



A Summer Evening Walk with Goethe and Schiller in Jena 1794

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In 1790, Goethe was invited to Schiller's wedding to Charlotte von Lengefeld, where they met for the first time. This formed the background of the later legendary meeting at the Society for Scientific Research in Jena the summer of 1794. The friendship with Schiller began a new period in Goethe's life, in some ways one of the happiest and, from a literary point of view, one of the most productive. This 'coming together again' led to them to form a great and lasting bond that would only be separated by death – it was the most powerful influence on the lives of the two poets, and the closeness of their intimacy is almost without parallel in literary history.⁴

It was not long before the close intimacy with a spirit as restlessly creative as his own began to show itself in Goethe's return to poetry, with the help of Schiller's intelligent criticism. Of Fräulein von Klettenberg, Goethe wrote: "My Klettenberg is dead! She who was so much to me!"⁵. The period of Goethe's closest intimacy with Schiller, although the two were in daily cooperation, left little of permanent literary worth from the former poet. On the other hand, these are the years of Schiller's greatest activity. Under Goethe's influence, Schiller soon returned his attentions to the craft of playwriting and during the period that followed composed his most mature dramas. In 1799, he took up residence in Weimar where he and Goethe collaborated to make the Weimar Theatre one of the most prestigious theatrical houses in Germany.

Here, as a 21st century post-modern reader-seeker observer, one is enabled occasionally to join in the conversation invisibly as they left the scientific meeting in Jena. In this way we accompany Goethe and Schiller. It turns out that modern research and development resounds throughout their conversation. Both were of the opinion that Nature should not be considered in such a piecemeal fashion as had been done in a lecture that they had just heard by the botanist August Johann Bach (1761-1802), the author of *Overmuch eider Anleitung our Kenton's undo Geschichte deer Pflanzen* (Hale, 1787)⁶

This conversation clearly demonstrated their two different worldviews - Goethe's Monism and Schiller's Dualism.⁷ Neither of them had been satisfied with what had been presented at the meeting: Schiller felt that a fragmented way of looking at Nature had been projected and remarked that such an approach could not appeal in any way to laymen. Goethe agreed, saying that it would perhaps remain strange even to the initiated themselves while adding that there could be yet another way of presenting Nature - not as something separated and isolated but rather as working and alive, as striving from the whole into the parts.

Goethe then went on to develop the great ideas that had arisen in him about the nature of the plants. Later we discuss how Goethe sought in the endless multitude of plant forms for the one archetypal plant—Urpflanze.⁸ Interestingly,

however, Steiner tells us that Goethe proceeded to sketch 'with many a characteristic pen stroke, a symbolic plant' before Schiller's eyes and explains Goethe's scientific thinking concerning the forces of growth at work within a plant; Goethe regarded 'an alternating expansion and contraction' as the external spatial factors that work upon a plant. Steiner explains that:

"As the entelechical principle of plant life (the realisation of potential), working out from one point, comes into existence, it manifests itself as something spatial; the formative forces work in space. They create organs with definite spatial forms. Now these forces either concentrate themselves, they strive to come together, as it were, into one single point (this is the stage of contraction); or they spread themselves out, unfold themselves, seek in a certain way to distance themselves from each other (this is the stage of expansion). In the whole life of the plant, three expansions alternate with three contractions. Everything that enters as differentiation into the plants formative forces, which in their essential nature are identical, stems from this alternating expansion and contraction."⁹

Steiner continues: (in greater detail to match Goethe's symbolic plant)

