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# THE OPEN COURT

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

FOUNDED BY EDWARD C. HEGELER

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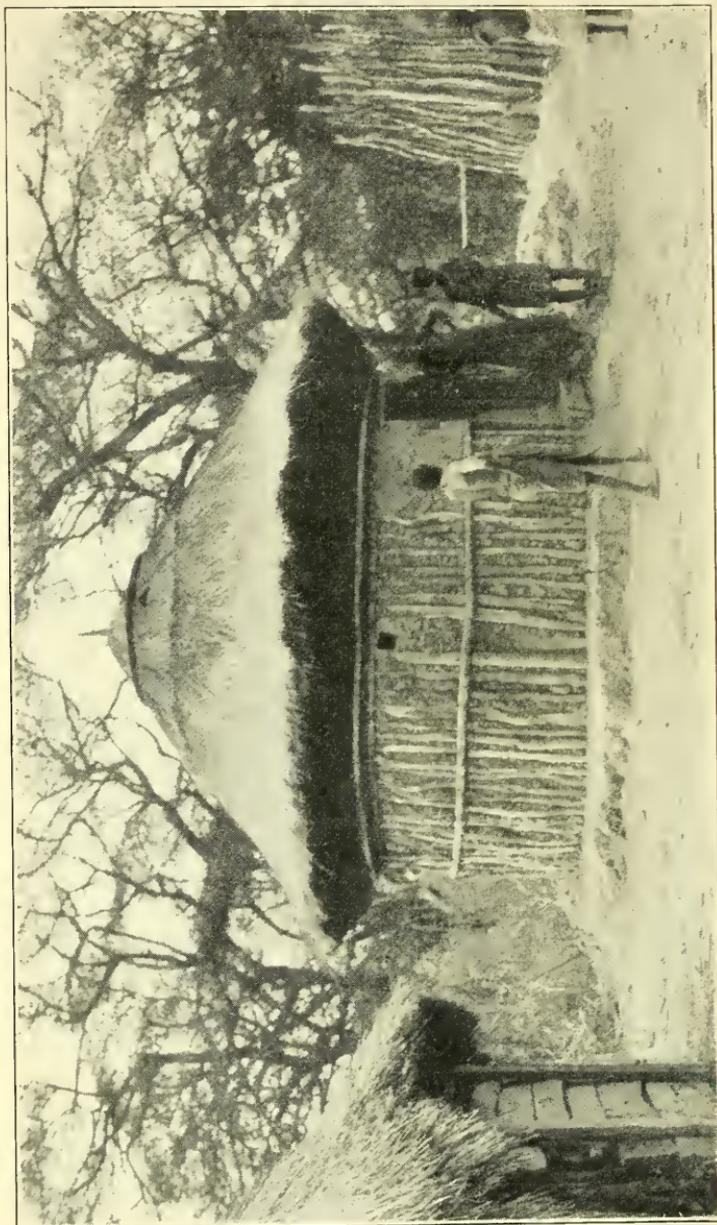
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HOUSE OF MEDITATION

Where the king communes with ancestral spirits during drought.  
Ngalang, Angola.

*Frontispiece to The Open Court.*

# THE OPEN COURT

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## GOETHE AS A LYRICAL POET

BY MARTIN SCHÜTZE  
The University of Chicago

WHATEVER one's opinion about the eminence of German drama and German prose literature, and about the poetry of reflection, one must admit that in the song lyric, or "Lied," Germany excels the other modern cultural nations. The volume, the continuity, and the qualities of spontaneity, simplicity, and universal human appeal of modern German song have no parallel. Whether this unbroken stream of song, which has now continued more than a hundred and sixty years and shows no sign of lessening, is the result of the unequalled succession of musical composers of song from Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert to Wolff, Brahms, and Strauss, and their successors; or the result of the peculiar conditions of the German cultural revival during the last generation of the eighteenth century, conditions which were decisive in directing attention to the popular, or folk character, rather than to the more sophisticated type of personality; or whether it arises, together with the Märchen, from some spontaneous naïve sensibility characteristic of German race personality; or from a combination of all these sources, need not trouble us tonight.

Important for us upon this occasion is the realization that the modern German song lyric has developed a poetical attitude of mind and a way of transforming common experience which are unique and rare. The "Lied," the specifically German song, while it has often a dramatic and active character, is not concerned primarily with external events and actions; while it is naïvely interested in the realities of life and nature, it does not depict or describe in its characteristic utterance situations or natural scenes; and while it is not indifferent or ignorant of ideas, tendencies and ideals, it absorbs all reflective elements in apparently more concrete and more simple, but really more abstract, universal, profoundly rich consummations of total personal sentiment.

The poetry of thought, of abstract ideas, at least on the assumptions underlying a modern view of German lyrical poetry, is not superior but is inferior to a perfect song. It stops short of the complete integral unity essential to a supreme work of art. It is the product of a creative gift, not sufficiently potent to fuse in the glowing unity of song the elements of sentiment, sensation, perception, and reflection, together with the dynamic or motor elements inherent in every personal response to significant experience. In developing his theme in the direction of reflective, theoretical abstraction and generalization a poet must slight and ignore those elements of direct feeling and sentiment, and the immediate motor and emotional reactions, which are the deepest forces determining the movement, the lilt, rhythm, tempo, cadence, "music," the temperamental flow and fluctuations, which are the soul of song.

No degree of literary refinement in phraseology, imagery, rhetoric, no subtleness of differentiation and reflective intimations, can supply the integral quality of song. Literary poetry even in its finest forms—great as especially in English letters it has been and can be within its type—falls short of the ultimate consummation of song. Setting Keats' *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, or Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality* to music would spoil poems of reflection without producing song.

