelmann, Goethe)’ (NF 1870-71, 8 39). One finds a similar sharp distinction between his understanding of antiquity and the traditional, Goethean view in a fragment from the year before, in which Nietzsche also alludes to what he thinks is wrong with the Greece of Goethe’s imaginings: ‘Das Hellenenthum, die einzige Form, in der gelebt werden kann: das Schreckliche in der Maske des Schönen. Polemische Seite: gegen das Neu-Griechenthum (der Renaissance, Goethe, Hegel usw)’ (NF 1869-70, 3, 74). Nietzsche’s Greece, as we saw in the preceding chapter, is grounded in the conflict between the world’s terrible, irrational undercurrent – which he names the Dionysian – and the Apollonian world of illusion, which can conceal but never eradicate the awful foundation on which human existence rests. Goethe’s error, as far as Nietzsche is concerned, was to allow himself to be misled by the Apollonian sleight of hand and equate the ‘schöne Schein der Traumwelten’ (GT 1) with the essence of antiquity. Nietzsche makes this point, using characteristically misogynistic language, in a note from 1874: ‘Das Goethische Hellenenthum ist erstens historisch falsch, und sodann zu weich und unmännlich [...] Es ist schön die Dinge zu *betrachten*, aber schrecklich sie zu *sein*’ (NF 1874, 32, 67). Goethe supposedly saw nothing more in Greece than a soothing, beautiful image, which for Nietzsche was a hopelessly superficial and profoundly mistaken interpretation.

Nietzsche claims to know why Goethe clings to this idealised view of the ancients, which brings us to the second strand of his criticism. Hans Erhard Gerber contends, correctly, that Nietzsche saw Goethe as fundamentally ‘untragisch’¹⁴ because of his inability to acknowledge the suffering and cruelty that are an intrinsic

¹⁴ Hans Erhard Gerber, *Nietzsche und Goethe, Studien zu einem Vergleich* (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1953) p. 22.

part of human life. This belief is evident in Nietzsche's repeated association of Goethe with 'epic' culture, which Nietzsche adversely contrasts with 'tragic' culture in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. Once again, the seriousness of this allegation – when examined in the context of Nietzsche's thinking about culture and aesthetics – can hardly be underestimated. In the twelfth section of the book, during his devastating assault on Euripides and 'ästhetischer Sokratismus' (GT 12), Nietzsche argues that epic culture is the artistic consequence of Apollonian hegemony. The 'dramatisirte Epos', he claims, originates in the attempt to place drama squarely 'auf das Undionysische' (ibid.), or to banish mystery and horror from art in favour of tranquility and beauty. This elevation of the Apollonian manifests itself in the 'Lust am Scheine und der Erlösung durch den Schein' (ibid.), in which the terrifying nature of existence is wholly concealed by the power of the image and the spectator is spared from having to contemplate the horror of reality. This salvation through illusion comes at the price of profundity, however: the 'ruhig unbewegte aus weiten Augen blickende Anschauung' (GT 12) of the epic dramatist cannot muster the piercing insight of Aeschylus or Sophocles, and is therefore destined to remain stranded on the surface of things.

Nietzsche links Goethe to the epic in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, although on this occasion he stops short of labelling Goethe as an irredeemably epic artist: 'ich möchte behaupten, dass es Goethe in seiner projectirten "Nausikaa" unmöglich gewesen sein würde, den Selbstmord jenes idyllischen Wesens – der den fünften Act ausfüllen sollte – tragisch ergreifend zu machen' (ibid.). This association of Goethe with 'un-Dionysian' art is in itself reproachful. In a note from 1871, however, Nietzsche goes further by describing Goethe's work from the period of *Italienische Reise* as 'der Blüthemoment unsrer epischen Kultur' (NF 1870, 5, 48). In another,

even more disparaging reference, he names Goethe as the apotheosis of an epic culture that also includes literary realism, while praising Schiller at Goethe's expense: 'Unsre *epische* Kultur kommt in *Goethe* zum vollen Ausdruck. Schiller weist auf die *tragische Kultur* hin. Diese epische Kultur breitet sich in unserm Naturwissen, Realismus und Romanwesen aus. Der Philosoph derselben ist Hegel' (NF 1870, 5, 46).

One cannot ignore Nietzsche's decision to group Goethe together with the proponents of realism whom Nietzsche attacks so bitterly in *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. At first sight it seems barely comprehensible, as it seems to impute to Goethe the same form of cultural illiteracy that Nietzsche identifies in his contemporaries and caustically satirises.

The reality is somewhat more complex. As will be shown in detail below, Nietzsche does not liken Goethe to authors such as Schmidt and Freytag because he thinks that Goethe had tried to subjugate culture to the demands of everyday life or 'das Wirkliche'. He believes that Goethe shared an incomplete, non-mythical notion of art with the realists; yet he also contends that in Goethe's case, this shortcoming was the consequence of a conscious strategic choice rather than philistinism. Unlike the *Bildungsphilister* who saw art as a means of communicating and promoting his particular view of the world, Goethe used it to shield himself from the chaotic disorder of myth and the horrifying nature of reality. This argument appears in a note from 1870, in which Nietzsche claims that Goethe's 'epic nature' was a barrier or defence mechanism: 'Bei Goethe ist gemäß seiner epischen Natur die Dichtung das Heilmittel, das ihn gegen die volle Erkenntniß schützt' (NF 1870, 5, 49). The fault

allegedly lay not in Goethe's artistic intuition, but in the lack of resolve to accept what it told him.

Heller's assessment of Nietzsche's description of Goethe as an epic artist reinforces that Goethe is a paradigm for Nietzsche's theory of *Bildung*. He suggests that Nietzsche sees himself as the man capable of bearing the burden of ultimate reality and continuing along the path which Goethe had embarked upon; unlike Goethe, however, Nietzsche refuses to shy away from the terrors that confront him:

He [Nietzsche] was determined to go to the very end of disillusionment, shed skin after skin of comforting beliefs, destroy every fortress manned by protective gods [...] Until this was done, even the nearest German approximation to Dionysian acceptance, even Goethe, would fail us. For he had an inclination to play truant when life was teaching its most desperate lessons.¹⁵

Politycki offers a similar interpretation. He contends that the charge of passivity that Nietzsche aims at Goethe – 'daß Goethe das Leben bloß anschauen wolle (anstatt es durch Taten zu verändern)'¹⁶ – is the result of Nietzsche seeing Goethe as an example of the 'multiple' ('vielfach') individual as opposed to the 'synthetic' ('synthetisch').¹⁷ The implication is that in spite of Goethe's conscientious effort to cultivate the various facets of his personality – including the attempt to synthesise reason and instinct – he ultimately failed to achieve the wholeness that he strived for. Nietzsche, according to Politycki, perceives a disparity between Goethe's aspirations, which he praises, and his ability to realise them: 'Das Prinzip sei das richtige, nur das Quantum Kraft, aus dem es sich nähre, sei eben zu gering.'¹⁸

¹⁵ Heller, 'Nietzsche and Goethe', p. 37.

¹⁶ Politycki, *Umwertung aller Werte?* p. 301.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Politycki, like Heller, also suggests that Nietzsche views *himself* as the man who will ultimately accomplish this gruelling final stage of self-cultivation, and that his refusal to attribute success to Goethe is partly tactical.

If Heller and Politycki's argument is correct, then this would once again confirm the closeness of Nietzsche's *Goethebild* to Nietzsche's model of *Bildung*. It was shown in Chapter One that Nietzsche believes an educator's responsibility is to inspire the 'Strome' (NF 1870, 8, 92) of future generations, rather than to inculcate fixed rules or doctrines. According to Heller and Politycki's interpretation, this is precisely the effect that Goethe had on Nietzsche: even though he failed in his attempt to fully cultivate his personality, the courage of Goethe's attempt supposedly inspired Nietzsche to try himself.

It soon becomes clear that Nietzsche's decision to group Goethe with the literary realists and Hegel in an isolated note does not require us to review the idea that Goethe is one of Nietzsche's greatest intellectual heroes. The crucial difference between Goethe and the *Bildungsphilister* – which Nietzsche does not refer to on this occasion – corresponds to the difference that Nietzsche identifies in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* between Apollonian and Socratic culture. At the beginning of the twelfth section, prior to his discussion of epic culture, Nietzsche reiterates that the essence of Greek tragedy is the 'Ausdruck zweier in einander gewobenen Kunsttriebe, *des Apollinischen und des Dionysischen*' (GT 12). He then relates Euripides' successful, but disastrous campaign to rid drama of the Dionysian in his quest for clarity and moral rigour. Nietzsche also claims, however, that having ousted the Dionysian, Euripides was not left with the Apollonian half of the 'geheimnisvolles *Ehebindniss*' (GT 4): 'die Gottheit, die aus ihm redete, war nicht Dionysus, auch nicht Apollo, sondern ein ganz neugeborner Dämon, genannt *Sokrates*' (GT 12). Euripides' purge

of myth had instead produced a ‘neue Gegensatz: das Dionysische und das Sokratische’ (ibid.).

Later in the section, Nietzsche explains what distinguishes this new Socratic or Euripidean drama from the purely Apollonian epic:

Hier merken wir nichts mehr von jenem epischen Verlorensein im Scheine, von der affectlosen Kühle des wahren Schauspielers, der gerade in seiner höchsten Thätigkeit, ganz Schein und Lust am Scheine ist [...] es ist ihm [dem euripideischen Drama] unmöglich, die apollinische Wirkung des Epos zu erreichen, während es andererseits sich von den dionysischen Elementen möglichst gelöst hat (ibid.).

Euripides never acts as a ‘reiner Künstler’ (ibid) – unlike Goethe or other epic artists – because he had no interest in semblance. He regards art, according to Nietzsche at least, as a transparent window through which to convey unadulterated reality or ‘truth’, which both Dionysian myth and Apollonian image would only serve to obscure. This led him to rely exclusively on ‘kühle paradoxe Gedanken’ (ibid.) to engage his audience, which, for Nietzsche, means that Euripides’ ‘art’ – unlike Goethe’s Apollonian epic – is entirely ‘unkünstlerisch’ (ibid.).

The previous chapter demonstrated that in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche portrays contemporary German culture – of which realism was a central pillar – as Socratic or Euripidean, rather than Apollonian.¹⁹ He ascribes to it the ‘ungeheure Verweltlichung’ (GT 23) of aesthetic Socratism, and the same desire to document and comment upon the ‘politische und sociale Gegenwart’ (GT 22). The dramatisation or literary representation of events was, of course, a self-proclaimed goal of realism, of

¹⁹ This is perhaps most clearly stated in the eighteenth section of the text: ‘Unsere ganze moderne Welt ist in dem Netz der alexandrinischen Cultur befangen und kennt als Ideal den mit höchsten Erkenntnisskräften ausgerüsteten, im Dienste der Wissenschaft arbeitenden *theoretischen Menschen*, dessen Urbild und Stammvater Sokrates ist’ (GT 18).

which Nietzsche was evidently aware. In a *Nachlass* fragment from 1870, he describes realism as a threat to *Bildung* that must be countered with ‘genuine’ art: ‘Der *Realismus* des jetzigen Lebens, die Naturwissenschaften haben eine unglaublich bildungsstürmerische Kraft; ihnen muß die Kunst entgegengebracht werden’ (NF 1870, 5, 28). Another extract from the same year has already been cited above, in which he condemns noted realist authors Schmidt and Freytag for their ‘Verehrung des Wirklichen’ and their alleged opposition to the ‘imperativische Welt des Schönen und Erhabenen’ (NF 1870, 8, 113). In the very same note, he contrasts these authors with Goethe, who supposedly stood alone as an ‘imperativische Behörde der Kultur’ (ibid.).

All of this renders Nietzsche’s decision to link Goethe with the realists in the note quoted earlier – which is also from 1870 – as somewhat incongruous. It may be attributable to Nietzsche not having completed the process of organising and refining his theory of tragedy: these notes were all written two years prior to the publication of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, and one could reasonably expect his ideas to change and develop in the intervening period. Yet the overwhelming balance of evidence – including other notes from 1870 in which Nietzsche explicitly contrasts Goethe with realist authors and posits him as a cultural authority – suggests that it is best explained as an anomaly that is impossible to reconcile with the *Goethebild* that emerges from his work as a whole. Nietzsche undoubtedly sees Goethe as an ‘untragic’ artist because of his failure to confront the terrible Dionysian substratum of life. He does not, however – this note from 1870 notwithstanding – equate him with the realism of the *Bildungsphilister*.

Nietzsche’s arguments that Goethe was ‘untragic’ and had misunderstood the nature of Greek achievement are intertwined. They are also connected to the third and

final element of his Goethe criticism, which is a pronounced and repeatedly stated aversion to *Faust*. Numerous critics have pointed out that Nietzsche's dislike of Goethe's monumental 'dramatisches Gedicht' stems from what Nietzsche regards as its strongly metaphysical overtones, which he objects to in a note of 1876: 'Alles, was *Faust* in der ersten Scene als Ursache seiner Leiden angiebt, ist irrthümlich, nämlich auf Grund metaphysischer Erdichtungen erst so bedeutungsschwer geworden: könnte er dies einsehen, so würde das Pathos seiner Stimmung fehlen' (NF 1876, 23, 155). Critics have also highlighted Nietzsche's rebuking of Goethe for having succumbed to his 'untragic' weakness and having admitted the possibility of mankind's redemption by sending Faust to heaven²⁰ – a failing that is evidently bound up with Nietzsche's claims that Goethe was essentially an optimistic, epic artist who had misunderstood the Greeks.

Nietzsche deplores the impact of Goethe's yearning for ontological solace in *Faust*. Yet this complaint rarely appears in his early writing, although his antipathy towards *Faust* certainly does. Instead, the animosity that he expresses towards Goethe's most famous play in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and his contemporaneous notes is primarily based on his equation, or figurative association, of its protagonist with the theoretical man and the cultural philistine. The fictional characterisation of a disaffected intellectual brought low by his unquenchable thirst for knowledge serves a useful illustrative purpose for Nietzsche in his fight against a form of philistinism that is animated, in his view, by an unchecked 'Trieb zum Wissen' (GT 17). In *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, for example, Faust is cited as the archetype of the 'modern man of culture', of the kind Nietzsche

²⁰ Gerber, *Nietzsche und Goethe*, p. 33. On Nietzsche's antipathy towards the supposedly redemptive aspect in *Faust*, see also Rose Pfeffer, *Nietzsche: Disciple of Dionysus* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1972), p. 263; Willi Jasper, *Faust und die Deutschen* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1998, pp. 111-112; and Sander L. Gilman, *Nietzschean Parody. An Introduction to Reading Nietzsche* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976), p. 49.

so despises: ‘Wie unverständlich müsste einem ächten Griechen der an sich verständliche moderne Culturmensch *Faust* erscheinen, der durch alle Facultäten unbefriedigt stürmende, aus Wissenstrieb der Magie und dem Teufel ergebene Faust’ (GT 18). He returns to this theme in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, in which he stresses Faust’s inaction by comparing him to a bank of clouds from which no lightning emerges:

Sein [Goethes] Faust war das höchste und kühnste Abbild vom Menschen Rousseau’s, wenigstens soweit dessen Heisshunger nach Leben, dessen Unzufriedenheit und Sehnsucht, dessen Umgang mit den Dämonen des Herzens darzustellen war. Nun sehe man aber darauf hin, was aus alle diesem angesammelten Gewölk entsteht – gewiss kein Blitz! (UB III, 4).

A similar claim can be found in the final essay of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1876), in which Faust is described as a representative of the theoretical man: ‘der *Faust* als die Darstellung des unvolksthümlichsten Räthsels, welches sich die neueren Zeiten, in der Gestalt des nach Leben dürstenden theoretischen Menschen, aufgegeben habe’ (UB IV, 10).

Nietzsche is unequivocal in his depiction of Faust as an unfruitful man of knowledge. This does not mean, however, that Nietzsche transfers this judgement to Faust’s creator, or fails to distinguish between Goethe and his artistic creations. It is necessary to stress this seemingly elementary philological principle because of passages in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* and the *Nachlass* where, at first sight, Nietzsche appears to blur the lines between artist and art, and ascribe the same unfruitfulness to Goethe that he identifies in Goethe’s most famous protagonist. It is necessary to address these passages because of their apparent contradiction with one of the central claims of this thesis: namely that Nietzsche sees Goethe as a model for

the productivity or fruitfulness that he believes should result from the process of self-cultivation, and that he regards Goethe as an effective antipode, and antidote, to the ‘wissenschaftliche Mensch’ (BA II) who prized knowledge over action and who saw it as the responsibility of culture to promote the particular ‘truth’ to which he adhered.

It will be argued that despite a certain lack of clarity on Nietzsche’s part, he nonetheless observes a strict boundary between Goethe and his work, and between Goethe and *Faust* in particular. It will then be possible to demonstrate that this strategy is very much in keeping with his concept of education as liberation, and to show how he uses Goethe for his own philosophical project by deploying him as a symbol of ‘Freiheit’ and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’. Firstly, however, it is necessary to examine the way that scholars have interpreted Nietzsche’s *Goethebild*, and specifically to show how they have portrayed the relationship between Nietzsche, Goethe and Goethe’s work.

2. Existing Scholarship

Nietzsche’s objections to Goethe’s work are the starting point of Hans Erhard Gerber’s study. He justifiably claims that Nietzsche not only opposes Faust’s apparent salvation because of his own refusal to accept the existence of a ‘Jenseits’,²¹ but also rejects Goethe’s portrayal of ancient Greece as hopelessly idealised. However, Gerber then suggests that the early Nietzsche effectively regards Goethe and Faust as a single entity, before shifting from this position in his later work:

Der frühere Nietzsche sieht wohl im Faust noch das Abbild Goethes. Später jedoch, als er von den eigenen Schriften als von den ihm nicht mehr gemässen

²¹ Gerber, *Nietzsche und Goethe*, p. 16.

‘Überwindungen’ spricht, stellt er den Satz auf, dass ein Künstler nie selbst das sei, was er darstelle und ausdrücken könne.²²

Gerber implies here that all of the criticism which Nietzsche aims at *Faust* in his early works should also be read as applicable to Goethe himself. This includes a striking passage in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, in which Nietzsche describes the ‘Goethesche Mensch’ as ‘der beschauliche Mensch im hohen Stile’ (UB III, 4) who renounces action in favour of observing the world and its contents from a safe distance. The ‘Goethesche Mensch’ is one of three archetypes cited by Nietzsche, the others being Rousseau and Schopenhauer. In the case of the latter two, Nietzsche is unambiguously referring to Rousseau and Schopenhauer as *individuals* rather than their works. However, all the evidence which Nietzsche provides in his depiction of Goethe as ‘der beschauliche Mensch’ relates specifically to *Faust*.²³ One of the key passages has already been quoted above, where Nietzsche describes Faust as a bank of clouds from which no lightning emerges. The text continues:

Und hier offenbart sich eben das neue Bild des Menschen, des Goetheschen Menschen. Man sollte denken, dass Faust durch das überall bedrängte Leben als unersättlicher Empörer und Befreier geführt werde, als die verneinende Kraft aus Güte, als der eigentliche gleichsam religiöse und dämonische Genius des Umsturzes [...] Aber man irrt sich, wenn man etwas Derartiges erwartet; der Mensch Goethe's weicht hier dem Menschen Rousseau's aus; denn er hasst jedes Gewaltsame, jeden Sprung – das heisst aber: jede That (UB III, 4).

Nietzsche's criticism is clearly directed at *Faust* rather than Goethe, and therefore one must be wary of regarding this passage as indicative of Nietzsche's *Goethebild*. The

²² Ibid., p. 20.

²³ This view is endorsed by Del Caro: ‘Nietzsche was able to make this distinction between Hölderlin's work and his life and, in the most important case of Goethe's *Faust*, between Goethe as an individual and Faust as a modern (romantic) type’. Del Caro, ‘Dionysian Classicism, or Nietzsche's Appropriation of an Aesthetic Norm’, p. 599.

fact that Faust is portrayed as an example of the unproductive ‘Wissenstrieb’ does not mean to say that Goethe himself was similarly afflicted, or that Nietzsche considers him to have been. His designation of the contemplative man as Goethean must be considered clumsy; Faustian would, it seems, have been far more appropriate.

Gerber accepts the legitimacy of Nietzsche’s metaphor, however, and interprets it as part of a broader argument in which the early Nietzsche associates Goethe, and German classicism, with the Socratic man of knowledge by claiming that he and Schiller had not done enough to combat the influence of the Enlightenment:

Sonst findet Nietzsche die Wendung der deutschen Klassik gegen die Aufklärung zu wenig betont, die Angriffstellung gegen den modernen Alexandrinismus nur unscharf bezogen, sodass er gelegentlich Goethe und Schiller geradezu der Aufklärung zurechnet.²⁴

Nietzsche’s treatment of Goethe’s relationship to the Enlightenment is undeniably ambiguous and somewhat contradictory. In a fragment from 1871, which Gerber cites in support of his argument, Nietzsche appears to place both Goethe and Schiller in the rational or Socratic tradition:

Schiller und Goethe als Dichter der Aufklärung, doch mit deutschem Geiste. So verhält sich Wagner zur großen Oper, wie Schiller zur französischen Tragödie. Der Fundamentalirrthum bleibt, aber innerhalb desselben wird alles mit deutschem idealem Radikalismus erfüllt. Der Fundamentalirrthum ist aber ein Urtheil der modernen Geschichte, nichts Zufälliges, sondern die Nothwendigkeit (beginnt deshalb mit der Renaissance), d. h. es wird der von Sokrates begonnene Weg fortgesetzt. Nur unsre großen deutschen Musiker

²⁴ Gerber, *Nietzsche und Goethe*, p. 51.

und Shakespeare stehen außerhalb dieses Prozesses, als bereits erreichte Höhepunkte (NF 1871, 9, 147).

By depicting Goethe as travelling on the ‘Socratic path’, Nietzsche seems here to associate him with the ‘Gelehrte’ or ‘theoretische Mensch’, on whom he pours scorn throughout *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. This would clearly undermine any claim that Nietzsche views Goethe as fruitful. In order to explain this anomaly, it is necessary to examine the context in which this note appears and to recognise the influence of the one man to whom Nietzsche – during his early period at least – pays unqualified homage.

Prior to their break in 1876, Richard Wagner largely escaped the acerbic criticism that Nietzsche aimed at other artists, philosophers and cultural figures. In 1871 (the year in which the fragment describing Goethe as a ‘Dichter der Aufklärung’ was written), Nietzsche was finishing *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, which he dedicated to Wagner and in which he outlines his vision of a German cultural revival under the guidance of Wagner’s music.²⁵ He was also a frequent visitor to Wagner’s villa at Tribschen²⁶ and was even invited to spend Christmas there that year.²⁷

It is important to bear this in mind when analyzing the note in which Nietzsche describes Goethe as a ‘Dichter der Aufklärung’. In the very next substantial fragment, we find the following paean to Wagner and the primacy of music in general:

Richard Wagner das Idyll der Gegenwart: die unvolksthümliche Sage, der unvolksthümliche Vers, und doch deutsch Beides. Wir erreichen nur noch das

²⁵ See in particular GT 21.

²⁶ On the regularity of Nietzsche’s visits to Tribschen, see Joachim Köhler and Ronald Taylor, *Nietzsche and Wagner: A Lesson in Subjugation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 36. For a more detailed analysis of Nietzsche and Wagner’s relationship and the manner in which it influenced their respective works, see Roger Hollinrake, *Nietzsche, Wagner and the Philosophy of Pessimism* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982).

²⁷ In a letter to Erwin Rohde from December 1871, Nietzsche explains that he had to turn down the invitation in order to work on *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*. Letter to Rohde, 21st December 1871; KGB II/1, p. 257.

Idyll. Wagner hat die Urtendenz der Oper, die *idyllische*, bis zu ihren Konsequenzen geführt: die Musik als idyllische (mit Zerbrechung der Formen), das Recitativ, der Vers, der Mythos. [...] Wagner versucht den Atlas der modernen Cultur einfach abzuwerfen: seine Musik imitirt die Urmusik. Die ‘moralische’ Wirkung ist die ergreifendste. Das Gesamtkunstwerk – gleichsam ein Werk des Urmenschen, wie Wagner auch die Urbegabung voraussetzt (NF 1871, 9, 149).

Nietzsche’s goal in both of these notes is to elevate Wagner and the ideal of the ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ above everything that had gone before. It is this desire to denigrate any form of art that does not incorporate music – or encourages the separation of art’s various distinct elements – that leads him to criticise Goethe in unusually strong terms: terms that are incompatible with Nietzsche’s more common view of Goethe as a fruitful artist who understands the purpose and value of knowledge. The probable influence of Nietzsche’s Wagnerian zeal on this comment must therefore be acknowledged, and we should be wary of taking it at face value.²⁸

It is consequently necessary to take issue with Gerber’s claim that Nietzsche cultivates distance between himself and Goethe in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*: ‘Der Nietzsche der 3. Unzeitgemässen Betrachtung sieht sich in der Folge plötzlich unüberbrückbar von Goethe geschieden’.²⁹ Nietzsche here emphasises his disapproval of the Faust character, and it is Faust rather than Goethe who provides the model for ‘der Mensch Goethes’. This is clear from both the passage itself and the compelling evidence provided by Nietzsche’s other works and notes from the same period, in which he stresses his view of Goethe as a productive man and the exact opposite of

²⁸ Matthias Politycki suggests that this fragment: ‘steht in ihrer Tendenz völlig vereinzelt, trägt somit den Charakter eines einmaligen Gedankenexperiments’. Matthias Politycki, *Umwertung aller Werte? Deutsche Literatur im Urteil Nietzsches* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), p. 208n.

²⁹ Gerber, *Nietzsche und Goethe*, p. 55.

the ‘unfruitful’ scholar. In fact, Nietzsche makes this point in an extract from the very same year that *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* was published:

Das, was C u l t u r heißt, besteht aus den Einwirkungen und Zusammenwirkungen von Staat, Erwerbenden, Formenbedürftigen, Gelehrten. Diese haben sich in einander hineingelebt und sind nicht mehr in Fehde. Großer Lärm und scheinbarer Erfolg. Nur daß die eigentliche Probe nie bestanden wird: die großen Genien sind gewöhnlich in Fehde dagegen. Man denke an Goethe und die Gelehrten, Wagner und die Staatstheater. Schopenhauer und die Universitäten: es wird offenbar nicht zugegeben, daß die großen Menschen die Spitze sind, derentwegen alles andre da ist (NF 1874, 34, 15).

By detecting a distance between Nietzsche and Goethe in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* – which is almost certainly a consequence of Nietzsche’s own lack of clarity – Gerber seems to overlook the continued importance of Goethe as a model of creativity for Nietzsche.

Nietzsche’s three criticisms of Goethe – his distaste for *Faust*, his claim that Goethe had misunderstood the Greeks, and his belief that Goethe was incapable of writing tragedies due to a want of inner resilience – represent serious reservations on Nietzsche’s part. Yet it is not only the instances of explicit criticism that betray Nietzsche’s mixed feelings towards Goethe’s art; they are also evident on the occasions that he praises Goethe, and specifically in the way that this praise is confined to a very specific phase of Goethe’s long, artistically productive life. As Ernst Bertram has pointed out, Nietzsche’s praise for Goethe’s work is reserved exclusively for the Weimar years:

Nietzsches Goetheerlebnis wird völlig begrenzt durch den Namen Weimar. [...] in keiner Epoche seines Denkens hat er sich auch nur fluchtig zu einem andern Goethebild bekennen können, als zu dem klassischen, ja klassizistischen, weimarischen Weisen.³⁰

This does not simply exclude Goethe's early works such as *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773) or *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, however. As Heftrich points out, Bertram uses the term Weimar to denote the 'classical' Goethe: 'Weimar meint hier; der klassische Goethe, aber dieser noch einmal, wie er als "Eckermannwelt" erscheint'.³¹

Nicholas Rennie considers this 'circumscribed' view to be part of Nietzsche's 'strategy' towards Goethe, which involved taking from Goethe what he needed and ignoring the rest.³² While Rennie is correct to argue that Nietzsche's treatment of Goethe's oeuvre is extremely selective, he neglects an important aspect of this strategy. Nietzsche's evident reluctance to discuss much of Goethe's work is in fact a consequence of his overriding preoccupation with Goethe *the man*. Nietzsche maintains a strict separation between author and text, a distinction which allows him to endorse Goethe's approach to art and life while harbouring considerable reservations about his actual writing.

Matthias Politycki contends that despite certain inconsistencies and anomalies, Nietzsche should be seen, on the whole, as remaining within the nineteenth-century tradition of 'biographism', which argued that the true meaning of a novel could be found in the life and circumstances of its author: 'Das Interesse am Zusammenhang von Dichter und Dichtung ist im 19. Jahrhundert vorgegeben – weit stärker als in dem

³⁰ Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche. Versuch einer Mythologie* (Berlin: George Bondi, 1919), pp. 185-189.

³¹ Heftrich, *Nietzsches Goethe*, p. 2.

³² Nicholas Rennie, *Speculating on the Moment: The Poetics of Time and Recurrence in Goethe, Leopardi and Nietzsche* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005), p.271.

unseren – und Nietzsche teilt es’.³³ Yet he also concedes that Nietzsche represents a step towards the more modern tendency of regarding the writer and the work as discrete entities, neither of which is capable of comprehensively explaining or defining the other. Nietzsche, he suggests, pursued an ‘indirect’ as opposed to a ‘direct’ biographism,³⁴ in which ‘künstlerisch[e] Schaffensprozesse seien keine “Personal” sondern “Epidermal-Handlungen”, von deren Ergebnissen man keinesfalls auf den ganzen Menschen zurückrechnen dürfe’.

There is ample evidence, however, to suggest that Nietzsche represents a more decisive break with philological custom and that he sought to avoid typical conflations of author and text. One can point to his own stated thoughts on the matter in order to advance such an argument: in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, for example, Nietzsche complains that ‘Alle Welt pflegt den Autor und sein Werk zu verwechseln’ (VM 153). The most decisive proof, however, is to be found in his own methodology, and particularly in his treatment of Schopenhauer. By the time that Nietzsche came to write the third *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtung*, in which he names Schopenhauer as an exemplary educator, Nietzsche had long since rejected the metaphysics of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. In fact, Nietzsche had identified serious flaws in his mentor’s magnum opus as early as 1868. In the fragment *Zu Schopenhauer*, he wrote: ‘in Versuch, die Welt zu erklären unter einem angenommen[en] Faktor. Das Ding an sich bekommt eine seiner möglichen Gestalten. Der Versuch ist mißlungen. Schopenhauer hielt es für keinen Versuch’ (ZS 1). Nietzsche suggests that Schopenhauer has been seduced by the same temptation as Kant; when he posits the will as the thing-in-itself, he is relying on a ‘poetischen Intuition’ (ZS 2) rather than logical rigour to determine the nature of ultimate reality.