"At first the whole plant, in all its potential, rests, drawn together into one point, in the seed (a). It then comes forth and unfolds itself, spreads itself out in leaf formation (c). the formative forces thrust themselves apart more and more; therefore the lower leaves appear still raw, compact (cc'); the further up the stem they are, the more ribbed and indented they become. What formerly was still pressing together now separates (leaf d and e). What earlier stood at successive intervals (zz') from each other appears again in one point of the stem (w) in the calyx (f). This is the second contraction. In the corolla, an unfolding, a spreading out occurs again. Compared with the sepals, the petals (g) are finer and more delicate, which can only be due to a lesser intensity at one point, i.e., be due to a greater extension of the formative forces. The next contraction occurs in the reproductive organs, stamens (h), and pistil (i), after which a new expansion takes place in the fruiting (k). In the seed (a) that emerges

from the fruit, the whole being of the plant again appears contracted to a point. The fruit arises through the lower part of the pistil, the ovary (l); it represents a later stage of the pistil and can therefore only be sketched separately. With the fruiting, the last expansion occurs. The life of the plant differentiates itself into an organ - the actual fruit - that is closing itself off, and into the seeds; in the fruit, all the factors of the phenomenon are united, as it were; it is mere phenomenon; it estranges itself from life, becomes a dead product. In the seed are concentrated all the inner essential factors of the plants life. From it a new plant arises. It has become almost entirely ideal; the phenomenon is reduced to a minimum in it."¹⁰

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Goethe's symbolic plan



Goethe's symbolic plant—a representation of the *Urpflanze*—was meant to express the being that lives in every individual plant no matter what particular forms the plant might assume. It was meant to show the successive becoming of the individual plant parts, their emerging from each other, and their relatedness to each other. In 1787 Goethe had written of this symbolic plant shape: "There must be after all such a one! How would I otherwise know that this or that formation is a plant, if they were not all formed according to the same model."¹² From his scientific observations he had developed within him the mental picture of a 'malleable-ideal' form, which reveals itself to the spirit when it looks out over the manifoldness of plant shapes and is attentive to what they have in common.

This is what he had proceeded to draw out before him in a sensible-supersensible form, representing the plant as a whole, out of which leaf, blossom, and so forth, reproducing the whole in detail, take form. This, in the twenty-first century, is now made plain—as Goethe's detailed initial accounts encountering the plant in its archetypal mode show—that "this experience is not to be confused with a mental abstraction, as if it were a sort of lowest common denominator of all plants ... as common as the error of supposing the archetypal plant to be a primitive organism."¹³ Schiller then—in the eighteenth century—had no such advantage and because he had not yet overcome the Kantian point of view and could only see in this 'whole' an 'idea' formed by human reason through the observation of the details. Schiller

contemplated this formation, which supposedly lived in all plants and not just one single plant, and said, shaking his head: "that is not an experience, that is an idea."¹⁴ Schiller's 'experience' here equates to the external extensive analytical (physical sensory) mode of consciousness; and, his 'idea' to the internal intensive holistic (spiritual non-sensory) mode of consciousness. Of the former, Henri Bortoft says:

"The process of comparing external appearances to find what is common to them is the way that the analytical mode of consciousness tries to find unity. But the unity of this "unity in multiplicity" has the quality of uniformity, and hence it is static and inflexible. In this mode... we refer to reducing multiplicity to unity. It is the mechanical unity of a pile of bricks, and not the organic unity of life."¹⁵

At the time, Goethe was somewhat taken aback as he was aware that he had arrived at his symbolic shape through the same kind of naive perception as the mental picture of a thing which one can see and feel. And he would not allow this to pass because he 'saw' the 'whole' spiritually as he saw the group of details with his senses, and he admitted no difference in principle between the spiritual and the sensible perception, but only a transition from one to the other. And it was clear to him that both had the right to a place in empirical reality. The symbolic, universal or archetypal plant was for Goethe an 'objective being' just like the individual plant. He knew that the symbolic archetypal plant had sprung not from arbitrary speculation but from unbiased observation. Goethe's 'way of doing science'—inclusive holistic (spiritual non-sensory) mode—enabled him visual entry to an individual plant, to perceive it holistically and thus—to all plants:

"He saw into the coming-into-being of the plants so deeply that he saw all plants as one plant. What he saw could be described as 'the possibility of plant.' A philosopher of being like Martin Heidegger would perhaps have said that Goethe reached the 'to be' of plant. The archetypal plant as an omnipotential form is clearly a different dimension of the plant than what appears in the space-time dimension as many plants."¹⁶