The modern German tradition of great popular song, which began with Goethe, is the unique and supreme German achievement in literature. If every other German work of literary creation were destroyed except its songs, Germany could still maintain its position in the front rank of literary nations.

Since a paper on the poetry of Goethe must be controlled by a considerable austerity of selection, the principal stress this evening will fall upon the greatest and most characteristic achievement of Goethe's genius, namely, his songs.

It is natural for those acquainted, as most of us are, with the deep and wide current of German lyrical poetry, to take it for granted that Germany has always been the home of song. But if one goes back a few years, about twenty, before Goethe's lyrical beginnings, one finds a condition so unexpected that it is shocking.

It is difficult for our generation to form a true picture of the conditions of literature and especially of lyrical poetry in Germany at the time when Goethe began his poetical career, that is, about

1766. In the early part of the eighteenth century there was only one German maker of songs of the first rank: Christian Günther. He died 1723, only twenty-eight years old. He was so far beyond the general level of his contemporaries that he perished from physical and mental privation. He was misunderstood even by Goethe who wrote of him nearly a century after Günther's death: "He could not control himself and so wasted his life and his art." This unjust verdict, which appears in Goethe's autobiography, has prevented to this day, more than two centuries after Günther's death, the recognition due to one of the most gifted and most tragic figures in German poetry, a genius akin to Franz Schubert, who came a century after him and whose greatness also Goethe failed to understand. Fortunate indeed is the man like Goethe, whose genius matures together with, rather than before, the spirit of his age.

Among the poets of the middle of the eighteenth century whom we should regard as the forerunners of Goethe, Klopstock is the most important. He did most to release spontaneous feeling from the bondage of conventional ideas and rules. But in the development of song proper he takes a minor place. The other lyrists were either chiefly didactic-moralistic, or they represented the so-called "anacreontic" movement.

Goethe's first lyrical poetry having significance was written in Leipzig, 1766-1768, between his sixteenth and nineteenth year. It followed the "anacreontic" fashion, which was the literary expression of the rococo. Since it is on the whole imitative and significant chiefly from a historical point of view, we pass over it with a bare mention, to come as soon as possible to his first great period of song.

In 1768 Goethe returned to Frankfurt, ill and discouraged. After two barren years at home in 1770, at the age of twenty-one, he went to Straszburg to complete his law studies. In September 1770 there arrived also in Straszburg the man who was to open to him as if by a miracle, a new imaginative and creative world. Herder, five years older than Goethe, had within three years become the acknowledged leader of the new literary and cultural movement which was to be the source of the German Classic Era.

Herder's philosophy, from which arose his theories of poetry and art, history, "humanism" or Humanität, psychology, theology, and social and political structure, was the culmination of the vast

and outwardly confused, yet essentially rather simple intellectual development which brought about the overturn of the ruling combination of neo-classical formalism with rationalistic speculative absolutism. Neo-classicism began with the seven French poets, who formed, under the leadership of Ronsard, about the middle of the sixteenth century, a group calling itself the Pléiade, and reached its highest development in the doctrines of Corneille and Boileau, and the practice of Corneille, Racine, and to a far less extent, of Molière. Both theories came to Germany in adaptations made by Opitz, at the beginning of the seventeenth, and by Gottsched, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, respectively, of which the latter was particularly uninspired and crude. Gottsched ruled in German letters until 1740 and even somewhat later.

The reaction against this tradition advanced the theory of the supreme authenticity of total individual sensibility in all matters of personal experience, feeling, and value against the neo-classic-rationalistic doctrine of the "absolute, universal, necessary," super-individual "Reason," whose predominance had been extended to poetry and the arts by Boileau.

In the field of poetry, Herder developed from this central idea his theory of folk song. Folk song in his view is the type of song which embodies the authentic, emotional and imaginative, spontaneous experience, the total "Gemütsleben," which is fundamental to normal, sound, imaginative, and intelligent humanity, that is, to all persons not warped and desiccated by false and conventional training, specialization, preoccupation and self-absorption. The question, who made these songs, whether a learned, a socially distinguished, or an unlearned, rustic person, did not matter to Herder. The many later wire-drawn academic differentiations between folk poetry, folkish poetry, and "art"-poetry, have no significance within Herder's view of poetry. They are, in the main, the results of the belief underlying the theories of the Pléiade and Boileau that poets must be, as it were, duly licensed members of some guild of classical learning.

Herder insisted on the complete organic integrality of individuality, an integrality in which there are no separate faculties, no reason that is not also feeling, will, imagination; no feeling that is not also mind. This completely integrated person, who does whatever he undertakes "with all his heart and all his mind" ("mit

ganzem Herzen und mit ganzer Seele"), this indissoluble intelligent whole, was Herder's ideal of cultural personality. It became the ideal of the genius, the cultural and poetic hero of the entire German classic era, which was sustained by this fundamental conception. This is a conception of genius, of cultural ideal of personality, different indeed from the later conception of genius as more or less of a freak which was characteristically developed by nineteenth-century positivistic utilitarianism and sociology, with the support of medical notions of physical normality.