³³ Politycki, *Umwertung aller Werte?*, p. 270.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.269.

Nietzsche also doubts Schopenhauer's designation of the intellect as a mere tool of the will. In Schopenhauer's system, the intellect is responsible for spatio-temporal individuation, or breaking the unified, indivisible will into discrete objects. It originated from the will's drive to self-preservation; it is an instrument of, and therefore predated by, the will. If this is true, Nietzsche points out, it precludes us from imagining individual things in space and time prior to the arrival of the intellect and cognition: a dilemma that Schopenhauer fails to address.³⁵

Nietzsche could cite Schopenhauer the man as an example and inspiration in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* without leaving himself vulnerable to accusations of hypocrisy or inconsistency, as it was Schopenhauer's approach rather than his system that Nietzsche considered so laudable. This separation of author and work also typifies Nietzsche's attitude towards Goethe. In spite of his perceived failings, Goethe is still portrayed as a paradigm of cultural endeavour. As A. H. J Knight points out, this is partly because Nietzsche saw Goethe's artistic legacy as far superior to that of anyone else in the German cultural canon, his deficiencies notwithstanding. According to Nietzsche, even Goethe's allegedly defective interpretation of Greek culture elevates him to a level of understanding unmatched by any of Nietzsche's contemporaries,³⁶ because Goethe, together with Schiller and Winckelmann, recognised that antiquity had something important to teach modern man:

Es möchte einmal, unter den Augen eines unbestochenen Richters, abgewogen werden, in welcher Zeit und in welchen Männern bisher der deutsche Geist von den Griechen zu lernen am kräftigsten gerungen hat; und wenn wir mit Zuversicht annehmen, dass dem edelsten Bildungskampfe

³⁵ This analysis is indebted to the explanation of *Zu Schopenhauer* by Christopher Janaway in "Schopenhauer as Nietzsche's Educator", in *Willing and Nothingness*, ed. Christopher Janaway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 18.

³⁶ A.H.J. Knight, 'Nietzsche and Goethe', in *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 10, 63-78 (p. 69).

Goethe's, Schiller's und Winckelmann's dieses einzige Lob zugesprochen werden müsste, so wäre jedenfalls hinzuzufügen, dass seit jener Zeit und den nächsten Einwirkungen jenes Kampfes, das Streben auf einer gleichen Bahn zur Bildung und zu den Griechen zu kommen, in unbegreiflicher Weise schwächer und schwächer geworden ist (GT 20).

Nietzsche believes that Goethe erred in his observations regarding Greece and human existence, or that he suffered a failure of nerves at the crucial moment: his inability to accept the Dionysian core of reality undermined his *Weltanschauung* and the works in which he expressed it. Yet this lacuna in his world-view did not detract from the nobility and inherent value of his struggle for self-cultivation, which Nietzsche – in keeping with his view of the educator as someone who should inspire through their deeds rather than teach through abstractions – considered to be of far greater significance.

A number of scholars have argued convincingly that Nietzsche is perhaps more indebted to Goethe's ideas than he openly admits. Bishop and Stephenson, for example, have demonstrated the close similarity between Nietzsche's theory of aesthetics as expressed in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* – and specifically the fruitful interaction between the opposed Dionysian and Apollonian drives – and the Goethean concept of *Polarität und Steigerung*:

Similarly, Nietzsche's immensely influential 'polaristic thinking' (that is, thinking in terms of polar opposites), in which each term (such as the Apollonian and the Dionysian) is affirmative and exists in its own right, rather than as a negation of the other, is inherited via Goethe.³⁷

³⁷ Bishop and Stephenson, *Friedrich Nietzsche and Weimar Classicism*, p. 2. For a further analysis of the importance of polarity to Goethe, see Astrida Orle Tantiillo, *The Will to Create: Goethe's Philosophy of Nature* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002). 'Throughout Goethe's

Pfeffer also explores this likeness, and successfully identifies a vital aspect of Goethe's principle which is hugely significant for our discussion of Nietzsche and creativity. Like Bishop and Stephenson, Pfeffer illustrates the paramount importance of *Steigerung* to both Nietzsche and Goethe, and explains how it manifests itself in their shared emphasis on creativity:

For Goethe as for Nietzsche, polarity does not represent a negative and hostile antagonism. It expresses an opposition that seeks equilibrium and contains within it the capability of enhancement and intensification. Goethe adds a second principle to that of *Polarität* and calls it *Steigerung*. But this second principle must always be understood as an inseparable part of the first. The essential function of conflict and negation for Goethe and Nietzsche [...] is contained in their positive and creative power.³⁸

Pfeffer then sheds light on a further important parallel between Goethe's idea of *Steigerung* and Nietzsche's infamous notion of the *Wille zur Macht*: 'Both [are] dynamic and active, both full of tension and polarity, [and] share one further important feature: they are both nonteleological forces'.³⁹ The relevance of this observation is clearly not limited to the concept of *Wille zur Macht*, which is only fully formulated in Nietzsche's later writings. It is also highly pertinent to the discussion of Nietzsche's early works, and specifically his opposition to the Socratic faith in knowledge and science's ability to unmask truth, which was discussed in Chapter Three.

Von Seggern detects another link at the theoretical level between Nietzsche's creative ideal and the standards of Weimar Classicism. He contends that the roots of

scientific corpus, he argues that the polar principle is at the foundation of all creative acts because only oppositions bring about new products' (p. 13).

³⁸ Pfeffer, *Nietzsche: Disciple of Dionysus*, p. 164.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

Nietzsche's antagonism towards the 'Verehrung des Wirklichen'⁴⁰ (NF 1870-71, 8, 113) can be found in his familiarity with Schiller and Goethe's discussion of aesthetics:

Die Skepsis gegen die 'servile Naturnachahmung',⁴¹ das 'peinliche Abkonterfeiern der Wirklichkeit', die sich bei Schiller zunächst gegen die bürgerliche Trivialdramatik und die Ausläufer des Sturm und Drang Theaters richtete, wird bei Nietzsche offensichtlich lebendig gehalten und bis ins Spätwerk fortgeführt.⁴²

In this passage von Seggern concentrates specifically on Schiller's influence, although the Schiller quotation he cites comes from the Schiller correspondence with Goethe. Yet he also highlights Nietzsche's use in *David Strauss* of a quotation by Goethe regarding Lessing: 'Bedauert doch, ruft uns Goethe zu, den ausserordentlichen Menschen, dass er in einer so erbärmlichen Zeit leben, dass er immerfort polemisch wirken musste'.⁴³ Von Seggern argues that this proves Nietzsche's sense of solidarity with the exponents of Weimar Classicism: he suggests that Nietzsche views the circumstances of his own age as comparable to those faced by Goethe and Schiller, and that he therefore seeks support in the aesthetic model that they established:

Das Goethe-Zitat in Nietzsches erster *Unzeitgemässer Betrachtung* ist dabei nur einer von äußerst zahlreichen Belegen dafür, daß der junge Autor, der sich unzweifelhaft bereits selber als 'außerordentlich' empfindet, die Argumente zu

⁴⁰ Von Seggern also shows how Nietzsche's protest is specifically directed against the writing of Julian Schmidt, Gustav Freytag and Berthold Auerbach. See Hans-Gerd von Seggern, *Nietzsche und die Weimarer Klassik* (Tübingen: Francke, 2005), p. 25.

⁴¹ Schiller to Goethe, 29th December 1797.

⁴² Von Seggern, *Nietzsche und die Weimarer Klassik*, p. 26.

⁴³ Goethe to Eckermann, 7th February 1827.

seinen kulturkritischen Polemiken gegen die andauernde ‘erbärmliche Zeit’ aus dem Fundus des ästhetischen Diskurses um 1800 bezieht.⁴⁴

It is not the aim of this thesis to investigate Goethe’s theory of *Bildung* or to compare it to Nietzsche’s, and this chapter will not seek to corroborate or disprove the arguments advanced by Bishop and Stephenson, Pfeffer and von Seggern. The similarities between Goethe’s ideas and Nietzsche’s emphasis on creativity and action are indisputable and strongly suggest that Nietzsche was influenced, to some extent at least, by his acquaintance with the discussions taking place between Goethe and Schiller in Weimar between 1794 and 1805. This likelihood is only heightened by our knowledge of Nietzsche’s education at Pforta, which is described by Janz in the following terms: ‘die Jugend, die hier aufwuchs [...], ging auf in der Welt von Hellas und Rom und in der Welt Goethes und Schillers’.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, it is also necessary to highlight a danger faced by anyone who tries to conceptualise Nietzsche’s approach to *Bildung*, which is that one risks obscuring or neglecting one of its principal tenets. Despite the existence of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* – in which Nietzsche undeniably advances a theory of aesthetics – it cannot be forgotten that in early works such as the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, Nietzsche consciously distances himself from the type of abstract thought upon which such a theory is constructed. Furthermore, he repeatedly invokes Goethe – to whom his own concept of creativity appears so heavily indebted – as an example of the productive artist who also serves as the antithesis of ‘der theoretische Mensch’. In trying to ascribe a set of shared theoretical principles to Goethe and Nietzsche, one therefore runs the risk of obscuring the anti-theoretical animus of Nietzsche’s critique.

⁴⁴ Von Seggern, *Nietzsche und die Weimarer Klassik*, p. 29.

⁴⁵ Curt Paul Janz, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Biographie*, 3 vols. (Munich and Vienna: Hanser, 1978), Vol. 1, p. 67.

This chapter will therefore focus on the way in which the early Nietzsche both portrays Goethe as independent by juxtaposing him with the *Bildungsphilister* and emphasising the distance that separates Goethe from contemporary Germany and its cultural tradition, and also depicts Goethe as a paradigm of the ‘fruitful’ artist.

In demonstrating the way that Goethe serves as a symbol for the ideas of ‘Freiheit’ and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’, I will further develop a theme that has been subject to an initial investigation by Heftrich. In his article on Nietzsche’s Goethe, Heftrich rightly argues that Nietzsche uses Goethe as a ‘semiotische Figur’⁴⁶ who serves to indicate the profundity of the ‘Krankheit’⁴⁷ afflicting contemporary Germany.

In pointing to the way that Nietzsche uses Goethe as a symbol or sign, and by illustrating that Nietzsche constructs an image of Goethe that serves Nietzsche’s own artistic and philosophical purposes rather than the cause of strict historical accuracy, Heftrich highlights one of the most important features of Nietzsche’s *Goethebild*. Where I diverge from Heftrich’s interpretation, however, is at the point where he claims that the significance of this *Goethebild* lies exclusively in Nietzsche’s late work,⁴⁸ and in *Götzen-Dämmerung* in particular.

The remainder of this chapter will demonstrate that Goethe symbolises the qualities of ‘Freiheit’ und ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ in Nietzsche’s early writing. It will show that Nietzsche often uses Goethe’s cosmopolitanism and untimeliness as an example in order to demonstrate the need for a type of constant self-development that incorporates broad and diverse experience while refusing to allow any one facet of that experience to exert excessive control over our ideas and actions. Nietzsche’s Goethe represents the boldness that we must show in contradicting the comforting

⁴⁶ Heftrich, ‘Nietzsches Goethe’, p. 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 15

⁴⁸ ‘Im Nietzsches Jugendphase, als ihm die zukünftige Kultur noch ganz mit den Namen Schopenhauer und Wagner verbunden war, tritt Goethe nur als ein weiterer Bundesgenosse auf’. (Ibid., p. 18).

verities of the age and in embracing the apparent incongruity of our opinions and actions. Furthermore, he is invoked repeatedly in order to illustrate Nietzsche's contempt for 'Belehrung ohne Belebung' (UB II, Vorwort).

3. Goethe and 'Freiheit'

Nietzsche's profound respect for Goethe is evident from an early stage in his writing life. In a letter to his good friend Erwin Rohde in 1869, in which he discusses his recent visits to see Wagner at his villa in Tribschen, Nietzsche writes the following: 'In letzter Zeit bin ich, kurz hintereinander, vier Mal dort gewesen, und dazu fliegt fast jede Woche auch ein Brief dieselbe Bahn. Liebster Freund, was ich dort lerne und schaue, höre und verstehe, ist unbeschreiblich. Schopenhauer und Goethe, Aeschylus und Pindar leben noch, glaub es nur'.⁴⁹

This admiration for Goethe, as was shown in Chapter Two, was very much in accordance with prevailing critical opinion in Bismarck's Germany. Yet it is also true that Nietzsche's *Goethebild* is characteristically personal, far removed from the widespread perception of Goethe as a distinctively German emblem of national unity, which had emerged from the politicised literary discourse of the period.

This is not surprising, when we consider Nietzsche's hostility – which was also analysed in Chapter Two – towards the veneration of the state that he identified in *Gründerzeit* Germany, and his general belief that we must avoid submitting ourselves to any external authority if we are to preserve our 'Einzigkeit' (UB III, 1) and the freedom upon which this uniqueness depends.

⁴⁹ Letter to Erwin Rohde, 3rd September 1869: KGB II/1, p. 52.

Knight has pointed out that Nietzsche may have shared with his contemporaries an admiration for Goethe, but the motives for his admiration could hardly have been more different:

Nietzsche, in thus setting Goethe above any other German thinker or poet, was not contradicting the general literary judgement even of his own time [...] but we cannot expect that he will come to the same judgements as the literary critics and historians for the same reasons.⁵⁰

As well as acknowledging Nietzsche's general predilection for nonconformity, Knight also explains how the recasting of Goethe as a monument to Germans' common heritage was anathema to Nietzsche, who believed that one of Goethe's greatest assets was his success in transcending the particularities of his age and homeland, thereby evading the limitations imposed on the individual's personal freedom by being excessively 'zeitgemäß' or patriotic. Nietzsche is careful to separate Goethe from the German tradition that sought to appropriate him and seeks support for his view in Goethe's own work. In *David Strauss*, for example, he cites Goethe's trenchant criticism of Germans' supposed cultural deficiency:

Wir Deutsche sind von gestern, sagte Goethe einmal zu Eckermann, wir haben zwar seit einem Jahrhundert ganz tüchtig kultiviert, allein es können noch ein paar Jahrhunderte hingehen, ehe bei unseren Landsleuten so viel Geist und höhere Kultur eindringe und allgemein werde, dass man von ihnen wird sagen können, es sei lange her, *dass sie Barbaren gewesen* (UB I, 1).

Although Nietzsche's principal motive for invoking Goethe was doubtless the desire to reinforce the validity of his own opinions, it has the added effect of cultivating distance between Goethe and the concept of a specifically national culture.

⁵⁰ Knight, 'Nietzsche and Goethe', p. 65.

Nietzsche uses two techniques to emphasise the chasm that supposedly separates Goethe from his countrymen and their culture. The first of these is the straightforward force of his polemic. In the fourth lecture of *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, Nietzsche asserts that the accomplishments of Goethe and other German artists should be seen as a triumph over the handicap of being born and raised in Germany, rather than as a direct consequence of their nationality: ‘Was hatte Lessing, was hatte Winckelmann aus einer vorhandenen deutschen Bildung zu entnehmen? Nichts oder mindestens ebensowenig als Beethoven, als Schiller, als Goethe, als alle unsere großen Künstler und Dichter.’ (BA IV) He argues that to emphasise Goethe’s essentially German character is to betray his legacy, and he therefore seeks to dissociate Goethe from the parochialism and chauvinism which, as Knight correctly points out, was one cause of Goethe’s renewed popularity at the beginning of the 1870s. Heftrich insists that the intensity of Nietzsche’s anger at the prevailing *Goethebild* in *Gründerzeit* Germany had a decisive impact on the way that he viewed Goethe:

Wie Goethe von den Zeitgenossen in Anspruch genommen wurde, hat Nietzsche von früh an und mit zunehmender Schärfe empört. Erst die neueren biographischen und quellenphilologischen Untersuchungen haben zutage gefördert, daß die besitzergreifende Interpretation, die Nietzsche Goethe angedeihen ließ, immer auch mitbestimmt war durch die Reaktion auf die Art und Weise, wie Goethe vom deutschen Geist der Gründerzeit okkupiert wurde.⁵¹

As with Schopenhauer, Nietzsche locates the key to Goethe’s self-reliance in his willingness to be ‘untimely’. The difficulty of flouting the conventions that regulate

⁵¹ Heftrich, ‘Nietzsches Goethe’, p. 10.

human conduct is reiterated throughout Nietzsche's writing. He insists that it requires uncommon resilience to endure the suspicion and alienation that invariably accompany self-determination, and in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* he describes Goethe, along with Beethoven, Schopenhauer and Wagner, as being one of those rare human beings who are capable of withstanding the pressure to conform:

Unsere Hölderlin und Kleist und wer nicht sonst verdarben an dieser ihrer Ungewöhnlichkeit und hielten das Klima der sogenannten deutschen Bildung nicht aus; und nur Naturen von Erz wie Beethoven, Goethe, Schopenhauer und Wagner vermögen Stand zu halten (UB III, 3).

Nietzsche saw Goethe's 'Ungewöhnlichkeit' as one of his most positive attributes, along with the toughness he displayed in being able to maintain it. He felt that they should both figure prominently in any biographical account of Germany's most famous poet: not only for the sake of historical accuracy – which, as we have seen, is not usually Nietzsche's foremost concern – but because they represent qualities to which every great man should aspire. Nietzsche believes, however, that posterity had shamefully concealed Goethe's defining character traits in the rush to construct a serviceable national icon.

The second technique that Nietzsche uses to emphasise Goethe's independence from Germany is citing Goethe's own criticisms of his countrymen. Nietzsche consistently portrays Goethe's attitude to Germany and German culture as, at best, sceptical and, at worst, contemptuous. Yet he contends that this deliberate remoteness had been obscured by the *Bildungsphilister* so that Goethe could be absorbed into the politico-cultural discourse of the nineteenth century. In order to stress the gravity, and perhaps the audacity, of this alleged misappropriation, Nietzsche invokes Goethe himself and recounts the difficulties that were supposedly

imposed upon Goethe by the coincidence of his Germanness. Nietzsche cites the story of a diplomat who, having met Goethe, observed that he looked like a man who had suffered. Nietzsche suggests that Goethe did not dispute this assessment, and was in fact moved to endorse it:

‘Wenn sich nun in unsern Gesichtszügen, fügt er [Goethe] hinzu, die Spur überstandenen Leidens, durchgeführter Thätigkeit nicht auslöschen lässt, so ist es kein Wunder, wenn alles, was von uns und unserem Bestreben übrig bleibt, dieselbe Spur trägt’. Und das ist Goethe, auf den unsre Bildungsphilister als auf den glücklichsten Deutschen hinzeigen, um daraus den Satz zu beweisen, dass es doch möglich sein müsse unter ihnen glücklich zu werden – mit dem Hintergedanken, dass es keinem zu verzeihen sei, wenn er sich unter ihnen unglücklich und einsam fühle (UB III, 3).

Nietzsche insists that Goethe could not provide legitimacy to a German tradition that he had conspicuously shunned, despite the best efforts of the *Bildungsphilister*. Nietzsche argues that the past was therefore remodelled to accommodate the needs of the present, and Goethe’s proudly independent spirit was erased from the historical record. This meant, in Nietzsche’s view, losing the most important part of his legacy and effectively nullifying his value as an educator. This value, as we have seen, is predicated on his ability to act as a ‘liberator’ and to encourage other great individuals and men of genius to be untimely.

Many of Nietzsche’s references to Goethe in the early 1870s accentuate the latter’s individualism, and not all of these focus on his autonomy from Germany and German culture. In a note from 1871, for example, Nietzsche places Goethe and Schiller firmly beyond the bounds of the categories used by scholars to organise historical knowledge: ‘Die Romantik ist nicht der Gegensatz zu Schiller und Goethe,

sondern zu Nikolai und der ganzen Aufklärung. Schiller und Goethe sind weit über den ganzen Gegensatz hinaus.’ (NF 1871, 9, 71). Goethe and Schiller’s independence, Nietzsche suggests here, transcended the fixed classifications that other people impose upon us and which restrict our individuality.

Nietzsche also emphasises Goethe’s refusal to cooperate with ‘mächtige Gesellschaften, Regierungen, Religionen, öffentliche Meinungen’ (UB III, 3), sometimes by contrasting him with the blunt populism of the *Bildungsphilister*. An extract from 1873, which was cited in Chapter Two in regard to what Nietzsche sees as the incompatibility between true culture and journalism, remarks on Goethe’s propensity for experimentation by comparing it to the populist instincts of Julian Schmidt and the Realists during the 1850s:

Entstehung des Philisters der Bildung. An sich die Bildung immer in sehr exklusiven Kreisen. Der eig<entliche> Philister hielt sich davon fern [...] Das Publikum des Almanachs ist das Stammpublikum, Abendzeitung. In den 50ger Jahren die Realisten, Julian Schmidt. Allmählich entsteht das Publikum der populären Vorträge, als eine Macht, es hat Sympathien, Voraussetzungen usw. Der Philister hat kein Gefühl von den Mängeln der Kultur und von dem Experimentiren bei Schiller und Goethe. (NF 1873, 27, 52)

The boldness to experiment and defy the customs of ‘das Publikum’ – whether political, social or aesthetic – is a prerequisite for the Nietzschean educator, if he is to act as a ‘Befreier’ and rouse future solitary men to action. Nietzsche believes that Goethe met this obligation, only for the artists of the nineteenth century – such as those who slavishly imitate the style and themes of Weimar classicism – to ignore his clarion call and instead pay dutiful homage to tradition: ‘Die aesthetische Bildung mehr begleitet als geleitet bei Schiller und Goethe:—allgemein umgekehrt! Die

aesthetische Bildung *leitet* unsre Produktion: wir sind gelehrte Künstler. Tasten nach Mustern' (NF 1871, 9, 34). In other words, the aesthetic tastes of the past had been installed as a rigid template, whereas Nietzsche argues that they should serve at most as a guiding principle, and ideally as a stimulus to start afresh. To use the terms that Nietzsche himself employs in the second *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtung*, Goethe and other educators should ideally be viewed through the prism of monumental history; modern men should learn from them 'dass das Grosse, das einmal da war, jedenfalls einmal *möglich* war und deshalb auch wohl wieder einmal möglich sein wird'. (UB II, 2). The 'gelehrte Künstler', however, practises a degraded form of antiquarian history: a pallid hagiography that weakens the present instead of invigorating it, which 'versteht eben allein Leben zu *bewahren*, nicht zu zeugen' (UB II, 3).

4. Goethe and 'Fruchtbarkeit'

In contrast to those who followed him – at least as far as Nietzsche is concerned – Goethe is portrayed throughout *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil* as someone who fully understands the purpose of historical knowledge and who is capable of 'begetting' for the benefit of life. Here, as elsewhere, he is called upon to provide intellectual ballast for Nietzsche's specific arguments. When explaining the concept of monumental history, for example, Nietzsche indirectly quotes Goethe's observation that Schiller had been forced to turn to the great men from the past due to the inadequacy of the present. (UB II, 2). In the case of antiquarian history, it is Goethe's own approach to the works of the medieval architect Erwin von Steinbach, notably Strasbourg Cathedral, that Nietzsche presents as exemplary (UB II, 3).⁵² Yet Goethe also serves as a reproach to the dominance of abstract knowledge and 'der theoretische Mensch'.

⁵² Goethe's tribute to Steinbach appears in his essay 'Von deutscher Baukunst' (1772), in Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*, ed. Karl Richter, 33 vols (Munich: Hanser, 1987), 1/2, 415-422.

This is most obvious in the introductory paragraph, which must be quoted at length in order to demonstrate just how clearly Nietzsche identifies Goethe with dynamic action and opposes him to the empty erudition of the scholar:

‘Uebrigens ist mir Alles verhasst, was mich bloss belehrt, ohne meine Thätigkeit zu vermehren, oder unmittelbar zu beleben’.⁵³ Dies sind Worte Goethes, mit denen, als mit einem herzhafte ausgedrückten *Ceterum censeo*, unsere Betrachtung über den Werth und den Unwerth der Historie beginnen mag. In derselben soll nämlich dargestellt werden, warum Belehrung ohne Belebung, warum Wissen, bei dem die Thätigkeit erschlapft, warum Historie als kostbarer Erkenntniss-Ueberfluss und Luxus uns ernstlich, nach Goethes Wort, verhasst sein muss. (UB II, Vorwort)

Using his reading of Kant’s *Anthropologie* as his example, Goethe insists that he *hates* anything that does not induce activity, a claim that Nietzsche seems to accept at face value. Nietzsche’s choice of a Goethean aperçu to introduce and anticipate the work’s main line of argument – that knowledge is only of value to the extent that it stimulates creative activity – suggests that Nietzsche unhesitatingly linked Goethe with the view of knowledge as an ‘umgestaltendes, nach aussen treibendes Motiv’ (UB II, 4).

The remainder of the *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil* supports this conclusion, as do numerous other references in Nietzsche’s early work that connect Goethe to the ideal of productive knowledge. The notion of a fruitful historiography, upon which *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil* is based, appears in embryonic form in *David Strauss*. It is

⁵³ This reference is taken from a letter that Goethe wrote to Schiller in December 1798, in which he remarked that he can only read Kant’s *Anthropologie* in small doses: ‘Kants Anthropologie ist mir ein sehr werthes Buch und wird es künftig noch mehr sein, wenn ich es in geringern Dosen wiederholt genieße’. Considering Nietzsche’s ambivalence towards Kant – Nietzsche’s view of him as someone who ‘hielt an der Universität fest’ was discussed in Chapter Two – suggests that this reference was carefully chosen by Nietzsche. Letter to Schiller, 19th December 1798, in Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*, 8/1, p. 661.

part of Nietzsche's rebuke to those of his contemporaries whom he believes to have decided that they live in an age of epigones and therefore ignore the summons 'zum Weitersuchen', which Nietzsche finds in the classics. Goethe is named as someone who, in contrast to the *Bildungsphilister*, recognised history's responsibility to engender the 'enthusiasm' necessary to continue seeking: 'Durch das historische Bewusstsein retteten sie sich vor dem Enthusiasmus—denn nicht mehr diesen sollte die Geschichte erzeugen, wie doch Goethe vermeinen durfte [...]' (UB I, 2). Enthusiasm should be read here as a synonym for 'der grosse productive Geist' (UB II, 4), which Nietzsche prizes as the wellspring of cultural achievement.

The view of Goethe as someone who understood both the purpose and the risks of knowledge also emerges from two notes that were written in the same year that *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil* was published. In the first of these extracts, Nietzsche again quotes Goethe directly when he refers to the burden of historical knowledge and its tendency to impede creative action: 'Wie sehr das historische Wissen tödtet, hat Goethe einmal ausgedrückt. "Hätte ich so deutlich wie jetzt gewusst, wie viel Vortreffliches seit Jahrhunderten und Jahrtausenden da ist, ich hätte keine Zeile geschrieben, sondern etwas anderes gethan."' (NF 1873, 29, 77). In the same section he writes: 'Goethe: "Wer sich von nun an nicht auf eine Kunst oder Handwerk legt, der wird übel daran sein. Das Wissen fördert nicht mehr, bei dem schnellen Umtrieb der Welt; bis man von allein Notiz genommen hat, verliert man sich selbst"' (NF 1873, 29, 80). There is yet more evidence of this in the following passage in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*:

Wenn Goethe einmal zu Eckermann, mit Bezug auf Napoleon, äussert: ‘Ja mein Guter, es giebt auch eine Productivität der Thaten’,⁵⁴ so hat er, in anmuthig naiver Weise, daran erinnert, dass der nicht theoretische Mensch für den modernen Menschen etwas Unglaubliches und Staunen-erregendes ist (GT 18)

The cumulative effect of these extracts is that Goethe emerges as the antithesis of the culturally sterile scholar, or as a fruitful individual. It is important to note that on the occasions when Nietzsche directly quotes Goethe, Goethe neither dismisses knowledge as worthless nor claims that genuine knowledge is impossible to attain. Like Nietzsche, he recognises that the process of learning can enhance life and the individual’s creative capacities, as is demonstrated by his resolve to read Kant in manageable segments and by his appreciation of Schiller’s need to consult history for inspiration and his faith in the potential practical benefits of science. Nietzsche instead depicts him as fearing a surfeit of knowledge that could vitiate his active impulse, and specifically his artistic productivity.

In his early writing, Nietzsche is confident that Goethe shares his belief in the supreme value of culture. This belief is fundamental to Nietzsche’s theory of education, and Goethe’s agreement on the issue therefore assumes tremendous importance. Goethe’s insistence on art’s unique status within the realm of human endeavour is apparent in a comment which Nietzsche recorded in his notebook in 1871: ‘Was *Goethe* von *Kleist* sagt, hätte er vor der Welt empfinden müssen—der volle Dramatiker ist die Welt selbst.’ (NF 1871, 7, 187). It is stated even more emphatically in the fifth section of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*:

⁵⁴ Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, 11th March 1828, in Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*, 19, p. 606.

Goethe war es, der mit einem übermüthig tiefsinnigen Worte es merken liess, wie der Natur alle ihre Versuche nur soviel gelten, damit endlich der Künstler ihr Stammeln erräth, ihr auf halbem Wege entgegenkommt und ausspricht, was sie mit ihren Versuchen eigentlich will. 'Ich habe es oft gesagt, ruft er einmal aus, und werde es noch oft wiederholen, die causa finalis der Welt- und Menschenhändler ist die dramatische Dichtkunst. Denn das Zeug ist sonst absolut zu nichts zu brauchen'. (UB III, 5)

The commitment to action that Nietzsche identifies in Goethe is thus further clarified and refined: it is supposedly artistic creativity that Goethe values above all else, which of course closely matches Nietzsche's priorities in his early works. Goethe's assertion that art is the ultimate purpose of 'Welt- und Menschenhändler' recalls Nietzsche's claims in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* that art is the true metaphysical task of life and that the world can only be justified as an aesthetic phenomenon. As was shown in Chapter Three, Nietzsche is not implying that art is capable of revealing eschatological or ontological truths, but he believes that the process of artistic creation should be held in higher esteem than metaphysical speculation because it is capable of improving human existence.

Having identified the way in which Nietzsche often uses Goethe as a symbol of 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit', it is now possible to show how Nietzsche links him to the broader idea of self-cultivation.