Schiller still maintained that the 'archetypal plant' was not an experience but was, in fact, an idea. This view, due to language and methodology, has continued into the twenty-first century. However, 'archetypal omnipotential form':

"To the analytical mind which is formed around experience with material bodies... must seem unreal, and hence must appear to be only an abstract thought... the omnipotential form, which is the archetype, is one plant, which is all possible plants. As such it is not a blueprint for plants, a general plant, or the common factor in all plants. This... would have the quality of uniformity. But... has the quality of diversity within unity, and from Goethe's own account it is inherently dynamical and indefinitely flexible."¹⁷

Goethe responded to Schiller by saying: "I can be very glad, then, when I have ideas without knowing it, and in fact even see them with my eyes."¹⁸ Goethe was extremely unhappy as Schiller rejoined with the words: "How can an experience ever be given that could be considered to correspond to an idea. For the characteristic nature of ideas consists in the fact that no experience could ever coincide with it"¹⁹ Importantly, though, as Bortoft says: "The intellectual mind does not understand omnipotentiality *dynamically* in terms of the coming-into-being of the plants, but *statically* in terms of the plants that have already become (emphasis added). It conceives it as if it were a state, which already contained the finished plants beforehand. This is an analytical counterfeit of something which can only be understood holistically."²⁰ As one absorbs

their eighteenth century conversation in the light of our twenty-first century observations, it is apparent that these two opposing worldviews still confront each other. In précis, then, for consideration, a brief summary is indented below:

Schiller's eighteenth century modern 'external, extensive and analytical' dualism (physical sensory mode of consciousness) sees the world as two spheres, the world of 'ideas' and the world of 'experience'. To the sphere of 'experience' belong the manifold things and events, which fill space and time. Confronting it stands the sphere of 'ideas,' which is a differently constituted reality of which reason takes possession (analytical counterfeit) Human knowledge to Schiller flows into the being from both spheres, from without it is through observation and from within through thinking, thus Schiller's dualism distinguishes from the two spheres two sources of knowledge.

Goethe's eighteenth century modern 'internal, intensive and (w)-holistic' monism (spiritual non-sensory mode of consciousness) perceives only one source of knowledge, the world of 'experience' in which the world of 'ideas' is included. It is not possible for Goethe's monism to talk of 'experience and idea' because to him the idea exists, through spiritual experience, before the spiritual mind's I-consciousness in the same way that the sense world exists before the physical eye. Goethe's monistic worldview demonstrates a wholeness, a oneness, a universal symbolic or archetypal perception of nature, 'experience and idea' being part of the 'whole'.

Goethe's monism for Steiner represented a particular type of thinking which he termed 'Goethean thinking'; from his own research he later developed his concept of 'living thinking' philosophical spirituality. This, in hi-tech twenty-first

century terms (post-modern) as opposed to the 18th-19th century (mid-late-modern), perceives the world in the internal inclusive holistic mode of consciousness. Nonetheless, this conversation was a momentous moment for both men as it enabled them to forge their great and lasting friendship. Suffice it to say, this was the instant from which Goethe realised that in order to be clearly understood he also must clearly understand the 'other'.

Now for a brief analysis of this Cartesian abyss to identify how the differences of worldview occurred. We have seen in the conversation with Schiller that there stood before Goethe's spiritual mind's I-consciousness a worldview antithetical to his own; this antithesis demonstrates his feeling about the way of picturing things that originated only from a one-sided aspect of Hellenism. It is in his conversation with his friend Schiller that he is able to perceive quite clearly that there exists for Schiller an Cartesian abyss between physical sensory experience and spiritual non-sensory experience, and how he, just as clearly, without any such abyss, saw the experience of the senses and the experience of the spirit unite in a world picture (monistic: holistic—intensive spiritual non-sensory—mode of consciousness), which communicated Reality to him. Schiller, along with all other such thinkers (dualistic: analytical—extensive physical sensory—mode of consciousness), could never perceive the true reality of a thing because only the sensory experience, the 'physical real' manifestation of it was allowed in—by their thinking—and from which they could form their concept of it.