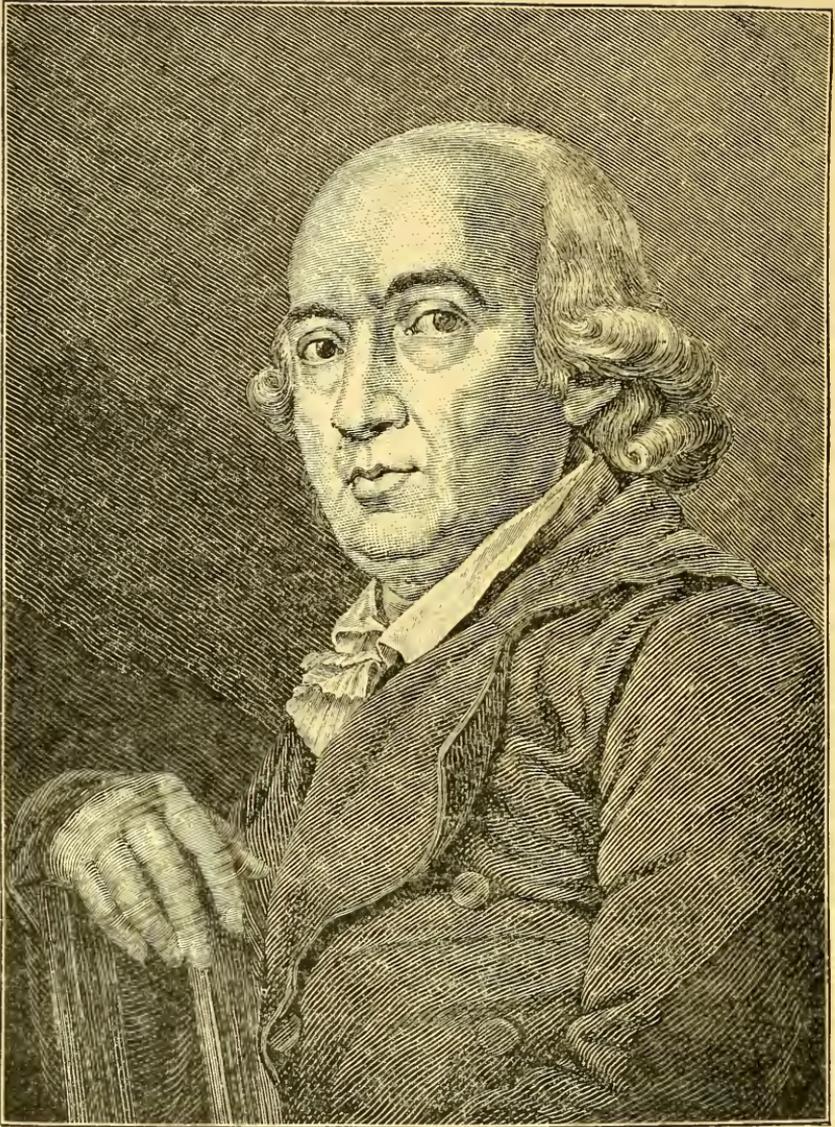
Herder communicated his ideas freely to Goethe in their daily intercourse during the year 1770-1771 in Straszburg. Goethe tells of this, intellectually the most quickening period in his life, in the tenth book of his autobiography. Herder's theory of genetic integral personality became the central subject, the "motif" of Goethe's view of life. It was the fundamental germinating force from which grew the substance of all his creative work. In his classic formulation in *Wilhelm Meister*, this "integral flame-fused totality"<sup>1</sup> is the essential principle distinguishing the genius, the cultural hero, from the ordinary, uncreative, utilitarian person.

Herder released Goethe's literary aspirations and spontaneities. The young poet had been intimidated and constrained by universal literary conventions. Now at last, as if by magic, following the guidance of Herder, he had a transporting vision of an authentic test of truth and beauty. Whatever spontaneously and absorbingly engaged all his faculties, that alone was now significant.

But it required still another vitalizing experience to complete his release. Throughout his life, love was his supreme poetic impulse. During his first great creative period, beginning in 1771 and ending in 1775, with his departure for Weimar, he passed through three crises of passion which left enduring records in his nature and poetry. In the history of song the first one is by far the most important.

Suddenly, apparently without any preparation or transition, Goethe burst into song. It was a new voice and a new melody, such as had not been heard in Germany since the great days of the Minnesang, and has never again been repeated. Here was a sentiment so young and strong and right that it swept aside every self-conscious smirk and simper, every mediocre qualm of gentility, every

<sup>1</sup>See Martin Schütze. "Das zusammenbrennende, zusammentreffende Ganze in Wilhelm Meister," *Modern Philology*, vol. xxvi, No. 4, May, 1929.



JOHANN GOTTFRIED VON HERDER

pose of superiority and disillusionment, and also every false etherealism and tissue-paper tenderness characteristic of rococo poetry. And here also was a new language, so lyrical, so native and spontaneous, that all other singers of the eighteenth century, with the sole exceptions of Günther and Klopstock, seemed like empty shells. And even Klopstock seemed old-fashioned and only partly achieved. A true folk-poet, the greatest singer of songs of modern times, had arisen.

*Mailed* is a perfect spring song. All nature is radiant, loud with song and laughter, transfigured to the young lover whose heart is bursting with fervor and happiness, as are the branches and bushes with buds and voices. The sentences are almost without grammatical structure. Subordinate clauses, complexities of relations, are absent. Even faults in construction occur. The poet does not care to order and constrain in formal sentences the glories and riches of love and the multitudes of joy. The utterance as it rushes forth, continually breaks into sparkles and showers of exclamation, like a fountain.

The diction is extraordinarily compact and direct. Only the most significant features of the situation and sentiment are chosen. They are cast in the most terse, pregnant, and poignant imagery. Qualifying terms are avoided or limited to their simplest matter-of-fact meanings. They are either merely quantitative as "tausend," "jedem," "jeder," "volle," "ewig," or directly denominative of the glory, the freshness, the fervor, the blossom-promise and morning-purity, and the heavenly blissfulness of young love, as "Morgen—," "Blüten—," "Himmels—," "frische," "warmem," "neuen." Only one word having a transferred meaning, and that one so little unusual that one hardly feels it as figurative, is the adjective "golden," meaning "resplendent."