5. Goethe's Self-Cultivation

In her study of Goethe and the question of an aesthetically constructed identity, Angelika Jakobs argues that: 'Er [Nietzsche] sieht Goethes Werk grundsätzlich auf

die Konstruktion der eigenen Identität ausgerichtet'.⁵⁵ It will be shown in Chapter Six that in *Götzen-Dämmerung* (1888) Nietzsche explicitly, and emphatically, links Goethe with the concept of a self-created personality, in a passage that is astonishing for the generous praise that Nietzsche bestows upon Goethe, but also for the way that it summarises the central themes that define Nietzsche's *Goethebild* throughout his works.

This passage from *Götzen-Dämmerung* (1888) makes use of ideas and arguments that Nietzsche advances in his work on *Bildung* more than a decade before. Yet this should perhaps not be surprising, when we consider that in the *Nachlass* from the early 1870s – when Nietzsche was formulating his theory of *Bildung* – we already find comments that anticipate the view of Goethe as a self-created individual.

This chapter has shown that Goethe fulfils the basic requirement of self-cultivation that Nietzsche stipulates in his early works. He allegedly sought to preserve a safe distance between himself and the norms and customs of his homeland, which we learn from the occasions when Nietzsche cites Goethe's criticism of the Germans. In a note from 1872, Nietzsche expands on this idea by claiming that Goethe had avoided becoming too closely linked to the age as a whole. This stems from his belief, which once again is related by Nietzsche, that the genius is linked to the period in which he lives by his weaknesses rather than his strengths. Once again, Nietzsche uses Goethe to embody the ideal of freedom – which Goethe supposedly achieved through his wariness – and to emphasise the fact that such autonomy is supposedly lacking in Nietzsche's own age due to the influence of mass politics:

Goethe sagt, das Genie hänge gewöhnlich durch eine Schwäche mit seiner Zeit zusammen. Umgekehrt der allgemeine Glaube, daß das Genie alle seine

⁵⁵ Angelika Jakobs, *Goethe und die Renaissance* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1997), p. 20.

Stärken der Zeit verdanke, und somit nur seine Schwächen für sich und von sich habe. [...] Jetzt nur nöthig Diener der Masse, in specie Diener einer Partei zu sein. Bildungsziel: eine Partei zu begreifen und ihr sein Leben unterzuordnen. (NF, 1872, 8, 59)

In a note from the following year, Nietzsche develops this idea further when he claims Goethe had not only preserved his freedom from external forces that may have otherwise suppressed his individualism, but that he had also taken proactive steps to create or *stylise* himself: ‘Goethe sodann ist vorbildlich: der ungestüme Naturalismus: der allmählich zur strengen Würde wird. Er ist, als stilisirter Mensch, höher als je irgend ein Deutscher gekommen’ (NF 1873, 29, 119). This description, and Nietzsche’s use of the adjective ‘stilisirter’ in particular, conveys a stronger sense of personal control over the process of self-development than we find in the description in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*. Rather than simply fighting to preserve his autonomy – which could be construed as somewhat defensive or reactive – Goethe is described here as possessing a heightened self-awareness and self-assertion. ‘Stylisation’, it would seem, can only be the product of a deliberate effort.

In the same note, we encounter another key feature of both Nietzsche’s *Goethebild* and his theory of *Bildung* when Nietzsche reveals how far Goethe still remains from the ideal of self-cultivation, and how much therefore remains to be done: ‘Von da bis zur Einfachheit und Grösse ist freilich noch ein grosser Schritt, aber wir sollten nur gar nicht glauben Goethe überspringen zu können, sondern müssen es immer, wie er, wieder anfangen’ (NF 1873, 29, 119). Modernity, as Nietzsche repeatedly insists, cannot simply recline on the achievements and glories of the past, but must fashion its own.

In Nietzsche's early works, Goethe appears as a model of Nietzschean *Bildung*, and of the themes of 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit' that underpin it. What is perhaps most striking is the way that Nietzsche not only uses Goethe to represent these themes, but that his relationship with Goethe so closely mimics the model of the teacher-pupil relationship that Nietzsche presents in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*. Nietzsche's deep respect for Goethe is never in doubt; yet this never descends into slavish imitation. Nietzsche's repeated, and occasionally trenchant criticisms of Goethe serve to preserve Nietzsche's freedom from him, while his declarations that he wants to go beyond what Goethe has already achieved shows that Goethe was able to inspire Nietzsche to action in the way that a Nietzschean educator must.

There is a slight contradiction in Nietzsche's approach to Goethe that should be addressed. Nietzsche regularly attacks the *Bildungsphilister* for having historicised Goethe, and for having supposedly reduced him to the status of a political icon. Yet one could argue that Nietzsche does exactly the same by having Goethe symbolise two ideas or values whose importance is ultimately determined by Nietzsche. Nietzsche's response to such a charge may well have been that a self-consciously subjective historicism – such as his – was very different to that of the realists and Young Germans who allegedly bound Goethe to an inflexible 'truth' and therefore fixed his fate, along with their own, for a far longer period. Nietzsche does not want his version of Goethe to be turned into a graven image; the value of *his* Goethe lies in his ability to continually stimulate new creative endeavours.

Having demonstrated the extremely close connection between Nietzsche's early theory of *Bildung* and his early *Goethebild*, the final two chapters will examine how this image of Goethe evolves in relation to the shifts and re-evaluations of Nietzsche's philosophy. It will be suggested that in spite of the considerable changes

of emphasis that Nietzsche's philosophy undergoes in the years between the publication of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* in 1874 and his collapse in Turin in 1889, it will become apparent that the views he expresses in his early writings and those found in the works of the 1880s are, in many ways, remarkably consistent.

Chapter Five

Nietzsche's View of Goethe in his 'Middle Period' (1878-1882)

The previous chapters have argued that the themes of 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit' are essential to Nietzsche's early theory of *Bildung*, and that Goethe acts as a symbol for them both. In Nietzsche's usage, 'Freiheit' denotes the ability of the individual to preserve his independence, and to eschew any single doctrine, creed or group that could restrict his personal development and prevent the emergence of his 'true'¹ or future self. 'Fruchtbarkeit', meanwhile, refers to Nietzsche's prioritisation of creativity and action, and is opposed to what he sees as the dry, purposeless knowledge that turns men into 'wandelnde Encyclopädien' (UB II, 4). In his early works and notebooks, Nietzsche portrays Goethe as having avoided the ideological, national or cultural ties that interfere with the process of autonomous self-cultivation by narrowing our intellectual horizons, and as having devoted himself to the production of art and 'Thätigkeit' (UB II, Vorwort).

This chapter will contend that these two themes remain pivotal to Nietzsche's work in the years between 1878 and 1882 and also continue to underpin his image of Goethe. This 'middle period' of Nietzsche's productive life is often depicted as one of radical change, in which he revised or rejected many of his previous ideas and distanced himself from his earlier works. In particular, critics have remarked on his seemingly dramatic re-evaluation of art and science in the three complete books from this period: *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches* (1878), *Morgenröte* (1881) and *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882). This reappraisal, it is sometimes claimed, amounts to

¹ It must be stressed once again that when Nietzsche refers to the possibility of accessing one's 'wahres Wesen' in the first section of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, he is not suggesting that the formation of the self is a predetermined or teleological process. Instead, he regards the 'true' self as one that has developed free from external constraints and whose nature is governed by the choices and actions of a sovereign individual, rather than by the norms and customs of the age in which that individual happens to live.

his total disavowal of the claims that he makes on art's behalf in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*² and his wholehearted embrace of rationalism. Safranski, for example, argues that the first section of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* is clear evidence of an 'Umbruch' that Nietzsche experienced in 1875, in which his passion for art was replaced by his desire for knowledge.³ Tanner claims that the contents of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (1878), which he dismisses as 'unmemorable',⁴ can be explained by Nietzsche's 'revulsion from the pseudo-narrative of *BT* [*Die Geburt der Tragödie*]'.⁵ Kuhn, meanwhile, despite arguing that the idea of a sudden reorientation in Nietzsche's thinking is problematic because of notes from the *Nachlass* between 1872 and 1875 that prefigure the ideas and arguments of his middle period,⁶ nevertheless describes the second period of Nietzsche's creative life as having been dominated by Nietzsche's hunger for knowledge:

Diesen [mittleren] Zeitraum beurteilt man als von der aus einem "Bruch" mit dem ersten Zeitabschnitt erwachsenen Abkehr Nietzsches von jeglichem Glauben, sei es an religiöse oder metaphysische Inhalte oder an die Kunst als deren Ersatz, und von seiner Hinwendung zu einer aufklärerischen Haltung, besonders dem Streben nach Erkenntnis, beherrscht.⁷

This chapter will neither ignore nor downplay the substantial differences that exist between the works that Nietzsche published before 1878 – which have been

² Such as the claim at the end of the foreword that he dedicates to Wagner, which was quoted in Chapter Three: 'Diesen Ernsthaften diene zur Belehrung, dass ich von der Kunst als der höchsten Aufgabe und der eigentlich metaphysischen Thätigkeit dieses Lebens im Sinne des Mannes überzeugt bin, dem ich hier, als meinem erhabenen Vorkämpfer auf dieser Bahn, diese Schrift gewidmet haben will' (GT, Vorwort an Richard Wagner).

³ Rüdiger Safranski, *Nietzsche. Biographie seines Denkens* (Munich & Vienna: Carl Hanser, 2000), p. 159. Safranski describes this as the: 'Triumph des Erkenntniswillens über den Willen zur Kunst und zum Mythos'.

⁴ Michael Tanner, *Nietzsche* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 23.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Elisabeth Kuhn, *Friedrich Nietzsches Philosophie des europäischen Nihilismus* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1992), p. 65-6.

⁷ Ibid., p. 62.

examined in the preceding three chapters – and the three texts that are commonly taken to constitute his ‘middle period’. It will also argue, however, that this seemingly dramatic shift can be explained, at least in part, by Nietzsche’s unwavering belief in the importance of ‘Freiheit’ and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’: two ideas which, as has already been demonstrated, are firmly rooted in the theory of *Bildung* that Nietzsche develops in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*.

The chapter will begin by examining how Nietzsche views the notion of ‘Freiheit’ in his second period, and show that his esteem for science in these works is linked to his new-found belief that science can increase freedom, rather than diminish it by enslaving men to the desire for truth. It will also show that as well as retaining his commitment to the idea of ‘Freiheit’, Nietzsche also continues to understand the idea in the twofold sense that Owen has identified and which was outlined in the introduction to this thesis. As well as maintaining his hostility towards any power or force that threatens to suppress our individualism – whether through brute force or in the more insidious manner of an abstract concept – Nietzsche continues to insist that it is also incumbent on the person to preserve their independence by refusing to let their ‘Herkunft’ or ‘Umgebung’ (MA 225) define their views for him. Nietzsche’s model of freedom also remains closely linked in these works to the ideal of continual personal development, and to the ability to move beyond our current self-perception that depends on a suspicion of fixed or absolute truths.

Having investigated the concept of ‘Freiheit’ and its relationship to science in Nietzsche’s middle period, it will then be possible to examine his treatment of ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ in these works. Nietzsche’s view of fruitfulness and creativity in his middle period is far more equivocal and nuanced than his view of ‘Freiheit’. He now tends to equate art and the artist – as well as philosophers – with the desire for fixed,

profound truths that he despises, and which he had previously associated with science. Yet in spite of this belief in art's mistaken preoccupation with 'Tiefe und Bedeutung' (MA 6), he also continues to portray it as an indispensable facet of existence: for he still sees art as a vital palliative to the cruelty of life, which neither science nor knowledge can do anything to assuage.

There is a further aspect to Nietzsche's view of art in his middle period, however. In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* Nietzsche describes a type of artistic creativity that shares much in common with the ideal of 'Fruchtbarkeit' from his early works. In contrast to art that supposedly grasps after 'höhere Würde' (MA 4) or which is born of the need to 'heal' ('heilen', MA 148), this form of art is both a product and an exemplar of serenity and self-restraint. Art that emerges from 'moderation' (MA 221), Nietzsche contends, is indispensable because it teaches us to look upon life with 'Interesse und Lust' (MA 222); it helps us not only to endure existence, but to enjoy it.⁸ Nietzsche depicts such art as fundamentally life-enhancing – which he regards as distinct from the temporary alleviation of primal pain – and as the result of the healthy outflow of energy from the individual. In both of these senses, it strongly recalls the notion of 'Fruchtbarkeit' that Nietzsche details in his early works.

Having argued that the ideas of 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit' remain crucial to Nietzsche in his middle period, and having shown that Nietzsche's changing attitude to art and science can be more easily understood with reference to these ideas, it will then be possible to show that he continues to use Goethe as a symbol of 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit'. At a time when Nietzsche is often said to have shifted radically in his views and outlook, he relies on tried and tested techniques to illustrate Goethe's own

⁸ This makes for an interesting point of comparison with *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, which is typically thought of as the zenith of Nietzsche's interest in art. There he describes Apollonian art as a 'Heilbalsam' (GT 21), which points to art's curative properties but stops short of claiming that it can induce pleasure.

personal autonomy and productivity. Many of the references to Goethe in the works and notebooks from 1878 to 1882 emphasise his intellectual and artistic independence by separating him from the German tradition, just as extracts from the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* often do. Nietzsche also repeats the accusation that by historicising Goethe and trying to assimilate him into a nationalist politico-cultural narrative, his compatriots had failed to learn anything from the man they revered.

Accompanying this familiar emphasis on Goethe's individuality and freedom is an equally recognisable portrayal of Goethe as an exemplary cultural figure. On several occasions in *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches*, *Morgenröte* and *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche describes Goethe as a titan in the history of German art and suggests that, in his later classical period at least, Goethe attained to the kind of controlled, measured fruitfulness that Nietzsche now regards as desirable. This is despite the fact that he still harbours strong reservations about Goethe's work and *Weltanschauung*.

Nietzsche's philosophical outlook is able to accommodate both mutability and consistency.⁹ The ability to adapt and revise his point of view, which Stern describes as the 'versatile' nature of Nietzsche's thought,¹⁰ is entirely in keeping with his opposition to dogmatism and the type of rigidly systematic philosophy which is unable to incorporate change without threatening its very viability.

Yet there are also ideas and principles that Nietzsche faithfully adheres to, even in the moments when he appears to disclaim his past most ferociously. One of the oft-remarked features of Nietzsche's middle period is that it marks his break with

⁹ Thiele refers to this as Nietzsche's 'continuity in change'. Leslie Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* (Princeton, NJ and London: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 3.

¹⁰ J.P. Stern, *Nietzsche* (London: Fontana Press, 1978), p. 25.

the two looming figures of his early works: Schopenhauer and Wagner. The significance of this rupture has been noted by Eugen Fink, among many other commentators:¹¹ '[Nietzsche's second period] hosts the inner separation from Wagner and the turn away from Schopenhauer, that is a farewell to the "heroes" of his youth that he worshipped with burning enthusiasm'.¹²

In a passage from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, written four years after Nietzsche's public schism with Wagner, Nietzsche takes the opportunity to pour scorn on both of his former cultural mentors. He derides Schopenhauer for the 'mystical embarrassments and evasions' of his philosophy ('mystische Verlegenheiten und Ausflüchte'), the 'Unsinn' of his theory of compassion and his various 'excesses and vices' ('*Ausschweifungen* und Laster' (FW 99)). Wagner, meanwhile, is criticised for being a disciple of Schopenhauer: yet he is also berated for failings that Nietzsche deems to be entirely his own, such as his inelegant prose, his 'intellectuellen Launen und Krämpfe' and his general propensity for error (ibid.).

In the midst of this tirade, Nietzsche offers a small, but substantial concession. For all Wagner's manifest flaws, Nietzsche argues, we should nevertheless praise what is 'wahr und ursprünglich' (FW 99) in him. By 'wahr', Nietzsche does not mean the claims made by Wagner that he happens to agree with, or that are logically or empirically verifiable. He is referring instead to those aspects of Wagner's character and thought that could be described as authentically his: that he had developed himself and not borrowed from Schopenhauer, Christianity or any other source, and

¹¹ The exact nature and extent of their influence on Nietzsche's early work is clearly a voluminous topic, which could not possibly not be resolved here. However, one can claim without too much fear of contradiction that Schopenhauer and Wagner are hugely significant for both the tone and content of Nietzsche's early works, not least because each of them have one of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* named after them. *Die Geburt der Tragödie* also provides ample evidence of their importance to Nietzsche: he quotes extensively from *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* in the sixteenth section of the text and pays homage to the power of Wagner's music in the nineteenth.

¹² Eugen Fink, *Nietzsche's Philosophy*, trans. by Goetz Richter (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 34.

which therefore amounted to more than a ‘nachträgliche Philosophie’ (ibid.). Nietzsche confirms this a few lines later by citing a passage from the fourth *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtung*, in which he extols the virtues of freedom and honesty that allow us to shape our own distinct character or self:

dass Ehrlich-sein, selbst im Bösen, [ist] besser, als sich selber an die Sittlichkeit des Herkommens verlieren, dass der freie Mensch sowohl gut als böse sein kann, dass aber der unfreie Mensch eine Schande der Natur ist, und an keinem himmlischen noch irdischen Troste Antheil hat; endlich dass *Jeder, der frei werden will, es durch sich selber werden muss*, und dass Niemandem die Freiheit als ein Wundergeschenk in den Schooss fällt (UB IV, 11).

This homage to self-determination – in the midst of a passage where Nietzsche conspicuously distances himself from other former attachments – clearly echoes the ideas and instructions from the first section of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*. Nietzsche here implores his reader not to ‘lose himself’ in the mores of conventional morality; in doing so he recalls his earlier warning of the sacrifice that one makes by slavishly following the example of others: ‘Zwar giebt es zahllose Pfade und Brücken und Halbgötter, die dich durch den Fluss tragen wollen; aber nur um den Preis deiner selbst; du würdest dich verpfänden und verlieren’ (UB III, 1).

As well as revealing the continuing importance of ‘Freiheit’ to Nietzsche’s thinking, this section from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* also suggests that Nietzsche still regards Goethe as a model for it. In the lines preceding the extract from *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche uses an unattributed quotation in order to clarify and reinforce his claim that we must seek to preserve our independence. It reads: ‘Sei ein Mann und folge mir nicht nach, – sondern dir! Sondern dir!’ Although Nietzsche does not name its author, many of his readers will recognise it as the message that Goethe

inserted at the beginning of the second edition of *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, in a bid to halt anyone who may think to follow Werther's tragic example. Nietzsche's choice of a Goethean quotation is surely significant, and although one must be wary of imputing motives to Nietzsche that cannot be conclusively demonstrated through reference to his writing, it is nevertheless worth noting that this is an example of Goethe critically reassessing his own work and trying to move beyond the attitudes and notions contained within it. In this way he can be said to be engaging in the process of perpetual self-development that Nietzsche consistently portrays as essential, and which is made possible by remaining free of the ideological, political or artistic attachments that foster a rigid, intractable view of oneself and the world.

1. 'Freiheit' and Self-Cultivation in Nietzsche's Middle Period

In her study of the works of Nietzsche's middle period, Abbey rightly points out that 'one of their distinguishing features is the praise they contain for science';¹³ praise that contradicts the vilification that pervades *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. She also successfully identifies the particular features of science that now commend it to Nietzsche. By illuminating the internal logic of this apparently dramatic reversal, Abbey reveals an unbroken thread in Nietzsche's thinking that can be traced back to the works of the early 1870s.

Abbey suggests that what Nietzsche particularly admires about science in his middle period is its 'methods and procedures', along with the 'values and

¹³ Abbey, *Nietzsche's Middle Period*, p. 87. The paramount importance of scientific methods to Nietzsche has been stressed by Kremer-Marietti: 'Im selben Maße, in dem er bloße Abstraktionen ablehnt, beruft Nietzsche sich, besonders in MA, auf den Geist der positiven Wissenschaften seiner Zeit, als deren Hauptvorteil er nicht so sehr ihre Resultate als vielmehr ihre Methoden ansieht'. Angèle Kremer-Marietti, 'Menschliches-Allzumenschliches: Nietzsches Positivismus?', in *Nietzsche Studien*, 26 (1997), 260-275 (p. 260).

characteristics of its practitioners'.¹⁴ It is not the promise of unadulterated truth that now attracts Nietzsche: he still scorns any attempt to unveil life's hidden meaning or underlying organisation, and insists that science is no more capable than religion or philosophy of peeling back the layers of appearance that obstruct our view of primordial reality.¹⁵ In a sentence that recalls the central argument of *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge*, Nietzsche refers to science as: 'die Nachahmung der Natur in Begriffen' (MA 38). He offers a similar argument in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, where he claims that mathematics cannot provide a direct insight into the nature of objects, but can supply information about mankind's relationship to them:

Wir wollen die Feinheit und Strenge der Mathematik in alle Wissenschaften hineintreiben, so weit diess nur irgend möglich ist, nicht im Glauben, dass wir auf diesem Wege die Dinge erkennen werden, sondern um damit unsere menschliche Relation zu den Dingen *festzustellen* (FW 246).

This new view of science as modest and life-enhancing clearly contrasts with Nietzsche's view of the voracious 'Trieb zum Wissen' (GT 17) that dominated all other spheres of human activity, which was discussed in Chapter Three. In an extract from the opening part of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, Nietzsche compares the 'spirit of science' with the lofty ambitions of Schopenhauer's metaphysics, which he now explicitly calls into question:

Aber auch in unserem Jahrhundert bewies Schopenhauer's Metaphysik, dass auch jetzt der wissenschaftliche Geist noch nicht kräftig genug ist [...] Viel

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁵ As in his early works, Nietzsche concedes the possible existence of a metaphysical world. He also continues to assert, however, that knowledge of it is impossible and that such knowledge would be useless even if it were attainable: '*Metaphysische Welt*. – Es ist wahr, es könnte eine metaphysische Welt geben; die absolute Möglichkeit davon ist kaum zu bekämpfen. Wir sehen alle Dinge durch den Menschenkopf an und können diesen Kopf nicht abschneiden; während doch die Frage übrig bleibt, was von der Welt noch da wäre, wenn man ihn doch abgeschnitten hätte. [...] wäre die Existenz einer solchen Welt noch so gut bewiesen, so stünde doch fest, dass die gleichgültigste aller Erkenntnisse eben ihre Erkenntnis wäre' (MA 9).

Wissenschaft klingt in seine Lehre hinein, aber sie beherrscht dieselbe nicht, sondern das alte, wohlbekannte ‘metaphysische Bedürfniss’ (MA 26).

Nietzsche believes that in contrast to Schopenhauer and philosophy in general, science contents itself with more humble, attainable types of truth. By focusing on the specific rather than the transcendental, its claims and discoveries are imbued with a credibility that metaphysics lacks. For these discoveries – since they do not lay claim to comprehensiveness – permit the possibility of further human endeavour. Nietzsche makes this point in the title of another aphorism from *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, where he claims that the spirit of science is characterised by a respect for parts rather than the whole: ‘*Der Geist der Wissenschaft im Theil, nicht im Ganzen mächtig*’ (MA 6). Nietzsche contrasts this modesty with philosophers, upon whom logic supposedly exerts its ‘tyranny’ (‘werden von der Logik tyrannisiert’, *ibid.*).

In a recent study of Nietzsche’s engagement with science, Babette Babich has convincingly argued that the periods in which Nietzsche commends science are those when he associates it with the ideas of possibility and change: ‘Nietzsches Philosophie ist zuerst und in erster Linie eine Philosophie der Möglichkeit’.¹⁶ As long as he believes that science is only concerned with absolute truth, he cannot endorse it: ‘Es ist die Insistenz der Wissenschaft die absolute Wahrheit (und sei es nur potentiell) zu haben, die Schwierigkeiten verursacht’.¹⁷

Nietzsche’s reconciliation with science also stems from the associated realisation that it can be enlisted in the fight against dogma, superstition and the automatic deference to tradition or received opinion. Nietzsche views suspicion as a key element of the ‘scientific spirit’, which helps to undermine the supposedly

¹⁶ Babette Babich, *Nietzsches Wissenschaftsphilosophie* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), p. 300.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

timeless truths that men use to guide their thought and deeds. Gerlach has described this as Nietzsche's vision of a 'new Enlightenment':

Es geht ihm [Nietzsche] in seiner 'neuen Aufklärung' nicht um Vernunft- und Verstandeskultur, es geht ihm vielmehr und stärker als dies in der bisherigen Philosophiegeschichte je der Fall war, um die Befreiung des Leibes und der Triebe, der Affekte des Menschen aus den Banden traditioneller Wahrheitslehren und konventioneller Moral- und Glaubensnormen.¹⁸

This interpretation is supported by a number of references in Nietzsche's texts. In another section from *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, he suggests that this propensity for doubt is science's single most important attribute: 'In der That braucht sie [die Wissenschaft] den Zweifel und das Misstrauen als treuesten Bundesgenossen' (MA 22). Such mistrust is clearly not conducive to the philosophical system-building or putatively exhaustive explanations of the world that Nietzsche rejects out of hand. For not only does it challenge the normative assumptions that unite mankind as a species or within a community, and upon which philosophers have traditionally constructed their interpretations of the world; it also prompts the open-minded person to scrutinise his particular prejudices and beliefs, which, as was demonstrated in Chapter Two, is a vital component of Nietzschean 'Freiheit' and a precondition of self-cultivation. This enables him to move beyond them, instead of allowing them to become the fixed determinants of his character and *Weltanschauung*. In this way, Nietzsche depicts science and rationality – for the duration of his middle period, at least – as consistent with the model of self-cultivation that is adumbrated in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*.

¹⁸ Hans-Martin Gerlach, 'Friedrich Nietzsche und die Aufklärung', in *Nietzsche: Radikalaufklärer oder radikaler Gegenauflärer?*, ed. Renate Reschke (Berlin: Akademie, 2004), p. 25.

According to Nietzsche, the free spirits for whom *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches* is intended forswear allegiance to any single custom, religion or group in order to retain their personal freedom and satisfy their essentially creative nature. He differentiates them from the ‘gebundenen Geister’ (MA 225) whose morals, cultural preferences or political loyalties are inherited rather than consciously chosen. These latter men, who constitute the vast majority of mankind and whom Nietzsche comes to describe as the herd,¹⁹ have their opinions assigned to them by the geographical and historical coincidence of their birth. They are also supremely confident in the validity of these opinions, due to both their complete lack of interest in the diversity of existence and the modern concept of education which inculcates this narrowness as a virtue:

Die Gebundenheit der Ansichten, durch Gewöhnung zum Instinct geworden, führt zu dem, was man Charakterstärke nennt [...] Dem Charakterstarken fehlt die Kenntniss der vielen Möglichkeiten und Richtungen des Handelns; sein Intellect ist unfrei, gebunden, weil er ihm in einem gegebenen Falle vielleicht nur zwei Möglichkeiten zeigt [...] Die erziehende Umgebung will jeden Menschen unfrei machen, indem sie ihm immer die geringste Zahl von Möglichkeiten vor Augen stellt. Das Individuum wird von seinen Erziehern behandelt, als ob es zwar etwas Neues sei, aber eine *Wiederholung* werden solle (MA 228).

Nietzsche’s reference to the ‘erziehende Umgebung’ is an extension of the ideas that are laid out in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*. It recalls the rival forces within modern society that Nietzsche considers to have degraded *Bildung* – such as the rapacious state, politics in general

¹⁹ Nietzsche uses the phrase extensively in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*. See, for example: FW 1; FW 116; FW 117 and FW 354.

and academia – which were discussed in Chapter Two. Nietzsche believes that they all desire pliant, limited men, and that the system of education has been adapted in order to produce them. The free spirit, however, is not willing to have his character cast in another man's mould and live life as a 'repetition'. He is inspired by possibility rather than certainty, and is determined that he should exercise ultimate control over the path that his life takes. Nietzsche suggests that this tends to lead him away from the norms and habits of the age in which he lives:

Alles Gewohnte zieht ein immer fester werdendes Netz von Spinnweben um uns zusammen; und alsobald merken wir, dass die Fäden zu Stricken geworden sind und dass wir selber als Spinne in der Mitte sitzen, die sich hier gefangen hat und von ihrem eigenen Blute zehren muss. Desshalb hasst der Freigeist alle Gewöhnungen und Regeln, alles Dauernde und Definitive, desshalb reisst er, mit Schmerz, das Netz um sich immer wieder auseinander: wiewohl er in Folge dessen an zahlreichen kleinen und grossen Wunden leiden wird, – denn jene Fäden muss er *von sich*, von seinem Leibe, seiner Seele abreissen (MA 427).

Nietzsche's notion of the self-determining free spirit strongly recalls the notion that is at the heart of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*: 'Niemand kann dir die Brücke bauen, auf der gerade du über den Fluss des Lebens schreiten musst, niemand ausser dir allein' (UB III, 1). In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, meanwhile, Nietzsche urges us to give 'style' to our character in a manner that is more assertive than simply avoiding rules and distrusting permanence, and which strongly recalls the image of Goethe as a 'stilisirter Mensch' (NF 1873, 29, 119) that appears in a *Nachlass* fragment from the time of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*:

Eins ist Noth. – Seinem Charakter ‘Stil geben’ – eine grosse und seltene Kunst! Sie übt Der, welcher Alles übersieht, was seine Natur an Kräften und Schwächen bietet, und es dann einem künstlerischen Plane einfügt, bis ein jedes als Kunst und Vernunft erscheint und auch die Schwäche noch das Auge entzückt [...] Es werden die starken, herrschsüchtigen Naturen sein, welche in einem solchen Zwange, in einer solchen Gebundenheit und Vollendung unter dem eigenen Gesetz ihre feinste Freude geniessen (FW 290).

Nietzsche does not consider the discipline required to ‘style yourself’ to be a sacrifice, as long as the process is carried out according to the dictates of one’s ‘own law’. At the beginning of the fourth book, he returns to the image of self-creation and, just as in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, rejects the notion of a predetermined or essential self: ‘Was sagt dein Gewissen? – “Du sollst der werden, der du bist”’ (FW 270).