The other half of the thing was across the other side of the abyss, the idea of it, the spiritually real non-sensory aspect was for him not a part of it but rationally (intellectual-analytical) separated from it. He could postulate upon the idea of a thing ad infinitum and so the 'full reality', the true Reality, of the entirety of the thing completely eludes him. Goethe, on the other hand, kept the physically real and the spiritually real together, formulating one concept in its true Reality. We, in twenty-first century postmodern terms, are able to see this somewhat more clearly now.



Bearing all this in mind, Steiner derived considerable comfort from Goethe and Schiller's conversation and, after a long struggle of the mind and with a greater depth of understanding, he was able to penetrate these words of Goethe since they visibly demonstrated Goethe's way of viewing nature and appeared to him in keeping with spirit; this fitted perfectly with Steiner's own philosophical active living spiritual perceptions and experience. Also, at this point, as briefly mentioned, we in our twenty-first century hi-tech post-modern world are enabled to perceive the world and indeed the Universe in a more internal inclusive holistic mode of consciousness. For example, he writes of Goethe: "In intercourse (correspondence and discussion) with Schiller—after 1794—a turning point came in his conceptions, in that from this time on he took a reflectively observing relationship to his own procedure and research methods so that his way of viewing things became for him an object of observation."²¹

Furthermore, the key to this defining instant pinpointed by Steiner is Schiller's friendship. Indeed, Schiller is the vital philosophical spiritual link that was required for Goethe, just as he was later for Steiner when reading Schiller's *Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* from which he was able to make the connection in his own right; and, due to Goethe's deep and spiritually intimate friendship with Schiller Goethe was able to read these prior to their publication — and they also deeply stirred him. The significance of this is not lost upon us as it is an important threefold instant in the evolution of philosophical spirituality:

1) Schiller's developed philosophy—concerning humankind's true nature—as expressed in *Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795).

2) Goethe's development of this in his *Naturphilosophie*.

3) Steiner's further development of this in his *Naturmetaphilosophie*.

Intriguingly then, in multi-cultural terms, here is the vital natural meta-link—though at a higher level — connecting both the physical sensory and the spiritual non-sensory aspects of a human being with the Universal Divine Spirit.

The 'active-idea as image' is the 'way of doing science' developed by Goethe, and post-modern science and philosophy are beginning to prove the wholeness of nature and Goethe's way of doing science. Besides his prodigious literary achievements, Goethe undoubtedly believed that the sizeable body of his scientific work "...would some day be recognised as his greatest contribution to humankind."²² His contemporaries, however, and several succeeding generations pre-dominantly ignored his scientific works: "these works were seen either as subjective artistic descriptions written by a scientific dilettante or as a form of philosophical idealism that arbitrarily imposed intellectual constructs on the things of nature. Only in the twentieth century, with the philosophical articulation of phenomenology, do we have a conceptual language able to describe Goethe's way of science accurately."²³

In précis, then, Goethe's way of doing science is a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach that stresses the integral interconnectedness between the seeing 'subject' and the observed 'object.' Such an understanding entirely suits late twentieth and early twenty-first century post-modern humankind, thus enabling us to consider Goethe our contemporary. We should therefore view Goethe not just as another poet who lived some two hundred years ago, but as a forerunner of post-modern scientific 'thinking' who 'de-constructs-re-constructs' phenomena so as to gain a true knowledge of them. Importantly, he did this not just physically in experiment, but also in his philosophical and spiritual thinking by way of verification.