*Heidenröslein*, a true folk song, begins abruptly in the middle of the event, without preamble or descriptive setting characteristic of less accomplished song. Its sentences are brief, compact, declaratory, almost without conjunctions. Articles and the preparatory "es," common at the beginning of sentences in German narrative style, are elided or omitted, especially at the beginnings of lines. Dramatic intensification is accomplished chiefly by the two most common devices of folk song, the dialogue and the refrain.

Another characteristic which this song has in common with all

great songs, is its almost wholly unadorned and verbally unemotionalized manner of statement. As in *Mailed*, only once, and therefore with particular emphasis, in the adjective "morgenschön," does the fervor of the imaginary singer insinuate itself into the utterance. This word is also the only striking and unusual image in the song.

In *Der König in Thule*, another great folk song, the diction is even more compact than in the preceding songs. Every line is quick with substance. The great creators of song are impatient of anything but the main parts of the story. They disregard and eliminate all explanations, minor qualifications, subtleties and ornaments, painstaking stylistic bridges and linkages. Herder calls this characteristic of great song, "das sprunghafte," that is, "saliency." This salience is usually explained as naïveté, or a sort of stylistic helplessness resulting from an elementary, untrained mentality supposedly pertaining to "the people." In reality, it is the characteristic of superior minds, whose substantive selectiveness has not been thwarted and blurred by the pseudorefinements and sterile subtleties of petty self-consciousness and phrase- and image-hunting. The so-called "art"-poetry, i.e., the consciously literary poetry, represents not a higher but a lower poetic stage than true song.

Again in *Der König in Thule* Goethe is sparing of direct emotional expressions. Adjectives, "goldnen," "hohen," "alte," "letzte" are few and matter-of-fact. This economy gives particular and salient poignancy to the sacredness of a life-long wedded love symbolized in "heiligen," the only attribute of expressly pathetic import. A few slightly archaic words, "Buhle," "gar," "täten," appropriate to the situation, and a great economy in the sentence structure, aid in giving to the story the appearance of naïve pathos and the heroic force and simplicity essential to the greatest poetry.

In the last three stanzas, extraordinarily terse and graphic, the action moves with ever-increasing impressiveness toward the final climax. We see the old King sitting "there," in his high castle by the sea. In the next view of him, which passes immediately, he is standing "there." Thereupon, in other glimpses, we see the goblet falling, "drinking," sinking into the sea, and immediately after, the king sinking into death. The bare matter-of-fact statement of the last two lines has more pathos, force and universal significance than could have been attained by a more emotionalized and insistent manner of expression.

Goethe's rhythmic fineness and justness is unequalled in German lyrical poetry. But it is supreme only in his use of native lyrical forms. In the Greek, Latin, Romance and Oriental forms, with which he experimented in later years, he never achieved mastery.

The meter of the *König in Thule* is in the main monopodic, i.e., each foot is stressed singly and has the same weight as every other:

Es war/ ein König/ in Thule

The meters of most of the others are, in the main, dipodic. Two feet are combined to make a rhythmic unit. In such a combination one foot is subordinated to the other. The dipodic meter tends to speed the tempo, as in *Mailed*:

Wie herrlich leuchtet  
Mir die Natur!  
Wie glänzt die Sonne!  
Wie lacht die Flur.

*Der König in Thule*, by virtue of its monopodic meter, aided by a prevalence of long, heavy, "dark" vowels, moves with a solemn, stately gravity that suggests a funeral march.

By his unfailing sense of the natural movements of words, Goethe is the greatest master of the two subtlest qualities of song, namely its inherent rhythm and its proper tempo, ultimate qualities which can be acquired by no learning.

*Gretchen am Spinnrade*, sung by Gretchen in *Faust*, prepares us dramatically for her undoing. But the song is complete within itself. If the drama of *Faust* and Gretchen had never been written, the song could have no more complete meaning. The supreme anguish of love which contains the extremes of longing and dread, of triumph and terror, of heaviness of heart and exaltation, of desolation and exuberance, of confusion of mind and clearest recognition of one overmastering impulse, speaks in a language almost bare of qualification and ornament, and abrupt, "sprunghaft," in its transitions; in a meter impetuous as that of *Mailed*, yet with a tragic movement wholly different; and in the repetitions of the first stanza which produce the sympathetic effect of a refrain. There is not one image in the song but is so fully part of common speech that it is not felt as an image. This song, as all the greatest ones of Goethe, shows the falseness of the notion that poetry calls for images. True song is hurt by conscious originality in imagery. The

essence and real freshness of song are not contained in details but in the integral unity of the whole.

Gretchen is overmastered by her passion; breathless, hunted by it. Her pulses cannot rest. When her mind pauses as in a moment of exhaustion, she cannot pause; she fills the gap with a reiteration of her first distracted outburst. In the last two stanzas she surrenders herself wholly to her ecstasy of desire. This ending is more tragic than a distressful ending or another repetition of the refrain-like stanza could have been. We know that nothing can save her. She will plunge to ultimate destruction, but through the gate of utter bliss. She will not perish like a poor wretch, dragged down in weakness and despair of defeat, but self-determined, in a blaze of glorious passion.

In this passion, in the strength, completeness, and purity of her impulse, Gretchen rises to the one moment of supreme greatness in her life. Her pathos is truly tragic. She arouses, this innocent and simple-minded girl, not merely individual pity, but beyond it a vision of rare possibilities of happiness, of a being heroic and infinitely precious.

To the present speaker this is the greatest song of the tragic ruin of a loving girl in all literature.