2. Art and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ in Nietzsche’s Middle Period

While the vision of art that one finds in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* is far removed from the panegyric tones of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, it is by no means the case that Nietzsche now rejects art entirely. This has recently been argued by Lossi, who also contends that what Nietzsche truly objects to is the separation of art and science into disconnected spheres of knowledge:

Es geht um kein *Aut-Aut* zwischen Kunst und Philosophie, als hätte er in den ersten Jahren seiner Lehrtätigkeit als Altphilologe eine Neigung zur Kunst gehabt, die dann zur *Geburt der Tragödie* geführt hätte, und dann, während der sogenannten ‘Aufklärungsphase’, die Wissenschaft als den wahren Zugang zur Lebensbedeutung entdeckt. [...] Nietzsche wehrt sich vielmehr gegen die

Entzweiung von Wissenschaft und Kunst als getrennte Bereiche des Wissens.²⁰

This is a perceptive reading that recognises the problem of focusing solely on the ruptures and discontinuities in Nietzsche's philosophy and failing to recognise that the shifts and adjustments in his view of the world are often influenced by what remains constant. In 'Anzeichen höherer und niederer Kultur', Nietzsche argues that: 'Sicherlich ist dem Menschen selber eine *gleichmässige* Ausbildung seiner Kräfte nützlicher und glückbringender' (MA 260). In another aphorism from the same section, he claims that it is a sign of a higher culture if it is able to furnish man with a 'double-brain': 'ein Doppelgehirn, gleichsam zwei Hirnkammern geben, einmal um Wissenschaft, sodann um Nicht-Wissenschaft zu empfinden: neben einander liegend, ohne Verwirrung, trennbar, abschliessbar; es ist diess eine Forderung der Gesundheit.' (MA 251) While Nietzsche now esteems science above art, he still considers art necessary to guard against the anguish that inevitably accompanies knowledge.

Science, he contends, gradually dispels the superstitions upon which metaphysics, religion and art are based. This lessens human happiness, because these mythological constructs have historically been a source of comfort to man and have distracted him from the chaos and disorder of the world. Knowledge undermines them without offering any consolation, which leads Nietzsche to conclude that man will eventually disown science and wilfully return to the 'Barbarei' of fantasy and myth if art does not continue to act as a necessary illusion (ibid.). He re-emphasises this point in *Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche* (1879), when he writes that knowledge can be harmful and it is therefore vital that culture is able to provide 'Gegengiften' (VM 13).

²⁰ Annamaria Lossi, 'Genealogie der Wissenschaft. Über das Verhältnis von Philosophie und Wissenschaft bei Nietzsche', in *Der Tod Gottes und die Wissenschaft*, ed. by Carlo Gentili and Cathrin Nielsen (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 2010), p. 185.

Nietzsche repeatedly claims that an excess of enlightenment is potentially dangerous and that the irrational is an unalterable fact of life. As he writes in an aphorism from ‘Von den ersten und letzten Dingen’: ‘*Das Unlogische nothwendig.* [...] Es sind nur die allzu naiven Menschen, welche Glauben können, dass die Natur des Menschen in eine rein logische verwandelt werden könne.’ (MA 31) He goes on to note that a great deal of good originates in the illogical (ibid.). This indicates that in spite of his repeated assertions in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* that the artist is inferior to the scientist,²¹ Nietzsche still views the creative drive that produces art to be an indelible facet of human nature.

It was argued in Chapter Three that Nietzsche never views knowledge as redundant in his early works but wishes to redress the balance of power between reason and imagination in favour of the latter. By 1878, Nietzsche has once again inverted the hierarchical relationship between the two; yet he never suggests that instinct and creativity can simply be cast aside.

Art remains indispensable for Nietzsche, even if he no longer credits it with the transcendental power described in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. He consequently envisages a continued need for the artist, although he now insists that the artist is inferior to the scientist. His new, pragmatic view of art – that it is ‘human, all-too-human’ and born out of mankind’s spiritual requirements and creative instincts – extends to his understanding of the process by which it is produced. He dismisses the ‘Glaube an Inspiration’ (MA 155) and the Romantic ‘Cultus des Genius’ (MA 162) as fantasies fuelled by the vanity of artists and non-artists respectively: artists wish to disguise the toil associated with their work, while the consumers of art soothe their

²¹ See, example MA 147, or MA 222.

envy of the creative man by convincing themselves that his gifts are innate and bestowed by a ‘ganz seltener Zufall’ (ibid.).

The Nietzschean genius,²² by contrast, acquires his talent through a combination of hard work and aesthetic acumen which is learned rather than conferred by nature: ‘Das Genie thut auch Nichts, als dass es erst Steine setzen, dann bauen lernt, dass es immer nach Stoff sucht und immer an ihm herumformt.[...] Nun kann Niemand beim Werke des Künstlers zusehen, wie es *geworden* ist’ (ibid.). One of the skills that the genius must cultivate is his ‘Urtheilskraft’ (MA 155) that allows him to assess the merits of his own work and to discard the drafts and sketches that must precede the masterpiece. This discernment must be refined through practice (ibid.), together with the other traits of genius which Nietzsche proceeds to list: ‘Alle Grossen waren grosse Arbeiter, unermüdlich nicht nur im Erfinden, sondern auch im Verwerfen, Sichten, Umgestalten, Ordnen.’ (ibid) To reject, sift or order objects – in short, to exercise judgement – presumes the application of knowledge which Nietzsche here clearly places alongside invention as a prerequisite of genius.

Nietzsche writes that he considers the average artist to be a man who surrenders unconditionally to instinct: ‘In Wahrheit will er die für seine Kunst *wirkungsvollsten* Voraussetzungen nicht aufgeben, also das Phantastische, Mythische, Unsichere, Extreme, den Sinn für das Symbolische, die Ueberschätzung der Person, den Glauben an etwas Wunderartiges im Genius’. (MA 146) He also contends that the creative man or ‘der Geistreiche’ is typically hostile towards science: ‘und wiederum haben geistreiche Leute häufig eine Abneigung gegen die Wissenschaft: wie zum Beispiel *fast alle* Künstler’ (MA 264) [emphasis added – JG]. It is crucial to note Nietzsche’s qualification here – he says that *almost* every artist is ill-disposed towards

²² Nietzsche continues to use the word genius, specifically requesting that its otherworldly associations be removed: ‘Genie—ein Wort, das ich bitte, ohne allen mythologischen und religiösen Beigeschmack zu verstehen.’ (MA 231)

science. It will be shown in the next section that he views Goethe – an example of the Nietzschean genius – as one of the rare exceptions.

Even in the midst of a work that is comparatively hostile to art, Nietzsche adumbrates an exemplary model of creativity and the productive man that he describes as the ‘ruhige Fruchtbarkeit’ of the ‘Aristokraten des Geistes’:

ihre Schöpfungen erscheinen und fallen an einem ruhigen Herbstabend vom Baume, ohne hastig begehrt, gefördert, durch Neues verdrängt zu werden. [...] Wenn man Etwas ist, so braucht man eigentlich Nichts zu machen,—und thut doch sehr viel. Es giebt über dem ‘productiven’ Menschen noch eine höhere Gattung (Ibid.)

Fruitfulness is an inevitable by-product of the great individual, which means that he does not have to feverishly pursue it. In this notion of ‘quiet’ fruitfulness one detects the germ of the question that Nietzsche formulates in the second edition of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1887): ‘In Hinsicht auf alle ästhetischen Werthe bediene ich mich jetzt dieser Hauptunterscheidung: ich frage, in jedem einzelnen Falle, “ist hier der Hunger oder der Ueberfluss schöpferisch geworden?”’ (FW 370). In the later work Nietzsche defines hunger as the ‘romantische Pessimismus’ (ibid.) that seeks to alleviate suffering by universalising it. While it is specifically the hunger for fame that Nietzsche refers to in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, the kernel of the critique is the same in both works: namely that Nietzsche cannot approve of art that is created in response to a deficiency. Art should instead originate in superfluity as an affirmation of life, rather than a consolation.

Dahlkvist suggests that Nietzsche's notion of romantic pessimism 'probably alludes to Goethe'.²³ In the *Gespräche mit Eckermann*, Goethe defines classicism as 'stark, frisch, froh und gesund', while he dismisses romanticism as 'schwach, kränklich und krank'.²⁴ Dahlkvist points to two occasions in the later *Nachlass* where Nietzsche uses a similar formulation,²⁵ and contends that we can justifiably infer that Nietzsche was influenced by Goethe because of the former's declaration in *Der Wanderer und Sein Schatten* that the *Gespräche* is the best German book there is. (WS 109)

If one accepts Dahlkvist's argument (and there is no obvious reason to reject it), it would also appear safe to conclude that Goethe is the inspiration for the ideal of creativity outlined in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*. This hypothesis is given further credibility by another, earlier instance in which Nietzsche borrows Goethe's method of classification. In *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten* Nietzsche writes:

Klassisch und romantisch. – Sowohl die klassisch als die romantisch gesinnten Geister—wie es diese beiden Gattungen immer gibt—tragen sich mit einer Vision der Zukunft: aber die ersteren aus einer *Stärke* ihrer Zeit heraus, die letzteren aus deren *Schwäche* (WS 217).

It is of course necessary to acknowledge that *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten* was published two years after *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*. However, it is clear from Nietzsche's references to the *Gespräche* in his early works²⁶ that he was familiar with the text long before he came to write *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*.

²³ Tobias Dahlkvist, *Nietzsche and the Philosophy of Pessimism. A Study of Nietzsche's Relation to the Pessimistic Tradition: Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Leopardi* (Uppsala Universitet: Uppsala, 2007), p. 231.

²⁴ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Gespräche mit Eckermann*, 2nd April 1829 in *Goethe. Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*, ed. Karl Richter, 33 vols (Munich: Hanser, 1986), 19, p. 300

²⁵ See NF 1888, 14, 25 and NF 1888, 14, 26 (Frühjahr, 1888).

²⁶ See GT 18, UB I, 1 and UB II, 8.

It is clear that Nietzsche still believes in the necessity of art and creativity in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, even if he has changed his mind about the respective value of the various human faculties. He is similarly resolute in his commitment to self-cultivation; he now believes, however, that this is best achieved through the application of reason. It should be emphasised once again that Nietzsche remains vehemently opposed to the purposeless accumulation of knowledge. To be able to recite the sequence of the periodic table or explain the theory of evolution possesses no inherent value for him. In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* he asserts that: ‘Das Können, nicht das Wissen, durch die Wissenschaft geübt’. (MA 256) In another passage he illustrates this point by discriminating between the facts of science and the procedures by which these facts are established:

Im Ganzen sind die wissenschaftlichen Methoden mindestens ein ebenso wichtiges Ergebniss der Forschung als irgend ein sonstiges Resultat: [...] Es mögen geistreiche Leute von den Ergebnissen der Wissenschaft lernen so viel sie wollen: man merkt es immer noch ihrem Gespräche und namentlich den Hypothesen in demselben an, dass ihnen der wissenschaftliche Geist fehlt: sie haben nicht jenes instinctive Misstrauen gegen die Abwege des Denkens, welches in der Seele jedes wissenschaftlichen Menschen in Folge langer Uebung seine Wurzeln eingeschlagen hat. Ihnen genügt es, über eine Sache überhaupt irgendeine Hypothese zu finden, dann sind sie Feuer und Flamme für dieselbe und meinen, damit sei es gethan. [...] (MA 635)

Nietzsche never retracts his contempt for those who dedicate their lives to a particular ‘truth’, whether it be scientific theory or political ideology. This sustained hostility towards the claims of absolute truth is yet another example of the consistency in Nietzsche’s thought that can occasionally be obscured by the changes. The vain

pursuit of ‘ultimate’ truth is precisely what he berates scientists and Socratic men for in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* the indictment remains the same; it is only the identity of the accused that has altered. Here he attacks philosophers and artists, whose indemonstrable ontological speculation he considers to be symptomatic of a ‘schwächere Moralität’ (MA 146) that cannot relinquish its desire for profundity.

As the passage above reveals, Nietzsche considers rigorous *criticism* to be a fundamental aspect of the ‘scientific spirit’ that makes it distrustful of any claim to unadulterated truth. In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* Nietzsche cites passion as the cause of conviction and dogmatism (MA 629), and argues that only sober, rational deliberation can free us from the bonds that are our emotional attachments. These appear, he claims, in the form of uncritical loyalty to a person or idea:

Nein, es giebt kein Gesetz, keine Verpflichtung der Art, wir müssen Verräther werden, Untreue üben, unsere Ideale immer wieder preisgeben. Aus einer Periode des Lebens in die andere schreiten wir nicht, ohne diese Schmerzen des Verrathes zu machen und auch daran wieder zu leiden. (ibid.)

Nietzsche’s recognition that knowledge can aid the process of self-cultivation (because it enables us to scrutinise our beliefs and prejudices and subsequently move beyond them) is a crucial factor in his conversion to a more positive view of science and knowledge. Self-overcoming – in the sense that one resists cleaving to a particular point of view and remains attuned to life’s diversity and wholeness – continues to be of central importance to Nietzsche’s philosophy in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, even if he redefines the way in which it is achieved.

It has been shown that Nietzsche still believes in the significance of self-cultivation and wholeness in his middle period. There is also a moment where he links

the two in a passage that anticipates the subtitle of his last published work: ‘Jeder hat *angeborenes Talent*, aber nur Wenigen ist der Grad von Zähigkeit, Ausdauer, Energie angeboren und anerzogen, so dass er wirklich ein Talent wird, also *wird*, was er *ist*, das heisst: es in Werken und Handlungen entladet’. (MA 263) Action is depicted here as being essential to the process of self-creation. The great man, in Nietzsche’s understanding, amounts to the sum of what he experiences *and* what he does, which is in keeping with his opposition to the idea of an immutable ‘authentic’ self. This idea is prominent in an aphorism from ‘Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche’: ‘Die tätigen, erfolgreichen Naturen handeln nicht nach dem Spruche “kenne dich selbst”, sondern wie als ob ihnen der Befehl vorschwebte: *wolle* ein Selbst, so *wirst* du ein Selbst’. , (VM 366) As well as being indebted to the central thesis of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, it also, of course, anticipates his description of Goethe in *Götzen-Dämmerung*: ‘er schuf sich...’

3. Goethe in Nietzsche’s Middle Period

A perennial danger of periodisation is that the attempt to divide an author’s body of work into discrete, thematically distinct blocks can conceal the common features that the respective periods share. This is certainly the case with Nietzsche. His renunciation by 1878 of the ‘Artisten-Metaphysik’ of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, combined with his decidedly more sympathetic view towards science, could lead one to infer that at this stage of his life Nietzsche completely abandoned the ideals and assumptions that had sustained him during the first half of the decade. This interpretation gains further credence if one regards Nietzsche’s shifting philosophical standpoint as nothing more than a reaction to events in the outside world. *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* is sometimes described as marking a double

emancipation: as the work in which Nietzsche frees himself from the influence of both Wagner and Schopenhauer. The growing disillusionment with Wagner that intensified following Nietzsche's attendance at the first Bayreuth festival in 1876, coupled with his now undisguised antipathy towards Schopenhauer's metaphysics,²⁷ makes it very tempting to herald the publication of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* as the start of a radical new beginning in both Nietzsche's life and philosophy.

Yet, as the first half of this chapter has demonstrated, Nietzsche remained staunch in his commitment to the two key themes from his earlier *Bildungsphilosophie*: firstly, his insistence on mankind's need for both science *and* art (or reason and instinct) that leads to creativity; and secondly the ideal of perpetual self-development (or self-overcoming), which presupposes individual autonomy and an opposition to the idea of absolute truth. All of these are present in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, and all continue to serve as the hinge of Nietzsche's *Goethebild*.

In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* Nietzsche continues to observe the distinction between author and work that informs the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, and which was discussed in the preceding chapter. Nietzsche's overwhelmingly positive view of Goethe as a person continues to exist alongside substantial reservations about Goethe's works. Some of these complaints are new, including a comment in 'Der Wanderer und sein Schatten' where Nietzsche laments the supposed failings of Goethe's prose style (WS 214). Others, however, are familiar from Nietzsche's early works, including his strong dislike of *Faust*. It was shown in the previous chapter that in his writing from the first half of the 1870s, this dislike tends to focus more on Nietzsche's identification of the character Faust with the theoretical

²⁷ See MA 26, which was quoted above. In one of the first maxims from *Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche*, Nietzsche also describes Schopenhauer's belief in the 'unalterable' character as an error. (See VM 5)

or scholarly man. In his middle period, however, this criticism goes to the root of his fundamental disagreement with Goethe's *Weltanschauung*:

Die Faust-Idee. – Eine kleine Nähterin wird verführt und unglücklich gemacht; ein grosser Gelehrter aller vier Fakultäten ist der Übeltäter. Das kann doch nicht mit rechten Dingen zugegangen sein? Nein, gewiss nicht! Ohne die Beihilfe des leibhaftigen Teufels hätte es der grosse Gelehrte nicht zustande gebracht.[...] Goethe sagt einmal, für das eigentlich Tragische sei seine Natur zu konzilient gewesen (WS 124).

This disapproval of Goethe's 'conciliatory' nature recalls Nietzsche's claims in the *Nachlass* that Goethe's vision of Greece was 'weich und unmännlich' (NF 1874, 32, 67) and that he had used poetry as a facade to protect himself from 'volle Erkenntniß'. (NF 1870, 5, 49) In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* Nietzsche is prepared to accept the general expediency of such self-deception, recognising that most people require some sort of distraction – whether art, religion or metaphysics – with which to allay the horrors of unadorned reality. The standards that Nietzsche sets for the genius, however, are more exacting. Goethe's supposed failure to confront the terrible truth of existence remains problematic for Nietzsche throughout his works, and *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* – the work in which Nietzsche seeks to decisively expose the fallacy behind man's various mythological analgesics – is clearly no exception.

This notwithstanding, Nietzsche's respect for Goethe clearly remains intact. In the final aphorism of *Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche*, Nietzsche places Goethe in a select group of eight paired philosophers and artists whose opinions and judgements he is willing to respect, if not always to accept:

Epikur und Montaigne, Goethe und Spinoza, Plato und Rousseau, Pascal und Schopenhauer. Mit diesen muss ich mich auseinandersetzen, wenn ich lange

allein gewandert bin, von ihnen will ich mir Recht und Unrecht geben lassen, ihnen will ich zuhören, wenn sie sich dabei selber untereinander Recht und Unrecht geben [...] (VM 408).

Goethe also receives generous praise elsewhere in these works. On the whole, this praise is linked to the themes described so far: firstly, Goethe's autonomy and refusal to accept either ideological or scientific absolutism which allows him to serve as a paradigm of self-cultivation; and secondly, his desire to incorporate the various human faculties within his personality which results in creativity.

As was shown in the previous chapter, Nietzsche's early works located Goethe far above the concerns of national interest. Nietzsche dismissed those who posited Germany, or indeed any individual state, as the most deserving beneficiary of human endeavour or even as the ultimate justification of existence. For Nietzsche, Goethe stood as a potent symbol against the narrow-mindedness of state-worship, and as someone who rejected the limits that such attitudes invariably impose on the individual.

Goethe performs the same function in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*. Once again, Nietzsche invokes him in order to illustrate a weakness that he perceives in the German character and to exhort the Germans to rise above the confines of their national identity:

Es sind die wahrhaft Unerträglichen, von denen man selbst das Gute nicht annehmen mag, welche *Freiheit der Gesinnung* haben, aber nicht merken, dass es ihnen an *Geschmacks-* und *Geistes-Freiheit* fehlt. Gerade dies ist aber, nach Goethes wohlerwogenem Urteil, *deutsch*. – Seine Stimme und sein Beispiel weisen darauf hin, dass der Deutsche *mehr sein* müsse als ein

Deutscher, wenn er den andern Nationen nützlich, ja nur erträglich werden wolle (VM 302).

In claiming that the Germans have no ‘freedom of taste’ or ‘freedom of spirit’, he alludes to the *Bildungsphilister*, whose aesthetic preferences are decided by his political or social loyalties. Nietzsche claims that both Goethe’s works and his life indicate that it is not sufficient to be German and nothing more. One’s nationality – and the customs, traditions or beliefs that are associated with it – can be a legitimate component of one’s character and may contribute to the person that one becomes. Yet Nietzsche fears that this relationship is all too often turned on its head and the person becomes the servant of a state or ideology. It should be stressed that Nietzsche is not concerned with the ethical implications of an overbearing state. He instead sees it in terms of life affirmation: by refusing to commit oneself irrevocably to something, one remains alive to life’s possibility and *wholeness*. It is a question of not truncating one’s potential in order to develop.

Nietzsche contends that the vast majority of people sacrifice this personal autonomy in favour of devotion to a country or an idea. They also expect others to do the same, and are accustomed to judging their fellow men on the basis of shared or conflicting allegiances. The free spirit, whose only loyalty is to himself, defies such easy categorisation and is therefore condemned, in Nietzsche’s view, to be eternally misunderstood. Goethe’s indifference to his nationality and his compatriots is an example of this, in that it allegedly placed an unbridgeable gulf between him and his countrymen:

Goethe that den Deutschen nicht noth, daher sie auch von ihm keinen Gebrauch zu machen wissen. Man sehe sich die besten unserer Staatsmänner

und Künstler daraufhin an: sie alle haben Goethe nicht zum Erzieher gehabt,
— nicht haben können (WS 107).

Nietzsche believes that in order to ‘make use’ of Goethe, German statesmen and artists have effaced his most valuable attributes. In another passage from *Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche*, he relates the history of Goethe reception in Germany as a catalogue of incomprehension and exploitation at the hands of various interested parties: he alleges that the Romantics, the Hegelians and the nationalists in their turn had all appropriated and distorted Goethe’s legacy to suit their particular requirements (VM 170). Yet in spite of their efforts, Nietzsche insists that Goethe still ‘stands above’ the Germans and would never belong to them (ibid.). For to understand Goethe was to share his cosmopolitan and adventurous spirit, which Nietzsche insists is highly unusual: ‘Ihm folgte eine *sehr kleine* Schar Höchstgebildeter, durch Altertum, Leben und Reisen Erzogener, über deutsches Wesen hinaus Gewachsener:—er selber wollte es nicht anders.’ (ibid.) It is this resolve to be educated by life – rather than impose a pre-existing ideological or philosophical framework upon it – that is the mark of the free spirit and of Goethe.

Nietzsche argues that Goethe’s unassailable individualism had ultimately thwarted attempts by these various groups to assimilate him into the system by which they made sense of the world. Indeed, Nietzsche suggests that Goethe’s independence of spirit was so formidable that he had ultimately succeeded in creating his own culture, which is an achievement that Nietzsche simultaneously celebrates and laments. He is in awe of the heights to which Goethe climbed, far above the foothills of modish literary movements and national canons. Yet he also despairs that Goethe had so far failed to produce any successors: not men who would follow him blindly

and accept his every word, but who would be inspired by his example to be master of their own fate and leave their own distinctive impression:

Von Goethe, wie angedeutet, sehe ich ab, er gehört in eine höhere Gattung von Litteraturen, als 'National-Litteraturen' sind [...] Nur für wenige hat er gelebt und lebt er noch: für die meisten ist er nichts als eine Fanfare der Eitelkeit, welche man von Zeit zu Zeit über die deutsche Grenze hinüberbläst. Goethe, nicht nur ein guter und grosser Mensch, sondern eine Cultur, Goethe ist in der Geschichte der Deutschen ein Zwischenfall ohne Folgen (WS 125).

Goethe's singularity – his refusal to pander to fashion or to lend his name to a movement or cause – made him inimitable. A true follower of Goethe, therefore, is someone who seeks to emulate his uniqueness. Yet Nietzsche is convinced that German intellectual life since Goethe has been characterised by a decline in personal autonomy, and that the art produced in this period has tended to be the articulation of a collective longing rather than an assertion of individual genius. In the same aphorism, Nietzsche writes: 'Aber *Klassiker* sind nicht *Anpflanzer* von intellektuellen und literarischen Tugenden, sondern *Vollender* und höchste Lichtspitzen derselben, welche über den Völkern stehen bleiben, wenn diese selber zugrundegehen: denn sie sind leichter, freier, reiner als sie' (ibid.). A truly classical culture, he suggests, must rise above the mundane affairs of nations, peoples and governments, for this is the only way that it can avoid obsolescence. If it is to act as a monument for future generations, it cannot limit itself to the needs and circumstances of a particular age.

In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* Nietzsche introduces another aspect of Goethe's defiantly independent character that will acquire even greater significance in the later works from the 1880s. He describes Goethe, together with Homer, Shakespeare and Aeschylus among others, as profoundly unreligious and therefore

capable of dealing with theological issues with ‘Unbefangenheit’ (MA 125). At this stage Nietzsche’s criticism of religion lacks the virulence that one finds in his later works. This relative tolerance is evinced by his claim that although man should look to move beyond religion and metaphysics, they nevertheless represent the ‘besten Ergebnisse der bisherigen Menschheit’ (MA 20). Yet he is also convinced that religious belief and the morality that it prescribes can impose checks and controls on human potential in the same way as patriotism or political allegiances. These great artists, including Goethe, are depicted as being able to interact with religion from a position of strength, rather than allowing it to ordain their character or their understanding of the world. The simile that Nietzsche uses to illustrate this point is striking: he suggests that these writers treat religion in the same way that a sculptor treats his clay.²⁸ As the previous chapters have shown, Nietzsche believes that typically the relationship is reversed and men habitually allow themselves to be manipulated by forces – whether religious, political or economic – whose authority Nietzsche views as both specious and harmful.

Nietzsche not only opposes the thoughtless devotion to a particular ‘truth’, but also suggests that error can be a vital constituent of self-development. In ‘Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche’, he uses Goethe to support this claim in an aphorism entitled ‘Goethes Irrungen’ (VM 227). Nietzsche is adamant that Goethe’s forays into the world of science and the plastic arts were doomed from the start because he lacked the requisite ability to be successful. Yet he refuses to condemn these non-literary aspirations as naïve or hubristic, arguing that without such digressions Goethe would never have become the man he was: ‘das heisst, der einzige deutsche Künstler der Schrift, der jetzt noch nicht veraltet ist – weil er ebensowenig Schriftsteller als

²⁸ ‘Wie der Bildhauer mit seinem Thon’ (MA 125).

Deutscher von Beruf sein wollte' (ibid.). Nietzsche suggests that these experiences imbued Goethe's art with a timelessness that eluded his contemporaries, even if it also goes without saying that he praises Goethe for eventually having realised that he was ill-suited to painting or science, and suggests that it was his rationality that enabled him to break free from the folly of these passions:

Endlich entdeckte er, der Besonnene, allem Wahnschaffnen an sich ehrlich Abholde, wie ein trügerischer Kobold von Begierde ihn zum Glauben an diesen Beruf gereizt habe, wie er von der grössten Leidenschaft seines Wollens sich losbinden und *Abschied* nehmen müsse (ibid.).

Unlike the artists that Nietzsche criticises in *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches*, Goethe did not make the mistake of dedicating himself solely and unequivocally to his specialist talent. Nor did he try to project the view of existence that he acquired through the prism of literature onto the wider world: 'Goethe ist darin die grosse Ausnahme unter den grossen Künstlern, dass er nicht in der *Borniertheit seines wirklichen Vermögens* lebte, als ob dasselbe an ihm selber und für alle Welt das Wesentliche und Auszeichnende, das Unbedingte und Letzte sein müsse' (ibid.). This flexibility enabled him to assimilate new experiences and ideas without their shattering his sense of self. The importance of this concept is stressed by Nehamas, who describes Nietzschean self-cultivation as: 'a matter of incorporating ever more character traits under a constantly expanding and evolving rubric [...] Everything I have ever done is instrumental in being who I am today.'²⁹ Life is seen here as a perpetual heuristic process, which precludes the complacency of assuming that a single interpretation of the world can be universally valid.

²⁹ Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 183-4.

In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* Goethe is portrayed as being unusually well-equipped for the task of self-cultivation. His ‘powers of expansion’ are highlighted and contrasted with those of the majority, who are accused by Nietzsche of stagnating once they reach the age of thirty:

Die Stärke und Schwäche der geistigen Productivität hängt lange nicht so an der angeerbten Begabung, als an dem mitgegebenen Maasse von *Spannkraft*. Die meisten jungen Gebildeten von dreissig Jahren gehen um diese Frühsonnenwende ihres Lebens zurück und sind für neue geistige Wendungen von da an unlustig.[...] Sehr spannkraftige Männer, wie zum Beispiel Goethe, durchmessen so viel als kaum vier Generationen hinter einander vermögen. (MA 272)

In the same passage Nietzsche traces what he takes to be the developmental path followed by the average man. He suggests that most people gradually renounce mythical artifice as they get older and are progressively hardened by knowledge. Firstly they abandon their religious beliefs, followed by their trust in the metaphysical postulates offered by philosophers. Finally, as they are gripped by the rigour of the ‘wissenschaftliche Sinn’, art also loses the ability to influence or captivate them and it is granted an ‘immer mildere und anspruchslosere Bedeutung’ (ibid.).

It must be emphasised that Nietzsche does not see this gradual dissipation of innocence as wholly desirable. He refers to the scientific spirit that ordinarily comes to dominate in adulthood as ‘gebieterisch’ (ibid.) It has already been shown that Nietzsche strongly criticises the tendency to allow a particular mode of thought or facet of existence to determine our character or worldview in their entirety. An ‘imperious’ scientific sense threatens to do just this, which brings us to the second

central theme that underpins Nietzsche's depiction of Goethe: the importance of wholeness and the continued importance of art and creativity.

It has been shown above that in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, Nietzsche associated art with the flight from reason or an overindulgence of the passions. Yet it was also argued that this decision to rank rationality above creativity does not obviate the need for the latter. Instead he outlines his admiration for a particular type of creative drive: one that originates in plenitude rather than weakness. This latter issue is dealt with in a section of *Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche* entitled 'Kunstbedürfnis zweiten Ranges' (VM 169). Here Nietzsche acknowledges that there still exist men who possess a need for art 'in hohem Stile', but insists that they are rare exceptions. He argues that art in nineteenth-century Germany is more commonly the refuge of dilettantes, who see art as a source of solace:

Und was begehren sie eigentlich von der Kunst? Sie soll ihnen für Stunden und Augenblicke das Unbehagen, die Langeweile, das halbschlechte Gewissen verscheuchen und womöglich den Fehler ihres Lebens und Charakters als Fehler des Welten-Schicksals ins Grosse umdeuten – sehr verschieden von den Griechen, welche in ihrer Kunst das Aus- und Überströmen ihres eignen Wohl- und Gesundseins empfanden und es liebten, ihre Vollkommenheit *noch einmal* ausser sich zu sehen: – sie führte der Selbstgenuss zur Kunst, diese unsere Zeitgenossen – der Selbstverdruss (ibid.).