4. Stuart P Heywood's *Emergent Holistic Consciousness* pp. 48-56. Initially, this was an improbable friendship because the differences were so great. Schiller, ten years younger than Goethe, was struggling to get on an equal footing with the older man. From the start, he felt he was being repulsed. In 1794 Schiller invited Goethe to contribute to the journal *Die Horen* [The Horae]. Goethe had learned to appreciate Schiller as an author.
5. Stuart P Heywood's *Emergent Holistic Consciousness* pp. 279-287.
6. It is a study of the writers of the eighteenth century who, following the lead of Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), Swedish naturalist and physician, promoted plant study. Goethe knew Batsch—yet another Jena botanical friend—who as a young Master of Arts had studied medicine and natural science at the University there, and, besides, had published some poetic attempts. He was living at Weimar in difficulties when Goethe made his acquaintance on the ice. His delicate precision and quiet zeal attracted Goethe, who prompted him to return to Jena—there to devote himself entirely to natural science.
7. **Monism:** 1) A theory or doctrine that denies the existence of a distinction or duality in a particular sphere, such as that between matter and mind, or God and the world. 2) The doctrine that only one supreme being exists. **Dualism:** 1) The division of something conceptually into two opposed or contrasted aspects, or the state of being so divided: a dualism between man and nature. 2) A theory or system of thought that regards a domain of reality in terms of two independent principles, especially mind and matter (Cartesian dualism). www.oxforddictionaries.com.
8. See: Stuart P Heywood's *Emergent Holistic Consciousness, ... Goethe's Urphenomenon*, pp. 299-304.
9. Rudolf Steiner's *Goethean Science*, (Mercury Press, New York, 1988), pp. 63.
10. Rudolf Steiner's *Goethean Science*, (Mercury Press, New York, 1988), pp. 63 and, p. 272. n. 37.
11. Goethe's *symbolic* plant is taken from Rudolf Steiner's *Goethean Science* p. 64. Ch IV.
12. Rudolf Steiner, *Goethe's World View*, (Mercury Press, New York, 1963), p. 11-12.
13. Henri Bortoft, *The Wholeness of Nature: Goethe's Way of Science*, p. 83.
14. Rudolf Steiner, *Goethe's World View*, p.12. Also, see Note 4 - Dualism.
15. Henri Bortoft, *The Wholeness of Nature: Goethe's Way of Science*, p. 83-84.
16. *Ibid*, p. 84.
17. *Ibid*, p. 84. Two other definitions of Goethe's archetypal plant which may prove helpful: 1) Psychoanalysis (In Jungian theory) a primitive mental image inherited from the earliest human ancestors, and supposed to be present in the collective unconscious/mind's I-consciousness. 2) A recurrent symbol or motif in literature, art, or mythology: mythological archetypes of good and evil.
18. Rudolf Steiner, *Goethe's World View*, (Mercury Press, New York, 1963), p. 12.
19. Rudolf Steiner, *Goethe's World View*, p.12.
20. Henri Bortoft, *The Wholeness of Nature: Goethe's Way of Science*, pp. 84-85.
21. Rudolf Steiner, *Goethe the Scientist*, p. 48. As printed in Vol. I of *Goethe's Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, [Goethe's Scientific Study of Nature] in Kurschner's *National-Literatur*. The introductory chapters were worked out further by Goethe in 1796. In these treatises Goethe's fundamental views in regard to the formation of the animals are as fully contained as are those regarding the formation of plants in his writing *Versuch die Metamor-bose der Pflanzen zu erklären* [Attempt to Explain the Metamorphosis of Plants].
22. David Seamon & Arthur Zajonc (Eds) *Goethe's Way of Science*, p. 1. Citing, n.1: The most complete set of Goethe's scientific writings in English is J. W. von Goethe, *Goethe: Scientific Studies*, ed. and trans. D. Miller (New York: Suhrkamp, 1988; reprinted by Princeton University Press, 1994); this work includes a selection of Goethe's writings on morphology, botany, zoology, geology, meteorology, and physics as well as several of his writings on "Methodology and General Scientific Topics." Also useful is J. W. von Goethe, *Goethe's Botanical Writings*, trans. B. Mueller (Woodbridge, Conn.: Ox Bow Press, 1989; originally 1952); this volume includes selections "On General Theory"
23. *Ibid*. pp. 1-2.

Stuart P Heywood was a former entrepreneur, who ran a business selling business computers and word processors. His interest in the evolution of human thought processes originated during this time when he noticed that people were unaccountably attached to old ways of doing things despite being offered more efficient alternatives; nonetheless, within a few generations the world changed; thus, indicating the probable existence of the hidden/invisible non-sensory half of evolution. In the 1990s he went on to study at the University of Bristol, gaining BA and MA degrees in theology and contemporary theology.