Even at the risk of seeming presumptuous the speaker feels that he should not now, after many years of hesitancy, withhold his conviction, that Schubert, whom he loves and reveres as he does few creators of music, did a serious injury to this song by repeating the first stanza once more at the end. The sentiment of that refrain has been completely overcome in the the last two stanzas of Goethe's song. It is no longer real after them. Its repetition in Schubert's composition reverses, weakens, and sentimentalizes the tragic course of the whole. It makes the song drop back to a state of undecided distraction, instead of maintaining its rise to the highest exaltation of tragic self-fulfilment. Schubert's last stanza should be omitted. The song should end with Goethe's last stanza.

Klärchen's song in *Egmont*, expresses a less tragic side of the longing of love in its sudden and extreme oscillations. The mood, stripped of all detail of occasion, locality, time and event, season and weather, appears in its lyrical essence. It is individual, yet free from the limitations of individuality; general and yet rich and various in emotions and substance. Again there is no imagery which

as such draws our attention. The rhythm and meter are exquisite expressions of the tense and yet elastic mobility, the electric resiliency, the rhythmic energy of young love. In its supreme abstraction the song is as nearly absolute as can be anything uttered by the human mind.

This brief utterance, which seems effortless and unpremeditated, is one of the rarest flows of song. The highest spontaneity and naïveté are not lapses of ignorance and artlessness, as is often assumed in learned discourses on the differences—mainly imaginary—between “folk song” and “art-poetry”; but the final gifts of knowledge and art in which the self-consciousness of selection, composition, and intention is fused into the unity of direct integral sentiment.

This perfect song completes our picture of the essence of the first great, and in our opinion, the greatest period of Goethe's song.

The chief characteristic common to all the greatest songs of this period is that the sentiment, the imaginative experience, and the statement of each exclude everything except the indispensable substance, which remains after the elimination of all secondary qualification, ornament, and conscious appreciation or conscious emotionalization, both in the sentiment and in the statement. This supreme substantivity is usually interpreted as objectivity; and the quality of objectivity is then, in accordance with individual preoccupation regarded as inferior to “subjectivity,” when it occurs in folk song, especially in comparison with “art”-song, and at the same time as superior when it is found in Goethe.

There is no objective art in any definite sense. All art is subjective in its essential and crucial relations. Not only art, but all authentic experience. “Objective” poetry would be no less absurd, no less a contradiction in terms than “subjective” mathematics. The difference between great and poor poetry and art generally is not that of objectivity and subjectivity but of degree of substantivity or essentiality. The greatest art of all times has been distinguished by the elimination of minor details and a combination of all the elements essential to a poetic or artistic “idea.” Such an “idea” is an integral central unity of sentiment, so justly expressed that it conveys substantially the same poetic meaning, or imaginative sentiment, to all persons gifted with sufficient intelligence and with capacity for sentiment.

## WEIMAR

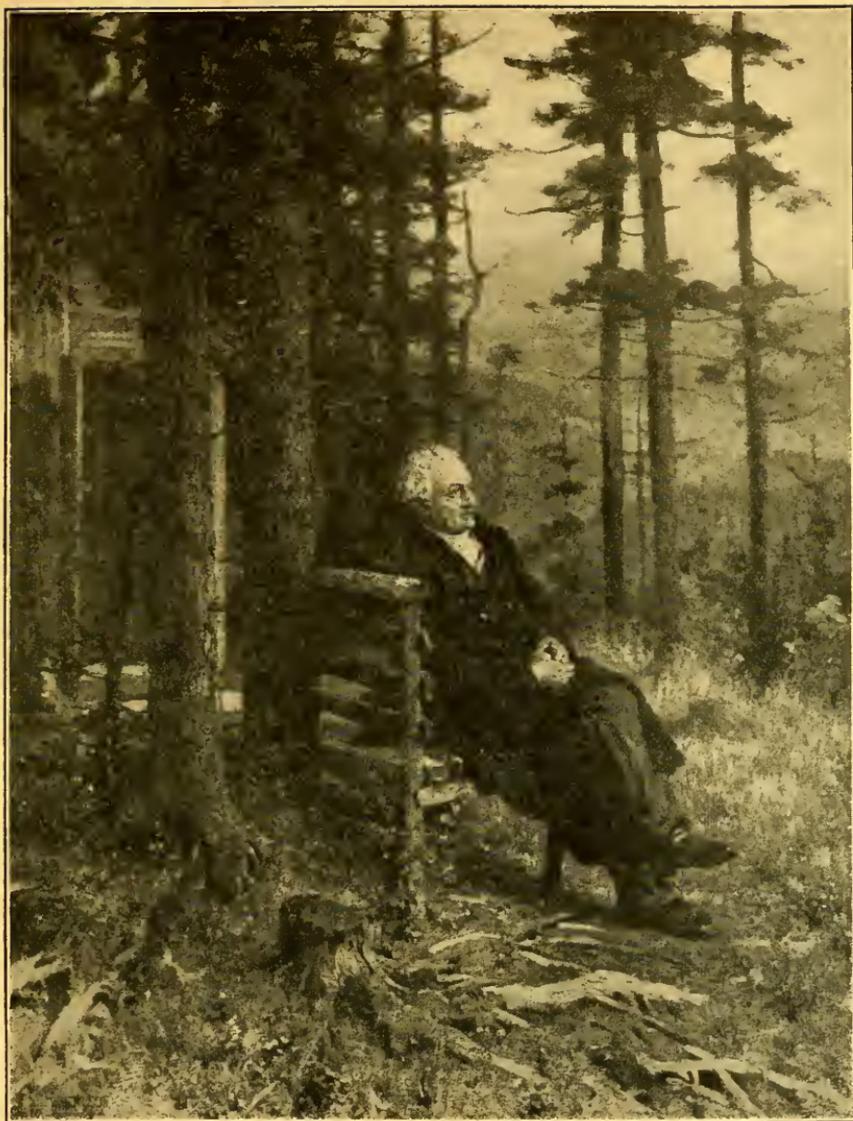
On November 7, 1775, Goethe arrived in Weimar, where he was to spend the remaining fifty-seven years of his life. He entered into a totally different environment. The foot-loose free-lance of poetry, who had troubled himself little about social formality, now had to adjust himself to the life of a small court. Friend and companion to the young duke, loved and hated by courtiers, the lover of Frau von Stein, who was the most intellectual of the ladies at the court; holder of many offices, including after only six years that of the President of the Ducal Chamber who was practically the ruler of the state, he was subject to a vast and complex pressure which affected every part of his mind and sentiment.