In this particular instance Nietzsche uses the Greeks as an example of 'healthy' art which is the result of superfluity. It is apparent from other sections of the text, however, that he regards Goethe's creativity as emanating from the same abundance. In 'Anzeichen höherer und niederer Kultur', Nietzsche distances Goethe from the artists who surrender to the rapture of emotions. He quotes Goethe directly as saying

that reason and science are man's '*allerhöchste Kraft*' (MA 265, emphasis in original). Nietzsche expands on this image in 'Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche', where he argues that Goethe – together with Homer, Sophocles, Theocritus, Calderón and Racine – produce art that originates in the surplus of a harmonious approach to life. He contrasts this to the indulgence of the passions that supposedly characterizes young artists: 'jene barbarische, wenngleich noch so entzückende Aussprudlung hitziger und bunter Dinge aus einer ungebändigten, chaotischen Seele, welche wir früher als Jünglinge unter Kunst verstanden' (VM 173). This rash impetuosity is a natural and necessary corollary of youth, he suggests, but must be superseded by the more measured demeanour that he attributes to Goethe. Although Nietzsche does not make explicit reference to the Sturm und Drang or Goethe's early work on this occasion, the course that he delineates – from 'eine Kunst der Überspannung, der Erregung, des Widerwillens gegen das Geregelte, Eintönige, Einfache, Logische' to an art of harmonious superfluity – strongly evokes the story of Goethe's life. One may also speculate that Nietzsche's self-reflection informs this passage: that he saw himself as undergoing a similar process of maturation that required him to leave behind both his reverential attitude towards art and his devotion to Wagner and Schopenhauer.

Chapter Six

Self-Creation and ‘Totalität’: Nietzsche’s Goethe, 1882-1888

It has been demonstrated above that Nietzsche’s faith in the ideas of autonomous personal development (‘Freiheit’) and creative productivity (‘Fruchtbarkeit’), together with his overwhelmingly positive image of Goethe, survives the changes that differentiate the works of his ‘middle period’ from those that he wrote prior to 1878. It was also shown that Nietzsche’s *Goethebild* continues to incorporate and symbolise these ideas of ‘Freiheit’ and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’, and that the recurrence of these motifs reveals a remarkable consistency in Nietzsche’s thought that exists alongside the alterations and revisions, and which to some extent explains them.

The present chapter will extend this argument by showing that not only do these ideas withstand the ‘changes in temper’¹ of Nietzsche’s middle period (1878-1882), but that they are just as crucial to his ‘late’ or ‘mature’ philosophy, which, according to the scheme first established by Salomé, begins with *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883-85) and ends with Nietzsche’s collapse in Turin in January 1889.

The structure of this chapter will mirror that of Chapter Five, beginning with an exploration of Nietzsche’s treatment of ‘Freiheit’ or independence in his late period. It will show that the desire so frequently expressed in his early work on *Bildung* – to liberate men from the fixed beliefs or ‘Halbgötter’ that prevent their further growth and development – persists in his late writings. Having established the significance of ‘Freiheit’ for his later philosophy, we will then investigate his continued efforts to discredit German political nationalism, which, as the previous chapters have demonstrated, was one particular ‘demi-god’ that he had consistently opposed since the early 1870s. Fifteen years after German unification, Nietzsche still believes

¹ Abbey, *Nietzsche’s Middle Period*, p. xii.

that deference to the Reich tends to inculcate certain ways of behaving and thinking, and to promote the narrowness of character and outlook that he despises. His hostility to the ‘Engen’ (JGB 241) of nationalism is particularly pronounced in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, which he introduces in the preface as a work for the ‘guter Europäer’ (JGB Vorrede) who will supposedly transcend the limits of chauvinism. An entire chapter of the book, entitled ‘Völker und Vaterländer’, is devoted to what Nietzsche sees as the particular limitations of ‘Germanness’ (although Nietzsche also finds space within it to denounce the English)² and to the expression of Nietzsche’s broader desire that nationalism should be declared obsolete:

Dank der krankhaften Entfremdung, welche der Nationalitäts-Wahnsinn zwischen die Völker Europa's gelegt hat und noch legt, Dank ebenfalls den Politikern des kurzen Blicks und der raschen Hand [...] – Dank Alledem und manchem heute ganz Unaussprechbaren werden jetzt die unzweideutigsten Anzeichen übersehn oder willkürlich und lügenhaft umgedeutet, in denen sich ausspricht, dass *Europa Eins werden will* (JGB 256).

It is not only Nietzsche’s notion of independence or ‘Freiheit’ in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* and *Götzen-Dämmerung* that recalls his earlier work. There is also much that is familiar in his remarks on the relationship between truth, knowledge and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’, and also in his argument that by fetishising truth, we fail to be either independent or fruitful. In the chapter from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* entitled ‘Wir Gelehrten’, he attacks scholars in a style strongly reminiscent of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. He challenges their ‘Selbstverherrlichung’

² ‘Das ist keine philosophische Rasse – diese Engländer: Bacon bedeutet einen *Angriff* auf den philosophischen Geist überhaupt, Hobbes, Hume und Locke eine Erniedrigung und Werth-Minderung des Begriffs "Philosoph" für mehr als ein Jahrhundert [...] Woran es in England fehlt und immer gefehlt hat, das wusste jener Halb-Schauspieler und Rhetor gut genug, der abgeschmackte Wirrkopf Carlyle, welcher es unter leidenschaftlichen Fratzen zu verbergen suchte, was er von sich selbst wusste: nämlich woran es in Carlyle *fehlte* – an eigentlicher *Macht* der Geistigkeit, an eigentlicher *Tiefe* des geistigen Blicks, kurz, an Philosophie’ (JGB 252).

(JGB 204) and their reverence for objectivity (JGB 207), and reintroduces the dichotomy from *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* of the dry, barren ‘wissenschaftliche Durchschnittsmensch’ and the productive genius (JGB 206), arguing that the former is only of value to the extent that he can serve the latter: ‘[Der Gelehrte] gehört in die Hand eines Mächtigeren’ (JGB 207). In *Götzen-Dämmerung* he targets Socrates in a fashion that recalls the sustained polemic in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, describing him as a ‘Verfalls-Symptom’ (GD ‘Sokrates’, 2) whose preoccupation with dialectics and ‘Superföatation des Logischen’ (GD ‘Sokrates’, 4) was proof of his decadence.

Nietzsche’s protest against the quasi-deification of knowledge is unchanged. So too, however, is his belief that the desire to acquire truth is so deeply ingrained within our character that it is a question of harnessing or redirecting this desire rather than trying to subdue it. In the opening chapter of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, ‘Von der Vorurtheilen der Philosophen’, he alludes to the trouble that the will to truth has caused philosophers and thinkers throughout history: ‘Der Wille zur Wahrheit, der uns noch zu manchem Wagnisse verführen wird [...] was für Fragen hat dieser Wille zur Wahrheit uns schon vorgelegt! Welche wunderlichen schlimmen fragwürdigen Fragen! Das ist bereits eine lange Geschichte’ (JGB 1). Yet in spite of these problems and what Nietzsche sees as the inescapable subjectivity of philosophy – including his own – it becomes clear that he does not wish to dispense with the will to truth, or even to blunt its edge. He claims that the philosophers of the future, to whom the book is addressed, will probably be ‘Freunde der “Wahrheit” (JGB 43) in the way that every philosopher in the past had been. His concern, as elsewhere, is with ‘das Problem vom Werthe der Wahrheit’ (JGB 1) [emphasis added – JG] and how we may best make use of our all-too-human thirst for knowledge about existence and the world.

The chapter will conclude by examining Nietzsche's *Goethebild* from this period and showing that it remains inseparable from these two themes. It will demonstrate that Nietzsche maintains and strengthens his view of Goethe as a beacon of independence and fruitfulness, in a way that is remarkably consistent with his early works. This coherence is most forcefully conveyed by a remarkable section from 'Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemässen' in *Götzen-dämmerung*, in which the various strands of Nietzsche's *Goethebild* that have been identified in this thesis are pulled together in the form of an extended tribute.

The chapter's analysis will be based on a study of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* and *Götzen-Dämmerung*. There are two main reasons for choosing to concentrate on these texts. The first is that of all the writings that comprise Nietzsche's late period, it is in these two that he most often mentions Goethe. The second is that a study of these two works allows us to trace the evolution of Nietzsche's thinking during this period, and to highlight common threads that run through it and throughout his philosophy as a whole. The four parts of *Also sprach Zarathustra* were published between 1883 and 1885, and while it is undoubtedly one of his most influential texts, it does not lend itself to the purpose of this study. Its semi-fictional character and its narrative voice – which Nietzsche assigns to Zarathustra – place it in a different category to Nietzsche's more obviously discursive works of his late period. More importantly, *Also sprach Zarathustra* does not contain any explicit references to Goethe. This makes it something of an anomaly, and for the purposes of this discussion it will be far more fruitful to focus on *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* – which was the first work that Nietzsche published after he completed *Zarathustra* – and *Götzen-Dämmerung*, which he wrote over the course of a week at the end of the summer of 1888.

The third and final phase of Nietzsche's writing life is the one in which, as Poellner rightly argues, he 'developed most of the ideas which are usually associated with his name and for which he is best known'.³ Other critics have been more forceful in asserting its significance for students of Nietzsche's work. Löwith insists that Nietzsche produced his 'eigentliche Philosophie'⁴ during this period, as does Schacht, who describes it as signalling the onset of Nietzsche's 'philosophical maturity'.⁵

Reducing the first decade of Nietzsche's published writing to the status of a preface or extended draft is highly questionable. Yet this is not to deny the richness of his late works, or the lasting fascination and intense scrutiny they have elicited. As well as containing such famous Nietzschean themes as the Will to Power, the *Übermensch* and the master/slave dichotomy, these texts – which in addition to those already mentioned include *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887) and *Der Antichrist* (1888) – exemplify what Reginster describes as the 'bewildering variety'⁶ of Nietzsche's work. They cover an astonishing array of topics, including Christianity, morality and the history of Western philosophy, as well as the subjects that have been investigated in this thesis so far: the function of art, the limits and purpose of knowledge, the lessons that we can learn from history, and the pernicious effects of German political nationalism on culture and the individual.

This chapter will not suggest that Nietzsche's treatment of these subjects during the 1880s is guided solely by his notions of 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit', or that these two ideas account for his full range of 'mature' doctrines in all their remarkable diversity and complexity.

³ Peter Poellner, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 1.

⁴ Karl Löwith, 'Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen', in *Sämtliche Schriften*, VI (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987), p. 125.

⁵ Schacht, *Nietzsche*, p. xiii. Schacht deviates from Salomé's tripartite model and divides Nietzsche's oeuvre into two, arguing that Nietzsche's mature philosophy begins with *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*.

⁶ Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 4.

It will show, however, that in his later writings Nietzsche still sees both ideas as central to his philosophical project, and that his explanation of their meaning and implications has much in common with his earlier work on *Bildung*. Amidst the ‘studied disorderliness’⁷ of Nietzsche’s books from the 1880s and the panoply of theories, critiques and polemics vying for our attention, one can clearly discern his strong belief that the individual should avoid any form of heteronomous commitment, including any kind of normative values, that constrains his ability to develop. He also continues to insist that man must act and create rather than merely know, and that knowledge and the desire to acquire it are of value only to the extent that they make action possible.

1. ‘Freiheit’ in Nietzsche’s Late Period

In his study of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Lampert argues that: ‘After completing *Zarathustra* Nietzsche had a clear grasp of his next task [...] he had to write a new book for free minds’.⁸ He also suggests that in light of this ambition and its influence on the genesis of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, we would do better to group the work thematically with the three books that preceded *Also sprach Zarathustra*: ‘*Beyond Good and Evil* belongs, anachronistically, to the series of books written for the free mind before *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the series that came to an end with *The Gay Science*’.⁹

This is not the place to tackle the thorny topic of periodisation, which, as has already been mentioned, is extremely complex in a body of writing as large and manifold as Nietzsche’s. Where we can agree with Lampert, however, is in his emphasis on Nietzsche’s continued wish to

⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

⁸ Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Task. An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 5.

⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

speak to free minds or spirits. As well as being a devastating ‘Kritik der Modernität’ (EH JGB, 2), to borrow Nietzsche’s retrospective description of the text in *Ecce Homo*, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* also addresses the people that Nietzsche believes will be the heralds of the philosophy of the future.¹⁰ He reveals their identity at the end of the work’s preface: they are the ‘freien, *sehr* freien Geister’ (JGB Vorrede) who still feel ‘die ganze Noth des Geistes und die ganze Spannung seines Bogens!’ (ibid.).

The importance of this ‘need’ and the ‘tension of its bow’ will be addressed in the discussion of ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ below. Firstly, however, it is necessary to examine Nietzsche’s notion of the free spirit in his later philosophy and to prove, rather than merely assume, that it is largely in line with his early theory of *Bildung* and with the free spirit whom he addresses in *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches* and *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*. Even though it is a term that Nietzsche has often used before, we should take heed of the warning in the ‘Nachgesang’ at the end of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* which underlines his unchanging belief in perpetual change and demands caution of any Nietzsche scholar: ‘Nur wer sich wandelt, bleibt mit mir verwandt’ (JGB Nachgesang).

The second chapter of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* is called ‘Der freie Geist’ and is correctly described by Lampert as the most important in the whole book.¹¹ Although the title appears relatively straightforward, the discussion that it contains is both complex and crucial to understanding Nietzsche’s notion of ‘Freiheit’. Nietzsche’s argument is far from systematic and contains digressions that appear at best tenuously related to the title, including a passage on the problem of accurately translating one language into another (JGB 28). Nietzsche recognises the difficulty of his discursive style, but claims that the mark of our ‘höchsten Einsichten’ (JGB 30)

¹⁰ The subtitle of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* is *Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft*.

¹¹ Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Task*, p. 61.

is that their meaning is not immediately or widely understood. He insists that a philosophy concerned with the ‘höhere Art von Menschen’ (ibid.) must be esoteric; these rare individuals supposedly have needs and desires that are irreconcilable with those of the ‘gemeiner Mann’ (ibid.) and what they require as ‘Nahrung’ (ibid.) will therefore inevitably confuse and anger the great majority.

In spite of Nietzsche’s belief in change and his conscious embrace of the arcane, it is possible to identify a number of ideas and modes of expression in his portrayal of ‘der freie Geist’ that echo his thoughts on freedom and independence in his earlier works. This chapter of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* will therefore provide the anchor for our analysis of ‘Freiheit’ in Nietzsche’s late period, although we will corroborate our findings with passages from elsewhere in the work and from *Götzen-Dämmerung*.

The longest and most lucid description of the free spirit comes in the final section of the chapter, which Nietzsche uses to summarise some of the points and arguments that he makes more obliquely in the preceding pages. His decision to place it here rather than at the beginning – where it could help to prepare the reader for what is to come and shed light on some of the more difficult passages – is in keeping with his preference for ‘das Esoterische’ (ibid.) and his conviction that the people for whom his philosophy is intended will be able to read between the lines. It is also linked to a dilemma that Nietzsche acknowledges in the final section before he embarks on this description: how can he posit the archetype of the free spirit as an ideal without lapsing into the ‘moderne Ideologie und Heerden-Wünschbarkeit’ (JGB 44) that he expressly condemns, and to which the free spirit should be an ‘Antipode’ (ibid.)? This concern prompts him to ask rhetorically: ‘Was Wunder, dass wir “freien Geister” nicht gerade die mittheilsamsten

Geister sind? dass wir nicht in jedem Betrachte zu verrathen wünschen, *wovon* ein Geist sich frei machen kann und *wohin* er dann vielleicht getrieben wird?’ (ibid.).

Having demonstrated his awareness of this issue as a potential bone of contention, Nietzsche then proceeds to list some of the free spirits’ qualities and identify some of the obstacles and temptations that they must negotiate. He refuses, however, to assign the free spirit a specific purpose or goal: he will not be drawn on the question of ‘*wohin*’, because to answer it would be to undermine the very nature of his project. Nor, crucially, does he simply equate the free spirit with the philosophers of the future, which could have been interpreted as a categorical or teleological statement about the nature of human existence. He undoubtedly believes that these philosophers will be free and independent because, as has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters, he regards this as a prerequisite for avoiding slavish conformity and as something that will stop these philosophers from simply replacing existing doctrines and prejudices with new ones. Yet he is just as certain that they will possess other strengths and attributes that he is unable to envisage, and which would render any attempt to define them by their independence alone as both prescriptive and inadequate. Nietzsche is adamant that he cannot predict exactly – much less dictate – what these future individuals will be like, and argues that he would do them a disservice by presuming to guess:

Brauche ich nach alledem noch eigens zu sagen, dass auch sie freie, *sehr* freie Geister sein werden, diese Philosophen der Zukunft, – so gewiss sie auch nicht bloss freie Geister sein werden, sondern etwas Mehreres, Höheres, Grösseres und Gründlich-Anderes, das nicht verkannt und verwechselt werden will? (JGB 44).

The necessity of this circumspection becomes apparent when we consider Nietzsche’s description of the free spirits’ character traits, and when we remember that he views himself as a

free spirit and is therefore obliged to abide by his own non-dogmatic standard.¹² He claims that men of his ilk are ‘neugierig bis zum Laster’ and engaged in a relentless ‘Wanderschaft’ (ibid.): they evade the ‘dumpfe und angenehme Winkeln’ (ibid.) that Nietzsche uses as a metaphor to describe the intellectual, moral and behavioural customs that are imposed upon us by the circumstances of our life and which we often transform into a restrictive orthodoxy¹³ that prevents our further development. The free spirit also shuns financial reward and professional success because of the ‘Lockmittel der Abhängigkeit’ (ibid.) that comes with them, or which is required to obtain them in the first place. He is even grateful to ‘Noth und wechselreiche Krankheit’ (ibid.) because the trauma of such events can break his obedience to ‘irgend eine Regel’ (ibid.) and free him from the prejudice or narrowness that supposedly stem from conformity.

This inexhaustible curiosity and restlessness places clear limits on the claims that either free spirits or philosophers of the future can make for their particular view of the world. If they refuse to treat anyone else’s ‘rule’ as absolute or eternally binding, and if they regard themselves as ‘Forscher’ (ibid.) who constantly subject our assumptions and intuitions to ruthless scrutiny, then they cannot expect – or hope – that their own opinions will be affirmed as true in any lasting sense. To do so would be merely to relocate the problem of dogmatism, rather than solve it.

Nietzsche recognises this and argues that not only will the philosophers of the future eschew pretensions to universal truth, but that they will be offended at the very suggestion that their theories have an all-embracing validity: ‘Es muss ihnen wider den Stolz gehn, auch wider den Geschmack, wenn ihre Wahrheit gar noch eine Wahrheit für Jedermann sein soll: was bisher

¹² Nietzsche repeatedly uses the first person plural when talking about the free spirit. In this very section, for example, he refers to ‘wir freien Geister’ (JGB 44).

¹³ Eagleton describes this as the tendency to impose ‘self-referentially a law at one with [...] immediate experience’. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 20.

der geheime Wunsch und Hintersinn aller dogmatischen Bestrebungen war' (JGB 43). Instead of groping for the ultimate truth of human existence and regarding its acquisition as their defining goal, the new breed of philosophers will be 'Philosophen des gefährlichen Vielleicht' (JGB 2) who remain open to possibility and accepting of the fact that their theories will be refined, restated or rejected.¹⁴ As Richardson argues in relation to this aspect of Nietzsche's thought: 'The new knower's truth is *hypothetical*, not certain. It lacks the transparent sureness often claimed by metaphysicians [...] [it] does not presume that it cannot be improved'.¹⁵ Nehamas also stresses this point, and makes clear that this open-mindedness does not inevitably lead to a debilitating crisis of confidence: 'Nietzsche's opposition to dogmatism does not consist in the paradoxical idea that it is wrong to think that one's beliefs are true, but only in the view that one's beliefs are not, and need not be, true for everyone'.¹⁶

The avowed anti-didacticism and individualism that Nietzsche attributes to the philosopher – "Mein Urtheil ist *mein* Urtheil: dazu hat nicht leicht auch ein Anderer das Recht" (JGB 43) – coexists with his belief that the philosopher must also contribute to the 'Erhöhung des Typus "Mensch"' (JGB 257). The relationship between these two ideas in Nietzsche's late work closely resembles his description of education as 'Befreiung' (UB III, 1) in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, which was discussed in Chapter Two. Nietzsche insists that the 'höhere Exemplar' (UB III, 6) – whether the 'Philosoph' of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* or the educator of his early work – must remain independent and suspicious of "letzte und eigentliche" Meinungen' (JGB 289) in order to safeguard his own self-development and to ensure that he can provide a model of autonomy for his 'pupils'. Yet he cannot live in complete isolation if he is to serve as a model:

¹⁴ Or as Nietzsche states in 'Von den Vorurtheilen der Philosophen': 'An einer Theorie ist wahrhaftig nicht ihr geringster Reiz, dass sie widerlegbar ist: gerade damit zieht sie feinere Köpfe an' (JGB 18).

¹⁵ Richardson, *Nietzsche's System*, pp. 285-6.

¹⁶ Nehamas, *Nietzsche. Life as Literature*, p. 33.

his value as a paradigm would be negated by his anonymity, and total seclusion would prevent him from learning about the values and idols to which men devote themselves, and which it is his duty to free them from.

Nietzsche pithily expresses this idea in a short aphorism from *Götzen-Dämmerung*, where he asks his reader: ‘Du läufst *voran*? – Thust du das als Hirt? oder als Ausnahme? Ein dritter Fall wäre der Entlaufene ... *Erste Gewissensfrage*’ (GD Sprüche und Pfeile, 37). Although he does not say here how a good conscience would answer this question, it is clear from Nietzsche’s works that he can countenance neither the proselytising herdsman nor the deserter. This twofold principle reappears throughout his writing, and is a key link between his early work on *Bildung* and his later philosophy. It therefore requires more detailed investigation, before we can show how the free spirit’s strict non-dogmatism facilitates the kind of continual self-development that Nietzsche describes in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*.

2. The Educator and Self-Cultivation in Nietzsche’s Late Works

Throughout his life Nietzsche repeatedly acknowledges that rare individuals – whether the ‘Erzieher’, the ‘freie Geist’ or the ‘Ausnahme’ – must endure solitude (‘Einsamkeit’ (JGB 25)) as an obvious consequence of their independence. He also maintains, however, that they cannot remain entirely separate from their fellow man. In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, as has been demonstrated, he argues that this detached engagement is necessary for two reasons; firstly, because the educator must be visible (‘sichtbar’ (UB III, 3)) if he is to serve as a ‘Wegweiser’ (UB III, 2) for others; and secondly because a knowledge of ‘Dinge’ (UB III, 7) as they currently stand is necessary if he is to move beyond them.

Nietzsche reiterates the need for ‘Verkehr’ (JGB 26) between the ‘higher’ and ‘average’ man (ibid.) in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, and links it to the same twofold obligation. In the chapter that follows ‘Der freie Geist’, he claims that the philosopher of the future will be responsible for ‘die Gesamt-Entwicklung des Menschen’ (JGB 61) and refers to the philosopher’s task as ‘Züchtungs- und Erziehungswerke’ (ibid.). It is apparent from Nietzsche’s opposition to a ‘Wahrheit für Jedermann’ that his notion of ‘breeding’ excludes rigorous instruction or indoctrination. Yet it evidently does require the exceptional human being to impact upon other people’s thinking and action, which he cannot do if he fully retreats from life.

This ability to exert influence on men also presupposes an understanding of what drives them; knowledge that, according to Nietzsche, can only be acquired through interaction rather than abstract speculation. He concedes that every ‘auserlesene Mensch’ (JGB 26) will instinctively want to break free from other men because they make him feel miserable and disillusioned (ibid.). Yet the philosopher – whom Nietzsche describes as the ‘Erkennender im grossen und ausnahmsweisen Sinne’ (ibid.) – will resist this impulse and rise above his dismay, because he recognises that study of the average man is a ‘nothwendiges Stück’ (ibid.) of his development. Nietzsche puts this idea somewhat more poetically in a subsequent passage, where he identifies the ability to overcome the temptation of remoteness as a mark of one’s fitness for independence: ‘Nicht an seiner eignen Loslösung hängen bleiben, an jener wollüstigen Ferne und Fremde des Vogels, der immer weiter in die Höhe flieht, um immer mehr unter sich zu sehn: – die Gefahr des Fliegenden’ (JGB 41).

This antipathy to the deserter or the overly introspective ‘Einsiedler’ (UB III, 3) is a constant in Nietzsche’s philosophy. So too is his opposition to the herdsman who would tame mankind and make him kneel before a devitalizing law or ‘truth’. The portrayal of the free spirit

and the ‘Ausnahme’ as unable either to accept or impose rigid principles resonates deeply with Nietzsche’s description of the educator as a ‘Befreier’ (UB III, 1) in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*. Nietzsche’s teacher – for whom, as was shown in Chapters Two and Four, Goethe serves as an example – does not try to convert people to his view of the world, but instead inspires them to pursue their own path by virtue of his independence and untimeliness. His indifference to the ‘Gehalten [sic] und höhere Stellungen’ (UB III, 6) that one acquires at the price of one’s integrity, his challenge to the dominant ‘Formen und Ordnungen’ (UB III, 3) and his hostility towards judgements that have become ‘bequem und gemüthlich’ (ibid.) encourage those that follow him to be similarly autonomous and suspicious of all claims to definitive or sufficient truth. He provides impetus for further change and development through the ‘muthige Sichtbarkeit [s]eines philosophischen Lebens’ (ibid.), rather than ready-formed doctrines to be absorbed and scrupulously adhered to.

We saw in Chapter Two that this independence or ‘Unumschränktheit’ (UB III, 3) – the refusal to align oneself conclusively with a particular ‘truth’ or be its unfailing advocate – is necessary to the perpetual self-cultivation that underpins Nietzsche’s theory of *Bildung* in his early works. In the opening section of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* he argues that if we are too closely attached to something, such as a profession, person or country – if we revere it as a ‘demi-god’ and come to regard its interests and success as paramount – then that object will come to shape our identity and we will no longer be able to control the process of self-cultivation that determines the person we become. We become a representative of a type or class, and are defined by the thing that we recognise as ‘true’ rather than by our own distinctive individuality. This kind of adherence to external authority¹⁷ also leads to the process of self-cultivation being

¹⁷ In a note from 1887, Nietzsche suggests that our custom of deriving our goals and meaning from an external, supra-human authority is a cause of nihilism: ‘Die Frage des Nihilismus “wozu?” geht von der bisherigen

prematurely cut short: we cannot develop further if our response to the people and objects that we encounter – which Nietzsche believes has a decisive impact on the way that our identity evolves – is decided in advance by our deference to the needs and wants of our ‘demi-god’.

The crucial relationship between personal independence and continual self-development is an equally important theme in Nietzsche’s late works, although his discussion of it is no longer limited to the specific context of *Bildung*. Instead, he presents the need to preserve one’s autonomy as a generally valid existential principle. An example of this can be found in a passage from the ‘Der freie Geist’ chapter in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, where he directly links dogmatic beliefs – and the broader fixation with truth as an end in its own right that provides the basis for such beliefs – to an inflexible and therefore heavily circumscribed view of the self. Having warned against the ‘Leiden “um der Wahrheit willen”’ (JGB 25) and argued that the impassioned defence of truth – whether the concept as a whole or a specific manifestation of it – makes men ‘stupid’,¹⁸ Nietzsche insists that we would do better to query both the theories that we hold dear and the self-image that is often tied to them:

Zuletzt wisst ihr gut genug, dass nichts daran liegen darf, ob gerade *ihr* Recht behaltet, ebenfalls dass bisher noch kein Philosoph Recht behalten hat, und dass eine preiswürdigere Wahrhaftigkeit in jedem kleinen Fragezeichen liegen dürfte, welches ihr hinter eure Leibworte und Lieblingslehren (und gelegentlich hinter euch selbst) setzt (ibid).

Nietzsche makes the epistemological point here that no claim to be ‘right’ can be credible because we lack an objective standard against which to measure it; hence his insistence that no

Gewöhnung aus, vermöge deren das Ziel von außen her gestellt, gegeben, gefordert schien – nämlich durch irgend eine *übermenschliche Autorität*’. (NF 1887, 9, 43).

¹⁸ ‘Es verdummt, verthiert und verstiert, wenn ihr im Kampfe mit Gefahr, Verlästerung, Verdächtigung, Ausstossung und noch gröberen Folgen der Feindschaft, zuletzt euch gar als Vertheidiger der Wahrheit auf Erden ausspielen müsst’ (JGB 25).

philosopher has ever successfully found truth. Yet his comment that it would be more ‘praiseworthy’ to challenge our cherished theories, and our stock notion of ‘who we are’, demonstrates his concern with the *value* – as opposed to the legitimacy or justification – of such claims. His opposition to dogmatic truth is motivated more by his belief that it inhibits our self-development and diminishes our individuality than by any desire to disprove all previous and future claims to knowledge.

The image of ‘placing a question mark behind you’ clearly implies the ability to move beyond your current set of beliefs and assumptions, or to ‘overcome’ them. It recalls the passage from *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* in which Nietzsche claims that the various objects (‘Gegenstände (UB III, 1)’) that we encounter during the course of our life both affect the way that we view other objects and have a direct impact upon our character and the formation of the self:

Stelle dir die Reihe dieser verehrten Gegenstände vor dir auf, und vielleicht ergeben sie dir, durch ihr Wesen und ihre Folge, ein Gesetz, das Grundgesetz deines eigentlichen Selbst. Vergleiche diese Gegenstände, sieh, wie einer den andern ergänzt, erweitert, überbietet, verklärt, wie sie eine Stufenleiter bilden, auf welcher du bis jetzt zu dir selbst hingeklettert bist (UB III, 1).

To reflect on the nature of our relationship with objects – which is what Nietzsche recommends in section twenty-five from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, and which entails examining how we are influenced by people, ideas or institutions and wondering whether we should modify or put an end to our engagement with them – is to permit the possibility of further self-development and an ‘open-ended future’.¹⁹ We must note Nietzsche’s caveat that we should question ourselves ‘occasionally’: although it could be an example of rhetorical understatement that draws attention

¹⁹ Schutte, *Beyond Nihilism*, p. 32.

to his contemporaries' self-assuredness, it may also reflect a concern that our self-scrutiny should not lead to insecurity or introspective torpor. This would be consistent with his belief – articulated in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* and *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* – that our independence or freedom should have self-imposed limits. There is, as far as Nietzsche is concerned, a fine line between healthy open-mindedness and paralysing self-doubt.