The influence of this environment began to appear soon in his poetry. Among the greatest songs written during the first decade of his life in Weimar, until his Italian Journey are *Der Fischer*, *Erkönig*, *Mignon*, *Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt*, *An den Mond*, and *Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh*.

A comparison of these songs with those of the preceding period reveals significant differences. The songs composed under the influence of the Weimar environment are marked by many refinements of style and meter. Some, like *Der Fischer*, *Erkönig*, *Mignon*, *An den Mond*, have a spell-like power resulting from an extremely artful use of mysterious suggestions, repetitions and sound symbolisms, very different from the direct simplicity of *Heidenröslein* and *Der König in Thule*. The force of the earlier songs seems to rest more in their substantive experience and pathos. The later ones aim with extreme verbal and metrical skill at an enhancement of the inherent force of their conceptions by creating a mysterious emotional preoccupation in the hearer. No more momentous in substance, they push farther the self-conscious, elaborately knowing pressure of their modes of statement. They are, particularly *Der Fischer* and *Erkönig*, somewhat loaded with deliberate skill.

*Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt* retains much of the tragic directness of *Gretchen am Spinnrade*. Yet with all its tragic poignancy and depth, it does not attain to the overwhelming poetic power and universality of the latter. It is more self-conscious; it does not rise to the glorious self-forgetfulness of *Gretchen*.

*Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh* sounds a new note in Goethe's poetry. It is one of the most perfect songs of the evening peace of nature.



GOETHE ON THE GICKELHAHN

It is, however, not really what is usually called a nature song. Nature songs do not as a rule sing, though their musical composers tell them that they must. In most literary compositions of this type, the imaginary person expressing his feelings is in some way found to be outside of his scene. He is an attentive, often sensitive and sympathetic observer of natural scenes or events. These he records faithfully in metrical language which is often subtly worded and ornamented with much interesting and fresh, though not rarely, far-fetched imagery. But his song will not sing. The fundamental necessity for song is a complete imaginative unity of the speaker and his story. As long as the two are perceptibly separate, the tale is prose for all its imagery and labored indirectness of discourse, which is supposed—without the least reason, as is shown by *Gretchen am Spinnrade* and all of Goethe's greatest songs—to be essential to poetry.

Goethe's *Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh* sings and is one of the most beautiful songs of its kind, because in some way the "mood of nature" expressed in it does not seem merely to be reflected upon the state of mind of an independent observer, but the imaginary speaker is so completely unified with the whole of nature that the mood and voice and emotional physiognomy of that particular scene are really an integral part of his own soul. The imaginary speaker of *Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh* does not give us primarily a picture of nature, or tell us what he has observed and felt in the presence of nature, but he seems the veritable soul and voice of nature itself. The distinction is difficult, and I do not know whether I have succeeded in making it clear. But its essence is real. Upon it hinges the difference between true nature-song and laborious literary comments upon what might have become a nature-song.

It was one of the fundamental qualities of Goethe's mind, the one upon which his view of life and his conception of characters in all his dramas and prose narratives rest, that he saw life whole, as only one other man of his age saw it, namely Herder.

The Italian Journey, 1786-1788, had on the whole an unfavorable effect upon Goethe's lyrical genius. He became absorbed in classical rhetoric and meter to such an extent that the free flow of his native spontaneity was troubled and checked. It took him nearly ten years to shake off some of the formal bonds of this neo-classicism. The "ballad year," 1797-1798, marks a partial return to his

native forms. These ballads, however, are not songs. Indeed, they have all been set to music. But the music merely serves to emphasize their non-musical substance. They are not, like *Heidenröslein* or *Der König in Thule*, balladic songs, but long, narrative, moralistic romances. Goethe never lost his interest in this type of narrative poems, which are fitted for declamation, and whose serious sentiment is often interestingly mingled with a peculiar didactic irony. Both this declamatory tone and didactic humor became intensified in his later ballads, especially *Die wandelnde Glocke* and *Totentanz*, both written in 1813. Another, very impressive one of these ballads, *Johanna Sebus*, written 1809, achieves again much of song. It is a tragic cantata.

The year 1813 was poetically fruitful. In it Goethe wrote one of his most beautiful love songs, *Gefunden*, addressed to Christiane Vulpius, now his wife, upon the twenty-fifth anniversary of their first meeting.

During the Napoleonic wars Goethe sought refuge in Oriental poetry. The poetic result was a very large collection of lyrics, called the *Western-Eastern Divan*. There are beautiful songs among these, especially love songs, written under the influence of Goethe's passion for a gifted woman, herself a poetess, who contributed a few songs to the collection, but on the whole, they are fatiguingly erotic in sentiment, and exotic in tone and form. Goethe was the greatest master of the German language since Luther. Through that gift he was so fundamentally and integrally German in feeling, thought, and disposition, that he could not, in spite of his mental and emotional flexibility, adapt himself to any essentially alien idiom. It was only in those works in which Goethe proceeded from his native inner "totality" of which he speaks so much, especially in *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust*, and in which he ignored with sovereign indifference alien purposes, forms, and values, that he rose to his greatest heights. Whenever he wrote with deferential gaze fixed upon alien models, as in *Iphigenie* and in the *West-Oestliche Divan*, his work loses some of the supreme excellence, characteristic of no modern poet as much as of him, namely, his flawless poetic integrity.

The last decade of his life brought an astonishing revival of Goethe's poetic powers. The so-called *Marienbad Elegy*, the exquisite song called *The Warder*, upon his gift of poetic vision, and some other lyrics included in the Second Part of *Faust*, especially the

concluding one upon the *Eternally Feminine* closely approach his greatest works.

The *Elegy* is a fundamental expression of the quality in him from which all his great songs sprang. A great passion once more, and for the last time, quickened him. The love of the septuagenarian for Ulrike von Levetzow who had barely passed the threshold of womanhood, and his inevitable disappointment, inspired one of his most truly tragic lyrics. All his need and love of life, his eagerness for the fulness of being, his spiritual vigor, his wistfulness and warmth, flamed once again into a great passionate realization before they succumbed to a final and heroic resignation. This cry of an old man, who is done with life, not through spiritual decrepitude or creative decay, but through the mere physical inadequacy of nature, is without a touch of disgusting or ludicrous sentimentality. It is not the voice of a morbid, unbecoming senile desire, but of the tragic rebellion of an unconquered spirit against the tyranny of earth.

Goethe's songs upon other subjects can be grouped chiefly among *Gesellige Lieder*, or songs of sociability; songs of friendship; lighter occasional and anecdotal songs; odes, among which his *Epilog zu Schillers Glocke*, an ode, and the *Marienbad Elegy* are the greatest; and a vast number of miscellaneous lyrics written upon every conceivable occasion of ordinary life.<sup>2</sup>

The distinguishing quality of Goethe as a maker of songs rests not in the objective richness, variety of range and greatness of his subject matter. Most of his subjects are common and fundamental to normal life. He was a man of the people by nature and disposition, and remained a man of the people even in the elaborate reserve laid upon him by the life of a very busy official who had to protect himself from indiscriminate contacts. He understood best the naïve, fresh, spontaneous, "whole" personalities like Gretchen, Klärchen, Christiane Vulpius, Lotte, and even Philine in *Wilhelm Meister*, their joys and sorrows, desires and interests. His aristocratic court ladies and court gentlemen never exhibit the full, warm, close-textured, thickly-tissued reality of his simpler characters. The former he felt immediately and spontaneously; the latter he had to construct laboriously and never quite successfully.

Neither was it as a philosopher or a scientist as such that he ex-

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of other parts of Goethe's lyrical genius and of his philosophical lyrics, see Martin Schütze's edition of *Goethe's Poems* (Ginn & Co.), introduction, pp. xvii—lxxviii.

celled. Most of his scientific experiments were barren of objective results. His great discovery of the intermaxillary bone in man is no longer of crucial significance. His technical-philosophical conclusions, including particularly his later theories on beauty and the arts, lacked from the beginning fundamental originality and coherence, and are, in the main, no longer valid as such but only as elements in his creative characters.

His consummate greatness lies in that central magnitude of spontaneous personality which he brought to everyone of his occupations, creations, and thoughts. Whatever he did, he did with his entire being. The richness of his work was that of his whole nature. That nature was richer and more complete than that of any other modern personality. It was of a different calibre, of a scale incommensurable with most modern personalities. When he sings a tune, his voice is mightier, reaches farther, and moves more profoundly, because it is the voice of the whole of Goethe.

It is through this greatness of his personality as a whole that he is the representative of the chief cultural significance of his age. And because this greatness finds its completely unified and spontaneous embodiment in his songs, his greatest songs will stir more hearts and appeal to more people, and will, I believe, live longer than any other works of his era, including even his own.

Ideas grow old and die even as the gods, but perfect song, like that of Goethe, will live and remain fresh as long as there are men and women to love and suffer, to rejoice and strive and hope.

## GOETHE IN CHICAGO

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THAT Chicagoans, keenly interested in and busily occupied with the stirring events of Civil-War days, nevertheless did not lose their contact with German literature and their admiration for Goethe reveals itself strikingly in a poem found in the issue of the *Chicago Sonntags-Zeitung* for December 14, 1862.<sup>1</sup> It is entitled *Der Erlkönig* and cleverly applies the central theme of Goethe's poem to the political affairs of that memorable time. In this poem Abraham Lincoln is the father riding through the night with his child Seward, his secretary of state, in his arms. Jefferson Davis, tempting Seward with promises of favors from the rich Southland, takes the place of the Erlking, who lures the child in Goethe's poem. Davis, as the Erlking, succeeds in drawing Seward to a compromise and destroying him in the eyes of the people. The poem is as follows:

Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?  
Es ist Herr Lincoln, der milde gesinnt,  
Er hält den Seward wohl in dem Arm,  
Er hält ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm.

"Sag', Seward, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht?"  
"Siehst unten du den Jeff. Davis nicht?  
Jeff. Davis mit seinem Rebellenstweif?"  
"Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif."

"Du lieber Seward, komm' geh' mit mir,  
Gar viele Dinge versprech' ich dir.  
Viel Baumwolle wächst in unsrem Land,  
Ich drücke dir Vieles zum Dank in die Hand!"

"O Lincoln, Lincoln, hörst du denn nicht,  
Was Davis mir so kühn verspricht?"  
"Sei ruhig, bleibe ruhig, mein Kind,  
Die ganze Geschichte ist nichts als Wind!"

"Willst, feiner Kunde, du mit mir geh'n,  
Der Süden soll deiner warten schön,  
Wir führen zusammen den festlichen Reih'n,  
Und theilen das Land dann zwischen uns Zwei'n!"