In *Götzen-Dämmerung*, meanwhile, Nietzsche references his own life and employs the same imagery that we find in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* to emphasise that we must view beliefs as provisional if they are not to be restrictive. He admonishes those who would domesticate his thought by tethering him to a specific idea or slogan, and reuses the metaphor of climbing steps to illustrate how he and his philosophy have evolved: 'Das waren Stufen für mich ich bin über sie hinaufgestiegen, – dazu musste ich über sie hinweg. Aber sie meinten, ich wollte mich auf ihnen zur Ruhe setzen' (GD Sprüche und Pfeile, 42). The 'peace' that comes with the unconditional acceptance of a particular truth – or settling on a particular step – is imbued with the negative connotations of indolence, stagnation and sloth, and stands in sharp contrast to the endless, active 'wandering' of the free spirit.

In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* Nietzsche adds a further element to his argument that we should refrain from sweeping commitments to any object – commitments that often originate in the identification of that object with enduring truth – in order to permit our continued self-development. In another passage from 'Der freie Geist', he claims that the psychological preference for certainty – which lies at the root of both our steadfast loyalty and implacable opposition towards 'objects' – is itself something that the individual must overcome. He writes that the 'Geschmack für das Unbedingte' (JGB 31) – allegedly 'der schlechteste aller Geschmäcker' (ibid.) – is a symptom of immaturity that we move beyond once life has furnished

us with the ability to accept nuance (ibid.). As well as leading us to mistaken conclusions about men and things (ibid.), the desire for unequivocal truth results in ‘Selbst-Verblendung’ (ibid.); a blindness both to the fluctuant nature of the world, which cannot support definitive judgements, and to the possibilities for change and development that are available to us as individuals. Once again, Nietzsche qualifies his remarks by warning that we must be careful not to let our newfound appreciation for subtlety and gradation descend into a thoroughgoing scepticism. The tyranny of absolutes can all too easily be replaced by an equally oppressive ‘suspicion’ (‘Argwohn’) that undermines our ‘enthusiasm’ (‘Begeisterung’) and capacity for action.²⁰ It can also cause us to view *all* of our existing beliefs and ideals as a form of ‘Selbst-Verschleierung’ (ibid.),²¹ leaving us hopelessly confused and without any sense of self at all. Nietzsche states that this disorientation or crisis of confidence is born of the desire to atone for our previous inflexibility; yet in reality it is just as harmful and should be regarded as another stage of ‘Jugend’ (ibid.) that we must do our best to move beyond. What he does not say, but can be inferred, is that the refusal to accept anything that we instinctively feel to be true is itself a form of dogmatism.

This description of the ‘Geschmack für das Unbedingte’ as something that the individual must surmount has an instructive parallel in the preface to *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, where Nietzsche describes the history of philosophical dogmatism as a ‘Kinderei und Anfängerei’ (JGB Vorrede). After mocking the ‘linkische Zudringlichkeit’ (ibid.) with which thinkers have pursued truth hitherto, and asserting – somewhat dogmatically – that truth has certainly not yet been

²⁰ We saw in *David Strauss* that Nietzsche uses enthusiasm as a synonym for the creativity and action that he exhorts us to: ‘Durch das historische Bewusstsein retteten sie sich vor dem *Enthusiasmus* — denn nicht mehr diesen sollte die Geschichte erzeugen, wie doch Goethe vermeinen durfte’ (UB I, 2).

²¹ In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* he discourages any attempt to access our inner core or ‘true’ self – not least, as we have seen, because Nietzsche believes that the self is formed during the course of one’s life rather than bestowed at birth, but also because he sees such an undertaking as potentially dangerous: ‘Zudem ist es ein quälerisches gefährliches Beginnen, sich selbst derartig anzugraben und in den Schacht seines Wesens auf dem nächsten Wege gewaltsam hinabzusteigen’ (UB III,1).

discovered,²² he expresses the hope that dogmatism is merely the precursor to the philosophy of the future:

Es scheint, dass alle grossen Dinge, um der Menschheit sich mit ewigen Forderungen in das Herz einzuschreiben, erst als ungeheure und furchteinflössende Fratzen über die Erde hinwandeln müssen: eine solche Fratze war die dogmatische Philosophie, zum Beispiel die Vedanta-Lehre in Asien, der Platonismus in Europa (ibid.).

Despite describing dogmatism as an ‘Alpdruck’ (ibid.) due to the graveness of its errors and the vast power that it has exercised over the minds of men – he names Platonism and Christianity as the two foremost examples of the dogmatic spirit (ibid.) – Nietzsche insists that we should not be ‘ungrateful’ (‘undankbar’ (ibid.)) to it. For as well as being a necessary staging post in mankind’s collective development, dogmatism has also itself equipped us with the means to move beyond it. The intensity of the antagonism that it has provoked has been transformed into a ‘Kraft’ or ‘prachtvolle Spannung des Geistes’ (ibid.) that can impel us to new heights of achievement.

The problem for Nietzsche lies in our reluctance to make use of this ‘power’ or ‘tension’. Rather than celebrate the opportunity yielded by the struggle against Platonic metaphysics and Christianity, we have instead replaced the old dogmas with new ones and allowed this potent creative force to dissipate. It was shown in Chapter Two that the early Nietzsche describes German political nationalism and worship of the Reich as serving as a substitute for Christianity – ‘An Stelle des “Reich Gottes” scheint “das Reich” getreten’ (NF 1873, 27, 40) – and that he regards this unquestioning devotion to one’s homeland as extremely harmful. Before examining the idea of a collective ‘tension of the spirit’ and showing the links between it and Nietzsche’s

²² ‘Gewiss ist, dass sie [die Wahrheit] sich nicht hat einnehmen lassen:—und jede Art Dogmatik steht heute mit betübter und muthloser Haltung da’ (JGB Vorrede).

notion of fruitfulness, it is necessary to show that the late Nietzsche still sees nationalism as an ‘idol’ or ‘demigod’ that impedes both freedom and fruitfulness, and which therefore must be overcome.

3. The Challenge to ‘Freiheit’ – ‘Götzen’ and ‘Halbgötter’

So far this chapter has looked at the meaning of freedom or independence in Nietzsche’s late works, and revealed that it closely corresponds to the direction of his early work on *Bildung*. The preceding chapters have demonstrated, however, that Nietzsche is not solely interested in defining the limits and broad purpose of freedom by insisting that it cannot be pursued at the cost of forsaking one’s fellow man and that it must be directed towards creative action. Nietzsche regards this as hugely important, but he is equally concerned with exposing and attacking the objects that he thinks tend to limit our independence.

It was demonstrated in Chapter Two that, in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, Nietzsche targets a series of ‘Halbgötter’ (UB III, 1) that supposedly monopolise the efforts and imagination of his contemporaries, and consequently suppress their ‘Einzigkeit’ (ibid.). One of these was the state, which Nietzsche associates with the German nation as a whole rather than the apparatus of government (UB III, 6). Both *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* and *Götzen-Dämmerung* prove that Nietzsche’s desire to unmask man-made deities and undermine their authority was undimmed by the passage of time. The title of the later work alone suggests his continued devotion to the task of cultural and intellectual insurgency, while its contents reveal that the ‘Götzen’ (GD Vorwort) whose demise Nietzsche predicts are semantically, as well as lexically related to the ‘Halbgötter’ of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*.

At the beginning of *Götzen-Dämmerung* Nietzsche seems to draw a distinction between the ‘demi-gods’ of his early works and the ‘idols’ that he now challenges. He declares his intent to ‘sound out’ idols in the text’s belligerent preface, in which he stridently likens the book to a ‘grosse Kriegserklärung’ (ibid.): ‘Eine andere Genesung, unter Umständen mir noch erwünschter, ist *Götzen aushorchen* ... Es giebt mehr Götzen als Realitäten in der Welt: das ist *mein* “böser Blick” für diese Welt, das ist auch mein “böses Ohr”’ (GD, Vorwort). He then clarifies that it will differ from his previous books by dint of its increased scope and ambition: ‘Und was das Aushorchen von Götzen anbetrifft, so sind es dies Mal keine Zeitgötzen, sondern *ewige* Götzen, an die hier mit dem Hammer wie mit einer Stimmgabel gerührt wird’ (ibid.).

This grandiose claim to be confronting ‘eternal’ idols – an adjective that also sits incongruously with his rejection of dogmatism – belies Nietzsche’s continued interest in the way that the political, social and cultural circumstances of nineteenth-century Germany affected his contemporaries’ thought and behaviour, and his belief that this influence was inhibitive and therefore malign. It is undeniable that in his later works, Nietzsche regards Christian faith and the morality decreed by it – which he sums up in the title of the third chapter of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* as ‘das religiöse Wesen’ (JGB 47) – as the main obstacle to individual autonomy and as the most obvious manifestation of the human tendency to depend on external guidance rather than trust in oneself. In the preface of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, as has been mentioned, Nietzsche claims that his work is a perpetuation of the ‘Kampf gegen den christlich-kirchlichen Druck von Jahrtausenden’ (JGB Vorwort). His personal fight against an ethical code that he considers to be grounded in immutable religious precepts – and whose legitimacy he considers to

have been fatally undermined by the widespread collapse of popular belief in God²³ – is ferocious and unrelenting.

A central cause of this antipathy is Nietzsche's belief that the pious observance of such a code leads to the 'Unterwerfung des Geistes' (JGB 46). He explains this in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, where he again stresses the error of surrendering one's freedom and uses language that approximates so closely to the idiom of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* that it could almost be construed as self-reference: 'Der christliche Glaube ist von Anbeginn Opferung: Opferung aller Freiheit, alles Stolzes, aller Selbstgewissheit des Geistes; zugleich Verknechtung und Selbst-Verhöhnung, Selbst-Verstümmelung' (ibid.). This phrase strongly recalls the first section of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* – albeit in a more brutal and dramatic style that is representative of Nietzsche's increasingly trenchant tone during the 1880s – in which he warns that by adhering to a rigid system of beliefs or rules, or to a group that imposes such a system, one risks losing or 'pawning' oneself ('du würdest dich verpfänden und verlieren' (UB III, 1)). In Nietzsche's late work, Christianity appears as the most prominent of the 'zahllose Pfade und Brücken und Halbgötter' (ibid.) that lead the individual away from his true self, or to 'sacrifice himself' as Nietzsche expresses it in this later passage.

Nietzsche claims that throughout human history, Christianity or the 'religiöse Neurose' (JGB 47) had been the most common refuge for men who could not bear the responsibility of fashioning mankind – or themselves – 'als Künstler' (JGB 62). He alleges that those who were neither strong nor far-sighted enough for the task of self-creation ('nicht stark und fernsichtig genug', (ibid.)) had therefore used religion to fix spurious limits for a human nature that, in

²³ Nietzsche most famously proclaims the death of God in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*: 'Gott ist tot! Gott bleibt tot! Und wir haben ihn getötet!' (FW 125). In *Götzen-Dämmerung*, he argues that the end of faith can only lead to the disintegration of Christianity as a system: 'Das Christenthum ist ein System, eine zusammengedachte und ganze Ansicht der Dinge. Bricht man aus ihm einen Hauptbegriff, den Glauben an Gott, heraus, so zerbricht man damit auch das Ganze: man hat nichts Nothwendiges mehr zwischen den Fingern' (GD 'Streifzüge', 5).

Nietzsche's view, remained '*noch nicht festgestellt[e]*' (ibid. – emphasis in original). These limits supposedly included the notions of human equality before God, 'Gewissens-Noth' and rejection of 'das Irdische' (ibid.), all of which Nietzsche regards as both lacking any transcendental foundation and contrary to the needs of the 'höhere Menschen' (JGB 62) whose welfare he prioritises. In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, he states that it is not the doctrines themselves that are harmful – he describes asceticism and puritanism as 'fast unentbehrliche Erziehungs- und Veredelungsmittel' (JGB 61) that are necessary stages in the process of mankind's development – but the fact that they had been proposed as incontrovertible laws in themselves: 'Es bezahlt sich immer theuer und fürchterlich, wenn Religionen *nicht* als Züchtungs- und Erziehungsmittel in der Hand des Philosophen, sondern von sich aus und *souverän* walten, wenn sie selber letzte Zwecke und nicht Mittel neben anderen Mitteln sein wollen' (JGB 62). He insists that once such doctrines are granted a status beyond that of 'means', and cease to be viewed as a particular, transient phase in the evolution of man's individual and collective identity, then they become tyrannical and detain mankind indefinitely at a 'niedrigere Stufe' (ibid.) of his development.

Nietzsche's opposition to Christianity and religion, which stems at least in part from this belief that they are driven by an overwhelming 'erhaltender Instinkt' (JGB 59) that encourages men to conform to existing customs and models of behaviour rather than create new ones, is apparent throughout *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. He also frequently suggests, however, that the power of Christianity was severely attenuated in his own age, and claims – as he does in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and early *Nachlass* – that it is rather the *impulse* that first drove men to embrace religion that remains strong. We saw in Chapter Two that in *David Strauss*, Nietzsche uses religious language and imagery – such as when he writes of the modern belief in

the ‘Katechismus’ (UB I, 3) or ‘Testament “der modernen Ideen”’ (UB I, 6) – to argue that men had constructed a series of new, secular idols which they worshipped with the same fervour that they had once shown towards God. The only difference, as far as Nietzsche is concerned, between this ‘Religion der Zukunft’ (UB I, 3) and its predecessor is that the former is divested of metaphysical rationale; for the ‘Neugläubigen’, Nietzsche contends, ‘der Himmel [...] muss natürlich ein Himmel auf Erden sein’ (UB I, 4).

In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, he repeats this claim that ‘Moderne Ideen’ (JGB 58), including the feeling of pride or duty towards one’s ‘Vaterland’ (ibid.), had usurped Christianity’s position in the age of ‘stolze Arbeitsamkeit’ (ibid.). He insists that his contemporaries felt no instinctive sympathy for religion because:

Sie fühlen sich schon reichlich in Anspruch genommen, diese braven Leute, sei es von ihren Geschäften, sei es von ihren Vergnügungen, gar nicht zu reden vom ‘Vaterlande’ und den Zeitungen und den ‘Pflichten der Familie’: es scheint, dass sie gar keine Zeit für die Religion übrig haben (ibid.).

This passage is instructive, because it illustrates the extent to which Nietzsche thinks the men of his era are defined by their adherence to ‘modern ideas’, including nationalism or patriotism. He insists that not only had Christian religion been replaced as the dominant force in men’s lives, but that it now hardly features in their lives at all. Such was his contemporaries’ preoccupation with their ‘Geschäften’ and ‘Vergnügungen’, they simply did not have time to accommodate Christianity and the ‘mikroskopischen Lieblings-Arbeit der Selbstprüfung’ (ibid.) that it entails. Tellingly, in yet another point of comparison with his early work on *Bildung*, Nietzsche also claims that his age recognised the value of ‘religiösen Gebräuche’ (ibid.), if not religion itself: ‘Verlangt man in gewissen Fällen, etwa von Seiten des Staates, die Betheiligung an solchen

Gebräuchen, so thun sie, was man verlangt, wie man so Vieles thut' (ibid.). He depicts the modern age as typically indifferent rather than hostile to religion, and claims that its interest is piqued when it feels that religion can help to advance one of its other goals. This is, of course, strongly reminiscent of the way that Nietzsche depicts attitudes to culture in nineteenth-century Germany in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*. Religion, he suggests here, has been relegated along with culture to the second tier of men's interests. The difference, from Nietzsche's perspective, is that he has no wish to return to the 'eigentlich religiöses Leben' (ibid.).

By indicating the way in which 'modern ideas' or contemporary idols had marginalised and instrumentalised religion, Nietzsche tacitly emphasises the controlling, stultifying effect that these ideas exert on life and the individual. It is clear, not only from the passage cited above but from many other references, that Nietzsche regards nationalism or excessive patriotism as one of the most influential of these ideas. He assails it throughout his late writings and consistently describes the people he admires – whether historical figures or ideal types like the free spirit – as successfully rising above it.

The importance that he ascribes to overcoming nationalism is evident from the very beginning of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. In the foreword, which Lampert aptly describes as characterised by 'rapid interpretations of vast historical movements',²⁴ Nietzsche claims that 'Jesuitismus' and the 'demokratische Aufklärung' (ibid.) represent the two main attempts to assuage the 'Noth' (ibid.) that the struggle against Plato and the 'christlich-kirchlichen Druck' (ibid.) had left in its wake. He sees them as "“deadly” truths"²⁵ created to 'pacify the European

²⁴ Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task*, p. 13.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 16.

mind’,²⁶ which had supposedly been left restless and disorientated after losing its traditional locus of meaning with the decline of Christianity and Platonic metaphysics. At the end of the foreword, however – when he introduces the free spirits who will welcome the ‘Philosophie der Zukunft’ and who will see this ‘Noth’ as a call to action rather than a cause for despair – Nietzsche states that as well as being neither Jesuits nor democrats, these spirits will also be ‘good Europeans’ who are not ‘sufficiently German’: ‘Aber wir, die wir weder Jesuiten, noch Demokraten, noch selbst Deutsche genug sind, wir *guten Europäer* und freien, *sehr* freien Geister – wir haben sie noch, die ganze Noth des Geistes’ (JGB Vorrede). The free spirit will not try to fill the void left by Christianity with the idol of a country or nation state – any more than he would try to fill it with a political system or alternative theology – because he will recognise that mankind’s true imperative following the crisis of religious belief is to embrace the opportunity that this crisis provides. For Nietzsche, this signifies continual striving rather than replacing one ‘Dogmatiker-Irrthum’ (ibid.) with another. The installation of a new idol may temporarily ease mankind’s existential strife, but only by suppressing the freedom that permits his self-determination, which, in Nietzsche’s view, is what makes man ‘die spärliche Ausnahme’ (JGB 62) among animals.

In the foreword, Nietzsche speaks to the community of free spirits that he believes will push back the ideological currents – including nationalism – that threaten to submerge man rather than encourage his further growth and development. In ‘der freie Geist’, however, Nietzsche reverts to the level of the individual and describes some of the specific measures that each person must take in order to preserve their independence. In a manner that echoes his early work on *Bildung*, he insists that we must maintain a safe distance from our homeland and avoid following any single person too closely:

²⁶ Ibid.

Nicht an einer Person hängen bleiben: und sei sie die geliebteste, – jede Person ist ein Gefängniss, auch ein Winkel. Nicht an einem Vaterlande hängen bleiben: und sei es das leidendste und hülfsbedürftigste, – es ist schon weniger schwer, sein Herz von einem siegreichen Vaterlande los zu binden. [...] Man muss wissen, *sich zu bewahren*: stärkste Probe der Unabhängigkeit (JGB 41).²⁷

The task of ‘conserving oneself’ mirrors Nietzsche’s demand in the first section of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* that the individual must protect his ‘Einzigkeit’ (UB III, 1) and not adopt ‘erborgte Manieren und übergehängte Meinungen’ (ibid). This includes, as Nietzsche indicates throughout his writing, the habits and opinions of nationalism. By succumbing to what Nietzsche describes in Germany as ‘Deutschthümelei’ (JGB 251) – a condition that he believes David Strauss to have suffered from²⁸ – one allows one’s actions and judgements to be guided by a vision of the world in which the particular, timebound norms and customs of one’s ‘Vaterland’ are transformed into a universal standard. This leads to the individual being defined, whether consciously or not, by his nationalist allegiance rather than his status as an ‘einmaliges Wunder’ (UB III, 1).

A significant parallel between Nietzsche’s thoughts on nationalism and his early theory of *Bildung* is revealed later in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. In the chapter entitled ‘Völker und Vaterländer’, Nietzsche acknowledges that patriotism has a powerful allure, and even confesses

²⁷ Nietzsche published the second edition to *Die Geburt der Tragödie* in the same year as *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. The foreword to this edition, entitled ‘Versuch einer Selbstkritik’, is notoriously scathing of the work itself, and adds some biographical context to Nietzsche’s claim in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* that a person can become a ‘prison’. As well as describing the book as ‘schlecht geschrieben, schwerfällig, peinlich, bilderwüthig und bilderwirrig’, Nietzsche also expresses regret for the fact that he had relied on Kantian and Schopenhauerian language to express his insights: ‘Wie sehr bedauere ich es jetzt, dass ich damals noch nicht den Muth (oder die Unbescheidenheit?) hatte, um mir in jedem Betrachte für so eigne Anschauungen und Wagnisse auch eine *eigene Sprache* zu erlauben,— dass ich mühselig mit Schopenhauerischen und Kantischen Formeln fremde und neue Werthschätzungen auszudrücken suchte, welche dem Geiste Kantens und Schopenhauers, ebenso wie ihrem Geschmacke, von Grund aus entgegen giengen!’ (GT ‘Versuch’).

²⁸ Nietzsche uses this term in a note from 1886 in which he describes how the experiences of his life have shaped his writing. He claims that his ‘zornige Ausbruch’ (NF 1886, 6, 4) against David Strauss was motivated by his dislike of Strauss’ ‘Deutschthümelei’ and Nietzsche’s own first-hand knowledge of ‘deutsche Bildung und Bildungs-Philisterei’ (ibid.) that he had gained as a student.

that he is vulnerable to it himself. In the chapter's first section, he delivers an assessment of Wagner's overture to the *Meistersinger* that includes the kind of effusive praise that would not be out of place in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* or the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. He describes the piece as 'prachtvoll' and as possessing 'Feuer und Muth', and lauds Wagner personally for the 'Meisterschaft [der] hier verwendeten Mittel' (JGB 240) that enabled him to make such music. Having paid these tributes, he goes on to claim that there is something specifically German about this music that he enjoys so much, and that it evinces 'eine gewisse deutsche Mächtigkeit und Überfülle der Seele' (ibid.).

In the very next passage, however, he reproaches himself for having indulged his feelings of national pride, and describes it as a lapse to which even good Europeans are prone:

Wir 'guten Europäer': auch wir haben Stunden, wo wir uns eine herz hafte Vaterländerei, einen Plumps und Rückfall in alte Lieben und Engen gestatten – ich gab eben eine Probe davon –, Stunden nationaler Wallungen, patriotischer Beklemmungen und allerhand anderer alterthümlicher Gefühls-Überschwemmungen (JGB 241).

Nietzsche recognises the discrepancy between his praise for the elements of Wagner's work that he regards as characteristically German and his stark criticism of 'das neue Deutschthum' (JGB 244) elsewhere. Yet he does not try to justify this incongruity, or draw a specious distinction between his nationally inflected acclaim for Wagner and the narrowness that he disparages in his contemporaries. Instead, he explains it as a spontaneous outburst of emotion that emanates from feelings of national pride that still exist within him as they do in others.

Where Nietzsche differs, in his opinion, is in the relative importance that he attaches to these feelings and in his ability to move beyond them. The text continues:

Schwerfälligere Geister, als wir sind, mögen mit dem, was sich bei uns auf Stunden beschränkt und in Stunden zu Ende spielt, erst in längeren Zeiträumen fertig werden, in halben Jahren die Einen, in halben Menschenleben die Anderen, je nach der Schnelligkeit und Kraft, mit der sie verdauen und ihre ‘Stoffe wechseln’ (ibid.).

By lingering on their feelings of ‘Vaterländerei’ (ibid), or taking so long to ‘digest’ them as Nietzsche phrases it, these figures come to be dominated by sentiments that Nietzsche believes should be no more than a stepping stone in our individual and collective development. Nietzsche suggests here that patriotism has played a substantial role in the intellectual and cultural formation of the age, and that it would be naïve to expect that its legacy could simply be erased. What he will not tolerate, however, is clinging to the national ideal as if it were an enduring truth.

The urgency of Nietzsche’s challenge to ‘modern ideas’ in his late period is most forcefully displayed in an extended section from the ‘Wir Gelehrten’ chapter of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. In it, he describes the philosopher as a ‘*nothwendiger Mensch des Morgens und Übermorgens*’ (JGB 212) who, as a consequence of his untimeliness, cannot help but conflict with the prevailing ideas and beliefs of his own age: ‘[Der Philosoph] sich jederzeit mit seinem Heute in Widerspruch befunden hat und befinden *musste*: sein Feind war jedes Mal das Ideal von Heute’ (ibid.). The philosopher’s role, according to Nietzsche, is not to reinforce the status quo or to act as an advocate for a party or state; nor is it to offer easy solutions to the problems and questions that have perpetually troubled mankind. Instead, he must ruthlessly scrutinise everything that those around him take to be true and inviolable. He must act as a ‘gefährliche Fragezeichen’ (ibid.), whose boldness in suggesting the possibility of an alternative is a form of doctrine in itself; an idea that Nietzsche encapsulates in one of his most striking metaphors:

‘Indem sie gerade den *Tugenden der Zeit* das Messer vivisektorisches auf die Brust setzten, verriethen sie, was ihr eignes Geheimniss war: um eine *neue* Grösse des Menschen zu wissen, um einen neuen ungegangenen Weg zu seiner Vergrößerung’ (ibid.).

As well emphasising the philosopher’s interrogative duty and the ostracism that he will endure as result, this section provides another example of the link in Nietzsche’s philosophy between the process of self-cultivation and the philosopher or great man’s role as an educator: a concept that was analysed in Chapter Two in relation to Nietzsche’s theory of *Bildung*. Nietzsche contends that the philosopher should aspire to independence and self-determination because it is a condition of greatness: ‘heute gehört das Vornehm-sein, das Für-sich-sein-wollen, das Anders-sein-können, das Allein-stehn und auf-eigne-Faust-leben-müssen zum Begriff “Grösse”’ (ibid.). In doing so, he portrays autonomy as being of innate value to the individual. Yet Nietzsche also evidently regards it as the philosopher or great man’s obligation to mankind. He claims that philosophers should be the ‘ausserordentlichen Förderer des Menschen (ibid.), who facilitate change by acting as the ‘böse Gewissen ihrer Zeit’ (ibid.). They point to a future laden with possibility by the fact of their own difference, in a way that recalls the figure of the ‘Wegweiser’ (UB III, 2) that Nietzsche describes in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, and therefore draw their fellow men – however belatedly or reluctantly – in their wake.

Underpinning the philosopher’s otherness, according to Nietzsche, is his celebration of ‘Umfänglichkeit und Vielfältigkeit’ (ibid), and his equation of these qualities with human greatness (ibid.). The philosopher supposedly judges his fellow man according to how far he can extend himself, and how many different facets of existence he can assimilate within the manifold, but disciplined form of his own personality: ‘Er würde sogar den Werth und Rang darnach bestimmen, wie viel und vielerlei Einer tragen und auf sich nehmen, wie *weit* Einer

seine Verantwortlichkeit spannen könnte' (ibid.). This profound respect for multiplicity and expansiveness supposedly places the philosopher at odds with an age that would assign each individual a specific role and 'banish him to a corner': 'Angesichts einer Welt der "modernen Ideen" welche Jedermann in eine Ecke und "Spezialität" bannen möchte würde ein Philosoph, falls es heute Philosophen geben könnte, gezwungen sein, die Grösse des Menschen [...] in seine Ganzheit im Vielen zu setzen' (ibid.). It was shown above that Nietzsche regards the unwillingness to take his ease in the 'dumpfe und angenehme Winkeln' of fixed beliefs as one of the free spirit's key characteristics. He employs similar imagery here to emphasise the philosopher's comparable refusal to be classified – or to define himself – by adherence to any narrow, inflexible 'truth'.

The practical requirements of 'Umfänglichkeit und Vielfältigkeit' are very similar to those of 'Freiheit'. Neither diversity nor 'extensiveness' can be achieved by clinging to a single idea, country or person, in the same way that dogged, submissive faithfulness to an external authority prevents one from being independent in the Nietzschean sense. The assertion of diversity or 'extensiveness', as Nietzsche portrays it in this passage from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, amounts to a bold statement of autonomy: especially in an era where, in Nietzsche's view, an addiction to narrow certainty is the norm.

Having established Nietzsche's continued insistence in his late period that one should protect oneself against the domineering influence of 'Halbgötter' or 'Götzen', and having shown that he still views nationalism, among other 'modern ideas', as a particularly powerful idol in the historical context of nineteenth-century Germany, we can now investigate his treatment of 'Fruchtbarkeit' in his late work. As was shown in Chapter Three, this idea is also inextricably linked to Nietzsche's thoughts about the value and purpose of truth. In the 1880s, Nietzsche

remains convinced that truth or knowledge cannot be regarded as ends in themselves, and that man should aspire to create rather than to know. The next section of the chapter will examine how, just as in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, the Nietzsche of the 1880s believes that knowledge, and specifically the desire to acquire it, can help to make man fruitful if we modify the way that we use them.

4. 'Fruchtbarkeit' in Nietzsche's Late Work

We have already seen that in the foreword to *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Nietzsche expresses the hope that 'Dogmatisiren in der Philosophie' (JGB Vorrede) was now at an end. He is sharply critical of all philosophy that considers itself 'end- und letztgültig' (ibid.) and which therefore excludes – whether implicitly or explicitly – the validity of all other perspectives. It has also been demonstrated that this antagonism towards dogmatism not only reflects Nietzsche's epistemological claim that verifiably objective, universal truth will remain beyond our grasp – a claim that appears in his reference in 'Von der Vorurtheilen der Philosophen' to the 'rein erfundene Welt des Unbedingten, Sich-selbst-Gleiche' (JGB 4) – but is also motivated by his conviction that dogmatic belief – whether in Christianity, Platonic metaphysics or the glory of the nation state – belittles the individual and precludes him from setting an example to others. Nietzsche views dogmatism's regimented parameters as contrary to the 'Begriff "Grösse"' (JGB 212), and as something that will be rejected by the true 'Förderer des Menschen' (ibid.).

However, he also states in the foreword that dogmatism, and specifically the war that has been waged against it, has resulted in an unprecedented 'tension' that we must do our utmost to exploit: '[der Kampf] hat in Europa eine prachtvolle Spannung des Geistes geschaffen, wie sie auf Erden noch nicht da war: mit einem so gespannten Bogen kann man nunmehr nach den

fernsten Zielen schießen' (JGB Vorrede). The battles that had been fought against religion and metaphysics had the effect of liberating mankind from the shackles of 'Glauben' (JGB 2) – whether moral, ontological or otherwise – and wiping the existential slate clean. This gives us the opportunity, in Nietzsche's view, to inscribe a new set of values and standards upon it, while remaining aware that subsequent generations would be free, and should be encouraged, to efface our work in the course of their own project of renewal.

It is clear from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* that Nietzsche does not define this creative tension in exclusively moral terms. He is not *only* interested in the 'Umwertung' (JGB 203) of traditional ethical judgements or the vision of creation as 'Gesetzgebung' (JGB 211), although one could certainly contend that these are the work's principal concerns and that they are portrayed as the most urgent of the tasks facing the 'neue Art von Philosophen und Befehlshabern' (ibid.) Instead, as becomes apparent in the chapter 'Wir Gelehrten', he insists that this tension should also stimulate creativity in the wider, more inclusive sense of 'Zeugung' (JGB 207) or 'Ausströmen' (NF 1887, 9, 102), which signifies an outward flow of energy that manifests itself in works or deeds and is the antithesis of the scholarly thirst for knowledge. The 'prachtvolle Spannung' of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, or the effect that Nietzsche desires from it, therefore has much in common with the idea of 'Fruchtbarkeit' that is so important to his early work on *Bildung*.

This similarity is best demonstrated in Nietzsche's discussion of the genius in both *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. In *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, where Nietzsche is deeply concerned with the 'Heile deutscher Bildung' (GT 20), he inevitably

associates the figure of the genius with the artist who can augment culture through his works.²⁹ This is not the case in his later writings, not least because the Nietzsche of 1886 views art very differently from the devotee of Wagner and Schopenhauer who rhapsodises about tragedy's transfigurative power in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. The previous chapter showed that Nietzsche had significantly re-evaluated his stance towards art by the time that he came to write *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, and neither *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* nor *Götzen-Dämmerung* signal a return to the view of art as the 'eigentlich metaphysischen Thätigkeit dieses Lebens' (GT Vorwort). In fact, Nietzsche explicitly distances himself from this assertion in the foreword to the second edition of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, which was published less than three months after *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* in October 1886. Nietzsche uses the seven short sections of 'Versuch einer Selbstkritik' to deliver an uncompromising critique of his first book, in which he ascribes the claims that he once made on art's behalf to the rashness of youth:

Aufgebaut aus lauter vorzeitigen übergrünen Selbsterlebnissen, welche alle hart an der Schwelle des Mittheilbaren lagen, hingestellt auf den Boden der *Kunst* [...] voller psychologischer Neuerungen und Artisten-Heimlichkeiten, mit einer Artisten-Metaphysik im Hintergrunde, ein Jugendwerk voller Jugendmuth und Jugend-Schweremuth (GTVS 2).

His retrospective distaste for *Die Geburt der Tragödie* because of its failure to recognise anything other than a 'Künstler-Sinn' (GTVS 5)³⁰ is echoed by an ambivalent description of the artist in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. As in the works from his middle period, Nietzsche is critical

²⁹ In his characterisation of the *Bildungsphilister* in *David Strauss*, for example, Nietzsche writes: 'Während man vorgab, den Fanatismus und die Intoleranz in jeder Form zu hassen, hasste man im Grunde den dominirenden Genius und die Tyrannis wirklicher Kulturforderungen' (UB I, 2).

³⁰ It should be stressed that although Nietzsche views the book's treatment of art as extremely problematic, he nonetheless sees *Die Geburt der Tragödie* as rejecting a moral interpretation of the world and as therefore providing the foundations for his current philosophical position: 'Diese ganze Artisten-Metaphysik mag man willkürlich, müßig, phantastisch nennen—, das Wesentliche daran ist, dass sie bereits einen Geist verräth, der sich einmal auf jede Gefahr hin gegen die *moralische* Ausdeutung und Bedeutsamkeit des Daseins zur Wehre setzen wird' (GTVS 5).

of artists whose creative impulse he judges to originate from need or ‘das Unbehagen’ (VM 169). He recalls his description of artists as ‘Verhehler der Natürlichkeit’ and ‘Mond- und Gottsüchtigen’ (FW 59) in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* when he names as ‘geborenen Künstler’ (JGB 59) those who, like the ‘homines religiosi’ (ibid.), can only take pleasure in life by falsifying it. Nietzsche contends that their wilful distortion of the world is equivalent to a ‘langwierige Rache’ (ibid) that stems from an ‘unheilbarer Pessimismus’ (ibid.): an image that he returns to when he identifies a number of famous poets, including Byron, Leopardi and Kleist, as artists whose works are a consequence of their desire to take revenge against ‘eine innere Besudelung’ (JGB 269).

Yet Nietzsche does not see art as invariably born of fear or dissatisfaction. He continues to believe firmly in the existence, and tremendous importance, of a creativity that emanates from ‘Fülle’ (JGB 260) or ‘Überschuss’ (VM 173), rather than lack or resentment. It is this type of creativity that he ascribes to the genius in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, and which is linked to the notion of ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ not only by its sense of controlled, life-enhancing profuseness, but by its essential opposition to the inward-looking, unproductive ‘Leidenschaft der Erkenntniss’ (JGB 207). In ‘Wir Gelehrten’, Nietzsche restates this crucial difference using the juxtaposition of the genius and the scholar that he so often employs in his early works:³¹

Im Verhältnisse zu einem Genie, das heisst zu einem Wesen, welches entweder *zeugt* oder *gebirt*, beide Worte in ihrem höchsten Umfange genommen – , hat der Gelehrte, der wissenschaftliche Durchschnittsmensch immer etwas von der alten Jungfer: denn er versteht sich gleich dieser nicht auf die zwei werthvollsten Verrichtungen des Menschen [...] Er [Der Gelehrte] ist zutraulich, doch nur wie Einer,

³¹ ‘Wer nämlich zu beobachten weiss, bemerkt, dass der Gelehrte seinem Wesen nach *unfruchtbar* ist — eine Folge seiner Entstehung! — und dass er einen gewissen natürlichen Hass gegen den fruchtbaren Menschen hat; weshalb sich zu allen Zeiten die Genie’s und die Gelehrten befehdet haben’ (UB III, 6).

der sich gehen, aber nicht *strömen* lässt; und gerade vor dem Menschen des grossen Stroms steht er um so kälter und verschlossener da (JGB 206).

Nietzsche urges us here to understand ‘zeugen’ and ‘gebären’ – which he describes as mankind’s two most important functions and of which the scholar is supposedly incapable – in their widest possible sense. The disciplined, yet generous outflow of individual vitality that has a formative impact on the world around us – contrasted with the mere accumulation and retention of knowledge that is derived *from* the world and therefore cannot effect change within it – can be achieved in a plethora of ways, of which art is one.

Nietzsche’s positive view of art that results from this type of active, ‘blühender Leiblichkeit’ (NF 1887, 9, 102) is evident in another section from ‘Wir Gelehrten’, where he points to the limits of human thought when it is isolated from the other human faculties (JGB 213). He claims that in contrast to many thinkers and scholars who rely exclusively on ‘dialektische Strenge und Nothwendigkeit’ (ibid.), and who regard conformity to the discipline of logic as the sole prerequisite of philosophy, the artist successfully unites this ‘necessity’ with a sense of freedom that allows him to shape the world, rather than be moulded by it:

Die Künstler mögen hier schon eine feinere Witterung haben: sie, die nur zu gut wissen, dass gerade dann, wo sie Nichts mehr ‘willkürlich’ und Alles nothwendig machen, ihr Gefühl von Freiheit, Feinheit, Vollmacht, von schöpferischem Setzen, Verfügen, Gestalten auf seine Höhe kommt, – kurz, dass Nothwendigkeit und ‘Freiheit des Willens’ dann bei ihnen Eins sind (ibid.).

It is only an artist’s conscience (‘Künstler-Gewissens’, JGB 225), Nietzsche suggests, that enables one to understand that man is both ‘*Geschöpf* und *Schöpfer*’ (ibid.); to recognise that in the ‘Koth, Unsinn, Chaos’ (ibid.) of a world that is devoid of innate meaning, it is up to us as

individuals to create both ourselves and the world around us. Unlike the ‘sensuous, childish’ (‘sinnlich, kindsköpfig’ JGB 269) artists who regard their work as a means of self-delusion rather than affirmation, the Nietzschean creator confronts reality and makes productive use of the ‘Spannung der Seele’ (JGB 225) that results from the destruction of the traditional beliefs that have sustained mankind in illusion for millennia.

Although Nietzsche regards many artists as succumbing to the escapist temptation that he identifies in Byron, Leopardi and Kleist, we will see below that he considers Goethe to be one of the exemplary figures who remained committed to a form of creativity that was grounded in reality and ‘Zucht’ (JGB 225).

5. The Scholar and the ‘Trieb zur Erkenntniss’ in Nietzsche’s Late Work

If Nietzsche is strict in his views on what the purpose and animating spirit of creative activity should be, he is equally unshakeable in the belief – as he is throughout his works – that this activity is a fundamental aspect of human existence. This lies at the root of his continued hostility towards the ‘Gelehrte’ (JGB 204) or ‘wissenschaftliche Mensch’ (ibid.), whom he still regards as unduly preoccupied with ‘Wahrhaftigkeit’ (JGB 1) and infected with the ‘objektiver Geist’ (JGB 208). These allegedly deleterious traits inspire the scholarly man’s all-consuming quest to learn as much as he possibly can about the world around him and the history that brought it into being; a quest which, as far as Nietzsche is concerned, means that the scholarly man can neither be a ‘Mensch des Morgens’ (JGB 212) nor an ‘Anfang, eine Zeugung und erste Ursache’ (JGB 207). In order to illustrate this point, Nietzsche reuses the image of the bow that he introduces in the foreword of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, and in doing so sheds light on the significance of a metaphor whose meaning is somewhat obscure when it first appears. He claims

that the scholar's inclination is to break or relax the bow's tautness: like religious believers and the adherents of the 'demokratische Aufklärung' (JGB Vorwort), the scholar supposedly prefers the comfort or 'Mittelmässigkeit' (JGB 206) of knowledge to the fecundity of doubt.³² In Nietzsche's view, this determination to know what there is, and what there has already been, makes the scholar incapable of determining what *will* be.

Nietzsche also retains his conviction, which he first aired in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, that Socrates was the founding father of philosophy that saw rationality as a 'Retterin' (GD 'Sokrates', 10) and conceived of life as 'hell, kalt, vorsichtig, bewusst, ohne Instinkt' (ibid.). He argues that Socrates used dialectics as a method of 'Nothwehr' (GD 'Sokrates', 6) and 'Selbst-Erhaltung' (GD 'Sokrates', 9) to protect him against a life that he considered irredeemably 'krank' (GD 'Sokrates', 1). This desire to insulate himself against the world, which Nietzsche takes to be a sign of 'décadence' (GD 'Sokrates', 4), puts Socrates at odds with Nietzsche's genius in whom the sense for self-preservation is allegedly overwhelmed by the abundance of the genius' creative powers: 'der übergewaltige Druck der ausströmenden Kräfte verbietet ihm jede solche Obhut und Vorsicht' (GD 'Streifzüge', 44).

The attack on scholarly men, and the naming of Socrates as their progenitor, reiterates arguments that Nietzsche presents in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, which were discussed in Chapter Three. So too does his insistence in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* that the relentless 'Trieb zur Erkenntniss' (JGB 6) – designated as the 'Trieb zum Wissen' (GT 17) in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* – had permeated his own age, and that its dominance was to the considerable detriment of creative endeavours like philosophy: 'Die Wissenschaft blüht heute und hat das gute Gewissen reichlich im Gesichte, während Das, wozu

³² 'Das Schlimmste und Gefährlichste, dessen ein Gelehrter fähig ist, kommt ihm vom Instinkte der Mittelmässigkeit seiner Art: von jenem Jesuitismus der Mittelmässigkeit, welcher an der Vernichtung des ungewöhnlichen Menschen instinktiv arbeitet und jeden gespannten Bogen zu brechen oder—noch lieber!—abzuspannen sucht' (JGB 206).

die ganze neuere Philosophie allmählich gesunken ist, dieser Rest Philosophie von heute, Misstrauen und Missmuth, wenn nicht Spott und Mitleiden gegen sich rege macht' (JGB 204).

The most important similarity, however, between Nietzsche's treatment of the will to knowledge or truth in his late works and his approach to the subject in his early writing is his constant portrayal of it as an intrinsic human impulse that can be conducive to creativity, providing that we use it in the right way. Clark and Dudrick make the valuable point that Nietzsche sees the will to truth – whether in the form of science or philosophy – as having played a leading role in the fight against Platonic and Christian dogmatism that Nietzsche describes in the foreword of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, and which he identifies as the source of the 'prachtvolle Spannung des Geistes' (JGB 1).³³ The distrust of prevailing religious or metaphysical explanations of the world had inspired thinkers to challenge them, and these challenges had sown a broader doubt that provided the intellectual and spiritual space for new, alternative interpretations of existence.

We have seen that, according to Nietzsche, the problem with these new interpretations was that they were as dogmatic as the beliefs that they sought to undermine, and they therefore perpetuated the view that the discovery of absolute, authoritative truth was the purpose of philosophy. Their intention was 'to prove something' ('Etwas zu beweisen', JGB 188), rather than create it. In the very first section of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Nietzsche takes aim at this purportedly age-old tendency by declaring that the question facing him – and his fellow free spirits whom he addresses in the preface – concerns the 'Problem vom Werthe der Wahrheit'

³³ Clark and Dudrick argue that the will to truth is in fact one of two constituent elements of this tension, with the will to value being the other: 'It makes sense that Nietzsche takes the will to truth to be one side of the magnificent tension of the spirit because, as the preface tells us, it is the "fight against Plato", and specifically against his "dogmatist's error", that has "created in Europe a magnificent tension of the spirit". But Plato's "dogmatist's error" was one "that meant standing the truth on her head". So it makes sense that Nietzsche views the will to truth as the instigator of the fight against Plato's dogmatism and therefore as one of the forces that constitutes the tension that he sees in contemporary philosophy'. Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick, *The Soul of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 31.

(JGB 1) [emphasis added – JG]. He will therefore ‘impatiently turn away’ (‘ungeduldig umdrehn’, *ibid.*) from the ‘wunderlichen, schlimmen, fragwürdigen Fragen’ (*ibid.*) that have traditionally occupied philosophy, which sought to establish the origin, grounds or accessibility of truth.

Having raised this issue of value, Nietzsche goes on to suggest repeatedly throughout *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, and in ‘Wir Gelehrten’ in particular, that it is linked to truth’s ability to stimulate creativity and enhance life.³⁴ This claim, as is so often the case with Nietzsche, is revealed as much through his criticism as it is through his own propositions. He condemns ‘sogenannte Positivismus’ (JGB 10) because, as Clark and Dudrick aptly put it, he sees it as having abandoned the ‘great originating project of philosophy’.³⁵ He complains that it is the preserve of ‘Wirklichkeits-Philosophaster’ (JGB 10), who produce nothing that is ‘neu und ächt’ (*ibid.*)³⁶ because they are interested solely in what their senses can tell them about existence, rather than what they can add to the world through their work and deeds.³⁷ They therefore neglect what Nietzsche regards as philosophy’s prime responsibility: ‘Sie [Philosophie] schafft immer die Welt nach ihrem Bilde, sie kann nicht anders; Philosophie ist dieser tyrannische Trieb selbst, der geistigste Wille zur Macht, zur “Schaffung der Welt”, zur *causa prima*’ (JGB 9).

³⁴ Burnham argues, convincingly, that this idea is alluded into in the very first line of the book. He suggests that the notion that truth should be fruitful or productive is suggested if we refer Nietzsche’s question about the value of truth back to his famous metaphor: ‘Vorausgesetzt, dass die Wahrheit ein Weib ist—, wie?’ (JGB Vorrede). ‘Now the question of “why pursue truth” becomes “why (do men) pursue women?” Well, no doubt there are many and complex reasons for this! But *one* reason is of course: “to propagate the species, to continue life”’. Douglas Burnham, *Reading Nietzsche: An Analysis of Beyond Good and Evil* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2007) p. 10. One could easily extend Burnham’s idea of the propagation or continuation of life to the more general *enhancement* or *augmentation* of life, which, as this thesis has argued, is the essential to Nietzsche’s notion of ‘Fruchtbarkeit’.

³⁵ Clark and Dudrick, *The Soul of Nietzsche’s Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 71.

³⁶ Nietzsche’s association of what is new or self-created with the idea of authenticity recalls his reference to our ‘wahres Wesen’ (UB III, 1) in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, which is the essence that awaits in our future and is the result of independent self-cultivation. It also recalls his concession in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* that we should continue to honour what was ‘wahr und ursprünglich’ (FW 99) in Wagner.

³⁷ Clark and Dudrick, *The Soul of Nietzsche’s Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 71.

Yet a more modest, disciplined desire to know is a prerequisite for one of the basic tasks that Nietzsche assigns to the philosopher, which we have already examined in the context of ‘Freiheit’. If the philosopher is to serve as the ‘böse Gewissen’ (JGB 212) of his age by dissecting the ‘Tugenden der Zeit’ (ibid.), it surely requires him to find out first what those virtues are. Nietzsche makes this very point in the preceding passage of ‘Wir Gelehrten’, where he once again employs the metaphor of climbing stairs to describe the process of human development:

Es mag zur Erziehung des wirklichen Philosophen nöthig sein, dass er selbst auch auf allen diesen Stufen einmal gestanden hat, auf welchen seine Diener, die wissenschaftlichen Arbeiter der Philosophie, stehen bleiben [...] um den Umkreis menschlicher Werthe und Werth-Gefühle zu durchlaufen und mit vielerlei Augen und Gewissen, von der Höhe in jede Ferne, von der Tiefe in jede Höhe, von der Ecke in jede Weite, blicken zu *können* (JGB 211).

In order to create anew, Nietzsche claims, one must know what has gone before. This argument is in keeping with his assertion in ‘der freie Geist’ that the higher type of individual must seek ‘Verkehr’ (JGB 26) with other men as part of his ‘Lebensgeschichte’ (ibid.). In this passage from ‘Wir Gelehrten’, Nietzsche also argues that as well as familiarising the philosopher with the values that he must seek to overcome, the process of ‘Erziehung’ – or immersion in human experience – assists him by making him ‘manifold’ (‘vielerlei’). The implication is that exposure to a broad variety of other people’s ‘truths’ will furnish the philosopher with an expansive view of the world, which will prevent him from accepting any single idea or doctrine as the final word and meekly submitting to it. It remains crucial, of course, that this education should be viewed as no more than a ‘Vorbedingung[en]’ (ibid.); it should not become, to borrow Nietzsche’s phrase

from the foreword of *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, a ‘kostbarer Erkenntniss-Ueberfluss und Luxus’ (UB II Vorwort). It is instead a preparation and means towards the task of ‘Werthschöpfungen’ (ibid.) that Nietzsche consistently portrays as the true philosophical imperative.

Chapter Three discussed Nietzsche’s view – which he expresses in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* and is another example of his frequently odious elitism – that the scholar or theoretical man could also contribute to culture if he were willing to sacrifice his own needs to the nurture and benefit of the genius. He revisits this idea in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, when he describes the objective man as ‘ein Werkzeug, ein kostbares, leicht verletzliches und getrübbtes Mess-Werkzeug und Spiegel-Kunstwerk, das man schonen und ehren soll’ (JGB 207). The function of this ‘tool’ is revealed in a subsequent section, where Nietzsche refers to ‘die philosophischen Arbeiter’ (JGB 211) – among whom he includes Kant and Hegel – whose responsibility is to sift and order the mass of information yielded by centuries of human curiosity:

Diesen Forschern liegt es ob, alles bisher Geschehene und Geschätzte übersichtlich, überdenkbar, fasslich, handlich zu machen, alles Lange, ja “die Zeit” selbst, abzukürzen und die ganze Vergangenheit zu *überwältigen* [...] Die eigentlichen Philosophen [haben] [...] die Vorarbeit aller philosophischen Arbeiter, aller Überwältiger der Vergangenheit, – sie greifen mit schöpferischer Hand nach der Zukunft, und Alles, was ist und war, wird ihnen dabei zum Mittel, zum Werkzeug, zum Hammer (JGB 211).

The claim that the past is something to be ‘subdued’ – to be manipulated and twisted into a shape that the ‘creative hand’ can make practical use of – recalls the note from the *Nachlass* in 1872 in which Nietzsche demands that science be ‘controlled’, rather than destroyed.³⁸ Sixteen years later, Nietzsche continues to insist that an ‘accurate’ description of the things that our ancestors

³⁸ ‘Es handelt sich nicht um eine Vernichtung der Wissenschaft, sondern um eine *Beherrschung*’ (NF 1872, 19, 24).

knew and did is of no inherent value in itself. Yet he also regards a broad, assertive acquaintance with history and other branches of knowledge – which imposes itself upon facts, figures and events, instead of being moulded by them – as fundamental to the process of creation.

6. The Late Nietzsche's Goethe

It is evident that the ideals of freedom – or the avoidance of unquestioning conformity to any kind of narrow truth that prevents constant self-development – and fruitfulness, which denotes creative activity in contrast to the search for knowledge or truth as ends in themselves, remain integral to Nietzsche's philosophy in his late works. It can now be shown that they also continue to form the basis of his *Goethebild* in this period. In addition, it will be demonstrated that as well exemplifying these two themes, Nietzsche's image of Goethe also retains the degree of criticism that, as has been shown, is in accordance with the ideas of autonomy, and of *Bildung* as liberation.

One of the most salient features of Nietzsche's depiction of Goethe during the 1880s is his repeated assertion that Goethe should be regarded as European rather than German, because Goethe was one of the 'seltneren und selten befriedigten Menschen, welche zu umfänglich sind, um in irgend einer Vaterländerei ihr Genüge zu finden' (JGB 254). This quotation perfectly captures the significance of the 'guten Europäer' (JGB Vorwort) for Nietzsche, and shows that he regards the concepts of a unified Europe and the European individual as antitheses to the complacency and self-limitation of nationalism, rather than as fixed, predetermined goals in themselves. It is the supposed unwillingness of these more 'comprehensive' people to adopt the exterior values and norms of their homeland as their own – or to constrain themselves through conformity to someone else's standard – that he deems so admirable. The fundamental character

trait that he cites as the cause of this unwillingness is also crucial, as it is illustrative of the continuity that runs in Nietzsche's thought from his early work on *Bildung* to these later texts. He claims that these uncommon individuals could not find 'satisfaction' in the assumptions and prejudices of patriotism because of their broader hostility to inhibitive truths: the assertion that they are 'rarely sated' recalls the endless process of self-cultivation that he outlines in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, which depends on the preservation of one's personal autonomy through the refusal to fall in behind any single ideal.

This connection to his early work – and the significance of Goethe as an enduring model of 'Freiheit' – is made explicit in the concluding section of 'Völker und Vaterländer', in which Nietzsche lambasts the 'Nationalitäts-Wahnsinn' and 'auseinanderlösende Politik' (JGB 256) that he saw as threatening to break Europe apart at a time when numerous 'unzweideutigsten Anzeichen' (ibid.) indicated its yearning to 'become one' ('Eins werden', ibid.). He names Goethe as one of the 'tieferen und umfänglicheren Menschen dieses Jahrhunderts' (ibid.) – alongside Napoleon, Beethoven, Stendhal, Heine, Schopenhauer and, perhaps surprisingly, Wagner – whose work and bearing point the way to the continent's new 'Synthesis' (ibid.). The term that Nietzsche uses to characterise these artists and philosophers – and Napoleon – is particularly revealing: he describes them as 'searchers', which is the same label that he gives to the 'Reihe von grossen heroischen Gestalten' (UB I, 2) whom he lionises in *David Strauss*, and among whom Goethe is also included:

Gewiss ist, dass der gleiche Sturm und Drang sie quälte, dass sie auf gleiche Weise *suchten*, diese letzten grossen Suchenden! Allesammt beherrscht von der Litteratur bis in ihre Augen und Ohren – die ersten Künstler von weltlitterarischer Bildung – meistens

sogar selber Schreibende, Dichtende, Vermittler und Vermischer der Künste und der Sinne (ibid.).

The incessant, harrowing ‘storm and stress’ that these proto-Europeans experience – which evokes the ‘prachtvolle Spannung des Geistes’ (JGB Vorwort) and is almost certainly a tacit reference to the eighteenth-century artistic movement that Goethe participated in as a young man – means that they cannot find fulfilment in the narrow ideals of ‘Germanness’ or ‘Frenchness’. Such rare individuals are driven, Nietzsche insists, by ‘Höhen und Tiefen ihrer Bedürfnisse’ (JGB 256) and are invariably ‘Ehrgeizige und Unersättliche’ (ibid); they share a profundity and voracity that is heightened by their consumption of ‘world literature’ (in implicit contrast to the defiantly parochial German art that Nietzsche frequently criticises, which was discussed in Chapter Two). This combination of an innately restive disposition and an avowedly cosmopolitan *Bildung* – which helps them to be ‘Schreibende, Dichtende, Vermittler und Vermischer der Künste und der Sinne’ and therefore does not descend into the ‘Belehrung ohne Belebung’ (UB II, Vorwort) that Nietzsche despises – supposedly ensures that these ‘hoch emporreissende Art höherer Menschen’ (JGB 256) can never be adequately defined by their nationality.

Nietzsche willingly concedes that these figures may be susceptible to the temptation of patriotism, just as he reveals himself to be when he heaps praise on the ‘gewisse deutsche Mächtigkeit und Überfülle der Seele’ (JGB 240) of Wagner’s *Meistersinger*. Yet in the same way that Nietzsche portrays his own ‘Gefühls-Überschwemmungen’ (ibid.) as fleeting moments of weakness that he is able to overcome, he describes his fellow Europeans’ intermittent bouts of nationalist sentiment as aberrations that occur when they are ‘taking a rest from themselves’: ‘nur mit ihren Vordergründen, oder in schwächeren Stunden, etwa im Alter, gehörten sie zu den

“Vaterländern”, – sie ruhten sich nur von sich selber aus, wenn sie “Patrioten” wurden’ (JGB 256). As elsewhere, Nietzsche recognises that contact with ‘modern ideas’ such as nationalism – which he repeatedly insists is absolutely necessary for the ‘höherer Mensch’ (ibid.) as a preliminary stage of his education – presents a series of dangers. He is also certain, however, that the truly great individual could never permanently ‘belong to the fatherland’.

Nietzsche’s view of Goethe as a European is also evident in *Götzen-Dämmerung*, where he names him alongside Schopenhauer, Hegel and Heine as someone who transcended the arbitrary boundaries imposed by geography, language and tradition, and who therefore resisted the simplistic classification imposed by a nationalist historicism: ‘Schopenhauer, der letzte Deutsche, der in Betracht kommt (– der ein *europäisches* Ereigniss gleich Goethe, gleich Hegel, gleich Heinrich Heine ist, und *nicht bloss* ein lokales, ein “nationales”)’ (GD ‘Streifzüge’, 21). In this later work, the designation of Goethe as European not only confirms Nietzsche’s judgement that Goethe was an autonomous, self-determining individual, but also signifies his view of Goethe as a fruitful man of culture.

This is a consequence of Nietzsche’s reiteration, in ‘Was den Deutschen abgeht’, of his argument that the rise of the Reich and the modern obsession with politics were directly responsible for Germany’s cultural impoverishment:

Man mache einen Überschlag: es liegt nicht nur auf der Hand, dass die deutsche Cultur niedergeht, es fehlt auch nicht am zureichenden Grund dafür. Niemand kann zuletzt mehr ausgeben als er hat – das gilt von Einzelnen, das gilt von Völkern. Giebt man sich für Macht, für grosse Politik, für Wirthschaft, Weltverkehr, Parlamentarismus, Militär-Interessen aus, – giebt man das Quantum Verstand, Ernst, Wille, Selbstüberwindung, das man ist, nach *dieser* Seite weg, so fehlt es auf der andern Seite (GD ‘Deutschen’, 4).

Nietzsche repudiates his theory from the third lecture of *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* that the ideal state would act as the ‘muskulöse zum Kampf gerüstete Kamerad und Weggenosse’ (BA III) of culture. He insists instead that ‘Cultur und der Staat [...] sind Antagonisten’ (GD ‘Deutschen’, 4) because one cannot simultaneously ‘expend oneself’ (‘sich ausgeben’) on politics and culture. If one is to be fruitful and channel the outward flow of one’s energy and spirit towards something worthwhile and ‘ja-sagend’ (GD ‘Deutschen’, 6), then one cannot afford to waste one’s mental and physical resources on the everyday affairs of the nation-state. Nietzsche argues that Goethe had understood this, and claims that this was the reason that Goethe’s spirit had been sent soaring by the arrival of Napoleon rather than the wars that reasserted German sovereignty after the French invasion: ‘Goethen gieng das Herz auf bei dem Phänomen Napoleon, – es gieng ihm *zu* bei den “Freiheits-Kriegen”’ (ibid.).

Nietzsche makes a very similar claim in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, in which he also reuses the tactic – highlighted in Chapter Four – of citing Goethe’s own criticism of the Germans. This has the twofold effect of lending gravitas to Nietzsche’s arguments and of emphasising the distance that, according to Nietzsche, separated Goethe from the German cultural tradition and political regime that sought to appropriate him. On this occasion he uses a reference from *Maximen und Reflexionen* to accentuate Goethe’s familiarity with, and supposed divergence from, ‘stereotypically’ German attributes:

Gewiss ist, dass es nicht die ‘Freiheitskriege’ waren, die ihn freudiger aufblicken liessen, so wenig als die französische Revolution, – das Ereigniss, um dessentwillen er seinen Faust, ja das ganze Problem ‘Mensch’ *umgedacht* hat, war das Erscheinen Napoleon’s. Es giebt Worte Goethe’s, in denen er, wie vom Auslande her, mit einer ungeduldigen Härte über Das abspricht, was die Deutschen sich zu ihrem Stolge rechnen: das berühmte

deutsche Gemüth definirt er einmal als ‘Nachsicht mit fremden und eignen Schwächen’³⁹ (JGB 244).

Goethe is described here as performing the same kind of ‘vivisection’ on German values that the philosopher undertakes when he ‘takes his knife to the virtues of the age’ (JGB 212). In delivering an unflinching, iconoclastic analysis of qualities that Germans supposedly hold dear and affirm as ‘good’, Goethe – in Nietzsche’s view at least – both demonstrates his knowledge of his contemporaries’ collective disposition and proclaims his independence of it.

The claim that Goethe understood and overcame the prevailing tendencies of his age lies at the heart of a remarkable tribute that Nietzsche pays to Goethe over the course of four sections in the ‘Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemässen’ chapter of *Götzen-Dämmerung*. As Heftrich argues, it is in these lines – which appear in a chapter whose title reaffirms Nietzsche’s own self-image as an ‘untimely’ individual – that Goethe’s semiotic significance to Nietzsche is most eloquently and coherently expressed.⁴⁰ One section in particular contains all of the principal ideas that have been identified in this thesis as incorporated by the concepts of ‘Freiheit’ and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’, and its significance requires that it be quoted at length:

Goethe – kein deutsches Ereigniss, sondern ein europäisches: ein grossartiger Versuch, das achtzehnte Jahrhundert zu überwinden durch eine Rückkehr zur Natur, durch ein *Hinaufkommen* zur Natürlichkeit der Renaissance, eine Art Selbstüberwindung von Seiten dieses Jahrhunderts. Er trug dessen stärkste Instinkte in sich: die Gefühlsamkeit, die Natur-Idolatrie, das Antihistorische, das Idealistische, das Unreale und Revolutionäre (– letzteres ist nur eine Form des Unrealen). Er nahm die Historie, die Naturwissenschaft,

³⁹ Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen*, 340, in *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*, Vol. 17, p. 778.

⁴⁰ ‘Die Texte, in denen Goethe als semiotische Figur Nietzsches den schärfsten Umriß erhält, finden sich in der *Götzen-Dämmerung*, und zwar in den letzten Aphorismen des Kapitels ‘Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemässen’. Heftrich, ‘Nietzsches Goethe: Eine Annäherung’, p. 10.

die Antike, insgleichen Spinoza zu Hülfe, vor Allem die praktische Thätigkeit; er umstellte sich mit lauter geschlossenen Horizonten; er löste sich nicht vom Leben ab, er stellte sich hinein; er war nicht verzagt und nahm so viel als möglich auf sich, über sich, in sich. Was er wollte, das war *Totalität*; er bekämpfte das Auseinander von Vernunft, Sinnlichkeit, Gefühl, Wille (– in abschreckendster Scholastik durch *Kant* gepredigt, den Antipoden Goethes), er disciplinirte sich zur Ganzheit, er *schuf* sich ... Goethe war, inmitten eines unreal gesinnten Zeitalters, ein überzeugter Realist: er sagte ja zu Allem, was ihm hierin verwandt war, – er hatte kein grösseres Erlebniss als jenes ens realissimum, genannt Napoleon. [...] Ein solcher *freigewordner* Geist steht mit einem freudigen und vertrauenden Fatalismus mitten im All, im *Glauben*, dass nur das Einzelne verwerflich ist, dass im Ganzen sich Alles erlöst und bejaht – *er verneint nicht mehr*... Aber ein solcher Glaube ist der höchste aller möglichen Glauben: ich habe ihn auf den Namen des *Dionysos* getauft (GD ‘Streifzüge’, 49)

This extraordinary paean offers a lucid synopsis of the motifs that define Nietzsche’s *Goethebild* throughout his writing career, and also reveals how the concepts of ‘Freiheit’ and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ – as well as underpinning this *Goethebild* – remain extremely closely related in Nietzsche’s late works. The first theme that appears, which has been examined in detail above and was shown to indicate Nietzsche’s view that Goethe was both ‘free’ and ‘fruitful’, is Goethe’s status as a ‘European event’ rather than a German one. The second, which appears at various points throughout the passage, is Goethe’s supposed hostility to the veneration of reason and knowledge as ends in themselves. Nietzsche’s assertion that Goethe was a convinced ‘realist’ who had sought to overcome the eighteenth century through a ‘return to nature’ places Goethe in opposition to the idealism of his contemporaries such as Kant and Fichte, whose primary

concerns were ‘the authority of reason’⁴¹ and the ‘conflict between reason and faith’.⁴² Goethe, Nietzsche suggests, had shunned the rarefied intellectual air of Enlightenment debates in favour of embracing nature as he directly perceived and sensed it. In claiming that Goethe had thus remained committed to corporeal ‘naturalness’, Nietzsche not only depicts him as independent – by virtue of his having consciously rejected the philosophical tenor of his age – but also as fruitful: by engaging with life rather than lofty abstraction (‘er löste sich nicht vom Leben ab, er stellte sich hinein’), he maintained his ability to exert influence upon it through his deeds.

This latter theme emerges even more strongly in the subsequent lines, in which Nietzsche also clarifies the cardinal relationship between the things that we do – or our creative activity – and the person we become. He insists that Goethe had not only valued ‘praktische Thätigkeit’ above everything else – meaning that he was capable of the ‘Zeugung’ (JGB 207) or ‘Ausströmen’ (NF 1887 9, 102) that Nietzsche consistently prioritises because it has a material impact on the world – but that he had also ‘made use’ of this ‘Thätigkeit’ and derived personal benefit from it. A few lines later, Nietzsche reveals what Goethe had used his activity for, in a refinement of the idea of self-cultivation that emerges from the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*: ‘er schuf sich...’.

In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, Nietzsche insists that the content or ‘Gegenstände’ of our lives – as opposed to a predetermined, inbuilt essence – is crucial to the person we become, and that we must seek to control the process of self-cultivation by refusing to surrender our individuality to the hegemony of ‘Halbgötter’. The difficulty with this idea, or perhaps the difficulty with the way that Nietzsche expresses it in this early essay, is that it could be construed as implying passivity or defensiveness: Nietzsche consistently urges that we must guard against

⁴¹ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

intrusion into the strictly individual realm of *Bildung*, but is less clear on how we can proactively work towards self-determination. In his later works, however, he fully embraces the idea that he tentatively established in the *Nachlass* note from 1873 where he describes Goethe as a ‘stilisirter Mensch’ (NF 1873, 29, 119). In *Götzen-Dämmerung*, as in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche argues for a bolder assertion of personal control over the shaping of one’s identity. Rather than simply saying that we should avoid the stifling influence of heteronomous authority and *intimating* that we should take charge of our interactions with ‘Gegenstände’ – without actually stating this explicitly, or giving instructions as to how we should go about it – in this later passage Nietzsche urges the conscious use of autonomous creative activity, or fruitfulness, to ‘create ourselves’.

The other fundamental features of Nietzschean self-creation or self-cultivation are also contained in this passage. Nietzsche describes Goethe as having actively engaged with the ‘stärkste Instinkte’ of his age and as having made use of intellectual disciplines such as history, science and the study of antiquity. Goethe’s active control over these various facets of existence is once again key: he used them as means to the end of his own self-creation, and therefore avoided being enslaved to any single one of them. This also applies to the mastery of his own faculties: Nietzsche claims that Goethe had resisted the separation or dominance of reason, sensuality, feeling or will, and had been able to exploit them all in his project of self-cultivation and in his ‘praktische Thätigkeit’. By assimilating all of these elements into his character and by ‘disciplining himself to wholeness’ – as opposed to settling on the step of a particular ‘truth’ or view of the world – Goethe had supposedly remained a ‘*freigewordner Geist*’.

The successful integration of these disparate elements could not be achieved through untrammelled freedom, however. In Nietzsche’s view, it was only possible because Goethe had

exercised his independence within self-imposed limits. The expansiveness of his personality was accommodated within ‘lauter geschlossenen Horizonten’, which prevented his being overwhelmed by the unfathomable vastness and multiplicity of human existence and losing his sense of identity amidst the mass of ideas and phenomena that he encountered. These self-determined horizons correspond to what Nietzsche describes in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* as ‘schöpferische Selbstumschränkung’ (UB III, 3), revealing the extent to which Nietzsche’s later notion of personal autonomy or ‘Freiheit’ is consistent with the ideal of self-cultivation that he presents in his early work on *Bildung*.

As well as repeatedly emphasising Goethe’s supra-national character and his command over the various intellectual and ideological currents of his age, Nietzsche also argues that Goethe had rejected another organised set of beliefs and ideals – that of Christian morality – that proposed itself as the ‘letzte[r] Zweck’ (JGB 62) of human existence and consequently placed limits on personal autonomy. In the final section of ‘Streifzüge’, Nietzsche writes of Goethe that: ‘er hätte drei Dinge empfunden, die ich empfinde,—auch verstehen wir uns über das “Kreuz”’ (GD ‘Streifzüge’, 51). This is a reference to Goethe’s *Venezianischen Epigrammen* (1790), in which Goethe wrote: ‘Vieles kann ich ertragen. Die meisten beschwerlichen Dinge / Duld’ ich mit ruhigem Mut, wie es ein Gott mir gebeut. / Wenige sind mir jedoch wie Gift und Schlange zuwider; / Viere: Rauch des Tabaks, Wanzen und Knoblauch und † [Christ]’.⁴³ Although Nietzsche does not expand on this comment here, his opposition to Christianity as a suppressor of personal independence or ‘Freiheit’ is stated frequently throughout his works.

There is plenty of epistolary evidence to suggest that Nietzsche remained attached to some of the ideas expressed in his early work on culture and education, and that he attributed

⁴³ Goethe, *Venezianischen Epigrammen*, 66, in *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*, Vol. 3/2, p. 139.

particular significance to *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*. In a letter to Erwin Rohde from the beginning of December 1882, he urges him to read the essay because it held the key to understanding his philosophy: ‘Lies mir doch einmal zu Gefallen meine Schrift über *Schopenhauer*: es sind ein paar Seiten drin, aus denen der Schlüssel zu nehmen ist’.⁴⁴ He makes a similar claim in the draft of a letter to Lou Salomé from later that month, where he recalls telling her that the work contained his ‘Grundgesinnungen’ and mentions that he had given her a copy in the expectation that she would agree with its fundamental insights.⁴⁵

Nietzsche maintained this view of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* as an accurate document of his philosophical outlook as the decade progressed, and in fact he would go further in affirming its importance. In a letter to Franz Overbeck in August 1884, he tells his friend that he had based his life on the ideals and principles expounded in the essay, and implies that it would have been better if he had chosen himself rather than Schopenhauer as his archetypal educator.⁴⁶

Übrigens habe ich so gelebt, wie ich es mir selber (namentlich in ‘*Schopenhauer als Erzieher*’); vorgezeichnet habe. Falls Du den Zarath [ustra] mit in Deine Mußzeit nehmen solltest, nimm, der Vergleichung halber, doch die eben genannte Schrift mit hinzu (ihr Fehler ist, daß eigentlich in ihr nicht von *Schopenhauer*, sondern fast nur von mir die Rede ist — aber das wußte ich selber nicht, als ich sie machte).⁴⁷

In yet another letter, this time to Georg Brandes in 1888, Nietzsche describes *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* as a ‘Erkennungszeichen’ and repeats that he had successfully lived in accordance with its teaching: ‘Im Grunde steht das Schema darin, nach dem ich bisher gelebt habe’. We can

⁴⁴ Letter to Erwin Rohde, beginning of December 1882; KGB III/1, p. 292.

⁴⁵ Draft of a letter to Lou Salomé, mid-December 1882; KGB III/1, p. 299.

⁴⁶ In making this claim Nietzsche suggests that he had met his own criterion for assessing the value of a philosopher, which he outlined in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*: ‘Ich mache mir aus einem Philosophen gerade so viel als er im Stande ist ein Beispiel zu geben. [...] Aber das Beispiel muss durch das *sichtbare* Leben und nicht bloss durch Bücher gegeben werden, also dergestalt, wie die Philosophen Griechenlands lehrten, durch Miene, Haltung, Kleidung, Speise, Sitte mehr als durch Sprechen oder gar Schreiben’ (UB III, 3).

⁴⁷ Letter to Franz Overbeck, beginning of August 1884; KGB III/1, p. 518.

assume that he was sincere in his claim that he would have preferred the title of the book to bear his name; one need think only of the chapter titles of *Ecce Homo*, including ‘Warum ich so weise bin’, ‘Warum ich so klug bin’ and ‘Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe’, to establish his predilection for self-reference. We may also surmise, however, that he might have considered renaming it *Goethe als Erzieher*.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated that an entrenched suspicion of conceptualisation and didacticism – which stems from the belief that ‘life’ and ‘living’ are paramount and that they must not be confused with mere knowing – is fundamental to Nietzsche’s thinking about *Bildung*. This creates obvious difficulties for his interpreters, and especially for those who argue that Nietzsche presents consistent, intelligible arguments about *Bildung* that also permeate his broader philosophical project. If one states that the ideas of ‘Freiheit’ and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ have a lasting value for Nietzsche – a value that is rooted in his philosophy of *Bildung*, but which also transcends it – one risks being accused of both abstracting the unabstractable and of ascribing fixed, prescriptive teachings to a philosopher who vehemently opposes dogmatism. In addition, one must face a paradox posed by the internal logic of ‘Freiheit’ as an idea: it is, of course, entirely possible to argue that Nietzsche’s antagonism towards inflexible doctrines or truths is a doctrine in itself.

The hermeneutic obstacles that Nietzsche’s arguments sometimes place in our path have been identified and addressed in this thesis. It has also been shown, however, that one can misrepresent Nietzsche’s philosophy by ignoring his intention to appraise objects and ideas through the ‘Optik des Lebens’ (GTVS 2) and reducing his work to the type of ‘reine Kopfangelegenheit’ (UB III, 5) or ‘Erkenntnisstheorie’ (JGB 204) that he explicitly seeks to avoid. Although the concepts of independence and fruitfulness may have theoretical weaknesses and inherent contradictions, one would obscure the main thrust of Nietzsche’s thought by focusing on these alone; for one would neglect the crucial significance of these concepts as responses to the world that Nietzsche lived and worked in.

The terms ‘Freiheit’ and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ have been used throughout the thesis – as words that Nietzsche himself uses regularly and in a specific manner – to denote *modes of behaviour* or *attitudes* that Nietzsche regards as both conducive to the ‘Herstellung des Individuums’ (NF 1876, 17, 27) and life-enhancing. In the world that we feel and perceive – which, Nietzsche repeatedly tells us, is the world that he is interested in – the instructions to preserve one’s independence and to prioritise creative activity over the acquisition of knowledge have clear implications for the way that we act, and for the way that we engage with people, events and ideas.

In the case of ‘Freiheit’, it means that we cannot be content merely to imitate the people we admire. It also means that we must familiarise ourselves with the ideals and prejudices of our milieu, and understand how these can adversely influence our behaviour and shape our character unless we remain vigilant. These two practical concerns were discussed in Chapter Two, which analysed Nietzsche’s understanding of *Bildung* as ‘Befreiung’ (UB III, 1). Our heroes, Nietzsche insists, must act as stimuli to the project of self-cultivation, while the customs and dogmas of our age must not be allowed to impede it. The latter point is best illustrated by Nietzsche’s hostile reaction to the political climate of nineteenth-century Germany, which is one of the most prominent features of Nietzsche’s own ‘untimeliness’. Nietzsche’s battle against nationalism and the infection of the ‘deutscher Geist’ (BA III) by a ‘politisches Fieber’ (NF 1874, 32, 63) is pivotal to *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, and is animated by a belief that he reiterates throughout his writing. He argues that devotion to a country or political ideology deprives people of their ‘Freiheit’ and limits their potential by determining their opinions, attitudes and conduct for them; men dedicate themselves to the collective interests of their nation or cause, and therefore feel ‘vergnügt’ (UB

III, 4) when they think and act in accordance with those interests. As we saw in Chapter Two, the epitome of such self-negation, Nietzsche claims, is the figure of the *Bildungsphilister*; he contends that the work of men like Julian Schmidt, Georg Gottfried Gervinus and David Strauss was not the ‘Überfluß’ (NF 1872, 19, 266) of a constantly evolving, self-governed personality, but was instead the external manifestation of a suppressed individualism. By writing to explain or promulgate an external ‘truth’, the *Bildungsphilister* supposedly reveals his status as one of the ‘Gläubige’ (UB I, 3) who submits to faith or ideology and is therefore unable to develop himself further.

As well as surrendering his ‘Freiheit’, the *Bildungsphilister* is also supposedly incapable of being fruitful in Nietzsche’s sense of the word. The early Nietzsche’s concept of ‘Fruchtbarkeit’, and the importance of art to it, was studied in Chapter Three. The first part of the chapter analysed Nietzsche’s opposition to art that aspired to ‘tell the truth’ (‘die Wahrheit zu sagen’, GT 14), by examining his polemic against Socrates and Euripides from *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. It was shown that Nietzsche’s antagonism is closely linked to the theory of aesthetics that he presents in the same work, and specifically to his belief in art’s ability to justify the world aesthetically;¹ an ability which is supposedly compromised if art is merged with the ‘wirkliche Welt’ (GT 7). Nietzsche argues that the didactic or realist art favoured by the *Bildungsphilister* was driven by a ‘sokratischer Tendenz’ (GT 12) which aimed to advance truth rather than transfigure existence, and insists that it therefore could never be an agent of ‘Weiterleben und Weiterwuchern’ (GT 10).

This Socratic tendency is shared, in Nietzsche’s view, by the ‘Gelehrte’ (GT 18) or ‘theoretischer Mensch’ (GT 15) who is allegedly consumed by the search for

¹ ‘Nur als *aesthetisches Phänomen* ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig *gerechtfertigt*’ (GT 5).

knowledge. Unlike the *Bildungsphilister* or Socratic artist, whom Nietzsche portrays as exhibiting a debased form of creativity that is subservient to the pursuit or promotion of ‘truth’, the scholar supposedly ignores creativity entirely in favour of ‘dissecting’ (‘zerlegen’, UB III, 6) the world around him. It is in the contrast between the ‘wissensgierige, durch Wissen allein zu befriedigende Einzelne’ (UB II, 4) and the ‘grosse productive Geist’ (ibid.) that the early Nietzsche’s concept of ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ is most clearly articulated. Nietzsche lavishes praise on the genius and the ‘Thätigen und Mächtigen’ (UB II, 2) who have an effect (‘Wirkung’ UB II, 5) on the world through their deeds and works; something of which the supposedly inner-directed, retentive scholar is incapable because he has neither the ability to produce a ‘heller, blitzender Lichtschein’ (UB II, 1) nor an interest in ‘was jetzt werden soll’ (ibid.).

According to Nietzsche, both the *Bildungsphilister* and the theoretical man derive meaning and ‘comfort’² from knowledge of the world as it currently exists, whether by aligning themselves to a particular ‘truth’ – such as a country, political party or a person – and dutifully serving it, or by committing themselves to finding out as much as possible about a certain subject or academic field. By externalising value and attributing a primary or existential significance to their ‘demigod’, they supposedly ignore the individual’s responsibility to ‘add to nature’ (‘die Natur durch neue lebendige Natur vermehren’, UB III, 6). The *Bildungsphilister* and the theoretical man also allow their chosen object of knowledge – or the pursuit of knowledge itself – to regulate their thought and behaviour, and therefore to shape their identity. This, to Nietzsche’s mind, is a disastrous inversion of the proper order.

Nietzsche’s insistence that we must master knowledge and make use of it, instead of allowing knowledge to dominate us, was shown in the final part of Chapter

² ‘Er [der Bildungsphilister] benutzte aber die Gelegenheit, mit jener Verschmitztheit geringerer Naturen, das Suchen überhaupt zu verdächtigen und zum bequemen Finden aufzufordern’ (UB I, 2)

Three. He contends that knowledge of both the present and the past can be used to stimulate the individual's 'plastische Kraft' (UB II, 1): it can inspire and fortify those individuals who engage in the mutually reinforcing tasks of self-creation and life-enhancement, individuals whom Nietzsche regards as 'gesund, stark und fruchtbar' (ibid.). It can also educate us by revealing the conditions that must obtain in order for culture to thrive, in the way that Nietzsche's knowledge of antiquity allegedly enabled him to diagnose the 'allgemeine Krankheit' (UB III, 4) afflicting German culture. It was shown that these arguments, together with Nietzsche's self-characterisation as a 'Zögling älterer Zeiten' (UB II, Vorwort), reveal the fundamental significance that Nietzsche ascribes to knowledge, despite some postmodern or deconstructionist claims to the contrary. He is unflinching, however, in his claim that knowledge must be pressed into active service and that it should 'beget' ('zeugen', UB II, 3) activity that elevates life and the individual, instead of being viewed as an end in itself.

The ideas of 'Freiheit' and 'Fruchtbarkeit' are grounded in Nietzsche's confrontation with his life and times, and in his understanding of the value and purpose of truth. These themes engrossed Nietzsche throughout his working life, and the connection he establishes between them and his *Goethebild* is indicative of Goethe's significance to Nietzsche as one of the 'großen, einsam schreitenden Helden' (BA III) to whom Nietzsche pays frequent homage.

Goethe, as was argued in Chapter Four, is linked to these ideas in Nietzsche's early work through a combination of effusive praise and pointed criticism. Praise of Goethe almost always occurs when Nietzsche is describing Goethe as a person, and pertains to the human qualities that supposedly render Goethe such a valuable 'Beispiel' (UB III, 3). In particular, Nietzsche stresses Goethe's status as a tireless 'Suchende' (UB I, 2) who had resisted the repose or complacency that accompanies

the acceptance of fixed truths, and emphasises the vast distance that separates Goethe from a contemporary culture which Nietzsche believes was fettered by the realities of nineteenth-century German politics and society. Nietzsche also regards Goethe as an example of the fruitful artist – as opposed to the ‘barren’ (‘dürre’, BA IV) scholar or theoretical individual – and as someone who appreciated the importance of knowledge as a catalyst to action and creativity.

Nietzsche’s praise for Goethe as an individual is lavish and consistently linked to the ideas of independence and fruitfulness. As we saw, he is somewhat less enthusiastic about Goethe’s work; indeed, Nietzsche often explicitly disparages it. His criticism centres around three key claims: firstly, that Goethe was an ‘epic’ artist who had been unable, or unwilling, to incorporate the Dionysian aspect of art into his work; secondly, the closely related allegation that Goethe had misunderstood the nature of antiquity because of this same repression or denial of the Dionysian; and finally, Nietzsche’s pronounced ambivalence towards *Faust*.

These recurring objections are undoubtedly motivated by substantive, genuinely felt aesthetic concerns on Nietzsche’s part. Yet they also serve to assert Nietzsche’s independence from Goethe, in a way that is entirely consistent with his theory of *Bildung* as ‘Befreiung’. Nietzsche shares Goethe’s passion for antiquity and admires the manner in which Goethe used historical knowledge to increase his ‘Thätigkeit’ (UB II, Vorwort). Yet if he were simply to accept and reproduce the model of ancient Greece that Goethe, Winckelmann and others had established, he would find himself in a position of dependency that is at odds with the ideal of using knowledge to further one’s own creative projects.

Chapters Two, Three and Four of the thesis sought to establish the meaning and importance of ‘Freiheit’ and ‘Fruchtbarkeit’ to Nietzsche’s theory of *Bildung*, and

to show how Nietzsche's image of Goethe is inextricably linked to these by both the qualities that Nietzsche ascribes to Goethe as an individual and Nietzsche's assessment of Goethe's works. Chapters Five and Six then demonstrated how these themes are carried over into Nietzsche's later philosophy, even though his interest in *Bildung* is less pronounced in the works and notebooks of his 'middle' and 'late' periods. These chapters also revealed that Nietzsche's portrayal of, and attitude towards Goethe remains essentially unchanged in his writing from the late 1870s and 1880s.

In Chapter Five, it was argued that despite an evident shift in his approach to art and knowledge in *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches*, *Morgenröthe* and *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche continues to insist on the strategic necessity of independence and to argue that it is essential because it permits continual self-development and the further evolution of our identity. It was also demonstrated that one of the main reasons for this shift is that Nietzsche now sees knowledge as potentially emancipatory rather than necessarily tyrannical. In contrast to *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, where he tends to associate knowledge and the desire to acquire it with totalising, self-restrictive claims to absolute truth, he now more often sees it as a means to overcome our prejudices and to move beyond the customs and traditions that we have hitherto allowed to guide us. Knowledge, he asserts, is one of the indispensable tools with which the 'freie Geist' – whom he addresses in the three works from this period – preserves his independence and uniqueness.

Nietzsche remains adamant, however – in keeping with his early works – that knowledge is not self-legitimizing: it must aid self-cultivation, or be used by the genius as part of the process by which he attains to his 'Vermögen' (MA 162).

Nietzsche also continues to view art as an essential facet of human existence – despite abandoning the reverential tone towards it that he adopts in his early works – but stipulates that it must emanate from the ‘Aus- und Überströmen’ (VM 169) of the well-constituted individual, rather than from weakness. It was shown that he names Goethe as an example of the ‘schöne grosse Seele’ (VM 99) who is capable of such healthy creativity, as well as continuing to stress Goethe’s autonomy and his status as an ‘Ausnahme-Deutsche’ (FW 103).

Throughout his later works, Nietzsche holds fast to his view of contemporary ‘Deutschthum’ (WS 124) as an unreflective, self-limiting parochialism that is incompatible with his notion of freedom: a notion which, as we saw in Chapter Six, remains tied to the idea of perpetual self-development. In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Nietzsche once again places the figure of the ‘freie Geist’ at the centre of his work, and again argues that this archetype’s key attribute is the refusal to be lured by the ease and contentment of any ‘truth’ that would interrupt his endless ‘Wanderschaft’ (JGB 44) and ‘Wachsthum’ (JGB 230). The rejection or overcoming of nationalism is portrayed as a prerequisite of this ‘Unabhängigkeit’ (JGB 41), and of the self-development or growth that such independence facilitates; we are told that the free spirit is a ‘gute[r] Europäer’ (JGB 241) who will not be dictated to by the values of his homeland or allow a patriotic ‘Schollenkleberei’ (ibid.) to constrain or define him.

This view of nationalism as militating against ‘Selbst-Erhöhung’ (JGB 262) is directly traceable to Nietzsche’s early work on *Bildung*. Nietzsche returns to it in *Götzen-Dämmerung*, where he writes of the fallacy of identifying the Reich as one’s ultimate ‘Zweck’ (GD ‘Deutschen’, 5) and of thereby forgetting that one’s true purpose is ‘*Bildung selbst*’ (ibid.). As in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, Nietzsche rejects the suggestion that the service or love of one’s country makes one ‘fertig’ (GD

‘Deutschen’, 5), not only because he considers a love of ‘grosse Politik’ (GD ‘Deutschen’, 4) to be a sign of ‘Mittelmässigkeit’ (GD ‘Deutschen’, 1) but also – and more importantly – because he refuses to accept that we can ever be ‘finished’ as individuals or that we can derive our sense of self from an external source. He claims instead that we should assimilate – as opposed to being overwhelmed by – as many realms of knowledge and experience as can be safely accommodated within the self-determined borders of our personality. As the extended passage (§49) from the ‘Streifzüge’ chapter of *Götzen-Dämmerung* reveals, Nietzsche believes that Goethe is an example of this type of self-creation, which is simultaneously autonomous, disciplined and expansive.

In his writing from the 1880s, Nietzsche’s sustained belief in the need for personal independence or ‘Freiheit’ – and his concomitant view that nationalism is inimical to such independence – is matched by his unstinting commitment to the ideal of creative, self-expressive activity, which he displays in his use of terms such as ‘Spannung’ (JGB Vorrede) and ‘Zeugung’ (GD ‘Streifzüge’, 36). Although there is a difference in emphasis between Nietzsche’s early and late philosophy – in the latter he devotes more attention to the creation of new laws and standards that will help to overcome the ‘zeitgenössisch[e] Moralität’ (JGB 212) than he does to the creation of art – this should not distract from the consistency of the underlying principle or from the significance that he continues to assign to art and culture. Throughout his writing, Nietzsche remains convinced that we should ‘flow outwards’, or create anew, rather than simply absorb knowledge from the world that surrounds us. This fundamental proposition links the figure of the fruitful artist in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* with the genius of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*

and the ‘philosopher of the future’ of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. It is also the second central pillar of his *Goethebild*.

The portrait that Nietzsche paints of Goethe throughout his writing is remarkably consistent. The same can be said of the manner in which Nietzsche engages with Goethe as a historical figure: he shuns textual analysis of Goethe’s works and avoids protracted debates about the biographical details of Goethe’s life in favour of constructing a carefully crafted image of Goethe that provides support for his own claims and polemics. It has been shown that this approach is entirely in keeping with Nietzsche’s thinking and outlook, which have been analysed in this thesis. To investigate the minutiae of Goethe’s life or to try to get to the bottom of what Goethe ‘really’ thought would have been, to Nietzsche’s mind, a pointless and vain endeavour. Such information would only add to the ‘unverdaulichen Wissenssteinen’ (UB II, 4) that men already carry with them, and would potentially lure us into the cultural complacency that Nietzsche detects in the age: ‘Die [moderne] “*Bildung*” versuchte sich auf der Schiller-Goetheschen Basis, wie auf einem Ruhebetto, niederzulassen’ (NF 1872, 19, 276).

Instead of thus inhibiting or becalming Nietzsche, Goethe educates him by inspiring or ‘liberating’ him. Chapter Two demonstrated that for Nietzsche, the process of autonomous self-cultivation is not only vital for the individual who creates himself and carries out great deeds; it is also necessary in order to give strength to those that come after him. By preserving his freedom and refusing to submit to any of the ‘stärkste Instinkte’ (GD ‘Streifzüge’, 49) of his age, Goethe both preserved his own ‘Einzigkeit’ and stimulated Nietzsche’s ‘Strom’ and ‘Bestrebungen’ (NF 1870, 8, 92) in a way that Schopenhauer’s ‘Pessimismus’ (FW 357) and Wagner’s ‘Parsifal-Musik’ (JGB 256) ultimately could not.

One must recognise that despite his repeated exhortations to independence and non-conformity, Nietzsche was not, and could not have been, entirely original. A man who had been steeped in the literary and cultural traditions of European civilisation from his earliest school years could hardly avoid being swayed, whether consciously or not, by the authors that he read. There are many circumstances where we can point to the impact upon Nietzsche of an artist or philosopher, such as the occasions when he himself declares his indebtedness to figures such as Schopenhauer, Wagner and Heraclitus. Yet this does not detract from the importance of 'Freiheit' as an idea or attitude that Nietzsche repeatedly comes back to in his work. Although Nietzsche may on occasion have failed to live up to his own standard of autonomy, or may have set a standard that was not realistically attainable, his belief in the necessity of personal independence has enormous significance for the way that we read and interpret his philosophy, and for the way that we situate it within the context of nineteenth-century German history.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes: 'Ich greife nie Personen an, – ich bediene mich der Person nur wie eines starken Vergrößerungsglases, mit dem man einen allgemeinen, aber schleichenden, aber wenig greifbaren Nothstand sichtbar machen kann' (EH 'Weise', 7). While one may certainly dispute Nietzsche's claim that his attacks are never *ad hominem*, we can agree that this is the technique he very often uses to cast light on arguments and ideas. This thesis has sought to demonstrate that Goethe, or the image of Goethe that Nietzsche constructs, can be used in a similar fashion to bring Nietzsche's often complex thinking into sharp focus. It has also shown that Goethe is constantly present in Nietzsche's work as a symbol of independence and creative fruitfulness, and that Nietzsche's admiration for him never

wavers: a consistency that bestows a unique significance upon Goethe among the men whom Nietzsche identifies as his own educators.

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