<sup>1</sup>*Sonntags-Ausgabe der Illinois Staats-Zeitung.*

"Mein Vater, mein Vater, ich seh' es gewiss,  
 Am düstern Orte, ein Compromiss!"  
 "Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh' es genau,  
 Jeff. Davis ist für dich bei Weitem zu schlau!"  
 "Ich lieb' dich, mich reizt deiner Ansicht Gestalt,  
 Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch' ich Gewalt!"  
 "Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt ist es gewiss,  
 Jeff. Davis zieht mich zum Compromiss!"  
 Dem Vater grauset's, er reitet geschwind,  
 Er hält in den Armen das ächzende Kind!—  
 Bekam Energie mit Mühe und Noth—  
 Im Auge des Volkes der Seward war todt.  
 (N. Y. Kladd.)

The end of the year 1862 may, upon first consideration, seem rather late as an evidence of interest in Goethe on the part of Chicagoans. However, when we consider that it was only in the forties that the Germans began to come to Chicago,<sup>2</sup> that the census of 1845 gave the number of Germans as only about 1000,<sup>3</sup> and that by 1854 in a population of 45,000 there were only about 5,500 Germans,<sup>4</sup> it is surprising that we have tangible evidence at this date. Yet there is a still earlier mention of interest in Goethe to be found in volume I of the *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter*,<sup>5</sup> and this is in the year 1858. In that year the second German theater established in Chicago and known as the Kinzie-Strassen Theater, gave as its opening performance Goethe's "Faust" under the direction of Alexander Pfeifer, formerly at the Milwaukee Theater. Unfortunately the Kinzie-Strassen Theater broke up in the late autumn of 1858, and the first German theater established, that of "Das Deutsche Haus," did not last much longer. With the close of the war, Heinrich Kenkel returned and again joined the theater group. The noteworthy event of the theater season of 1864-65 in "Das Deutsche Haus" was the appearance of a young English actor Daniel

<sup>2</sup>Gustav P. Körner, *Das deutsche Element in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika 1818-48*, Cincinnati, 1880.

<sup>3</sup>"Illinois State Historical Society Library Publications," 1905, page 251.

<sup>4</sup>Roth, E., *Die Stadt Chicago, ihre Söhne und ihre Bürger im Allgemeinen*. Chicago, 1894.

<sup>5</sup>*Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter*, Chicago, Jhrg. 1, Juli 1903, Heft 3, Heinrich Kenkel, "Der Bau des 'Deutschen Hauses' und die Gründung des Theaters in Chicago."

Bandmann in the rôle of Mephistopheles in Goethe's "Faust." The year 1865 furnishes two interesting announcements in the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*: the first, a performance of Gounod's opera Faust for Tuesday, January 3<sup>6</sup> and the second a repetition of the performance on Thursday, January 12,<sup>7</sup> because of the request of many opera goers. In the early years, then, in the theater interest in Goethe held its own. That this situation was not peculiar to the sixties but remained fairly the same later, a few more details from the *Staats-Zeitung* will show. The "New Chicago Theater" presented Carl Gutzkow's "Der Königs-Lieutenant oder Aus Goethes Jugendzeit" (From the Period of Goethe's Youth) September 19, 1875.<sup>8</sup> The year 1879 brings announcement of two performances of the opera Faust and later short favorable criticisms.<sup>9</sup> More unusual is the announcement in *Der Westen* of December 9, 1883 that "Egmont," Goethe's masterpiece, with music by Beethoven, is to be presented in McVicker's Theater. The drama "Egmont" is advertised as not one of the most mature but yet the most beautiful and most national in character and appeal among the dramatic masterpieces of the great German poet. The year '84 keeps pace with a performance of Goethe's "Faust" on April 27 in McVicker's with Daniel Bandmann as Mephistopheles and another performance on May 11 in the Pelissier Theater.<sup>10</sup> On January 9, 1887 Mr. Hermann Raberg presented in the Chicago Opera House as a benefit performance Goethe's "Faust."<sup>11</sup> The following comment, which gives a slight characterization of the time, is interesting: "Mr. Raberg's choice of this drama shows how good an opinion he has of the taste of the German public." Although these data are not complete (owing to incomplete newspaper files) yet they are sufficient to indicate that the German theater-going public maintained a place for Goethe.

Nor does the theater alone reflect the influence of Goethe's genius and personality. The quotations drawn from the great treasure chest of his works to solve practically every type of problem, serious and otherwise—such as, one's attitude toward life, history of criticism, the interpretation of dreams—the quotations to solve these

<sup>6</sup>*Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, den 3. Jan. 1865.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* den 12. Jan. 1865.

<sup>8</sup>*Der Westen*, den 19. Sept. 1875 (Continuation of *Chicago Sonntags-Zeitung* from 1868).

<sup>9</sup>*Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, den 13. Okt. und den 21. Okt. 1879.

<sup>10</sup>*Der Westen*, den 27. April und den 11. Mai 1884.

<sup>11</sup>*Der Westen*, den 9. Jan. 1887.

problems are too numerous to permit more than mere mention of them here. It is, however, gratifying to note that Chicagoans were not behind the rest of the country in their appreciation of Goethe. Just a few lines from Haertel's "German Literature in American Magazines from 1846-1880," will clarify this statement. He calls the period from '54 to '68 the period of decreased interest because of the lesser number of articles to be found and states that in the period from 1870 on "interest in Goethe never flags," that "he is not only recognized as a great poet and philosopher . . . but his character as a man is being freely praised." While no magazine material of the sixties for Chicago is available, yet at the very early date of December 10, 1862 in an address on "Schiller as a Dramatic Poet,"<sup>12</sup> delivered in the Concordia Club, Mr. B. Felsenthal renders tribute also to Goethe's literary genius. Since, as he puts it, these two great writers are inseparable in our thoughts, it will perhaps be in place here to present his appreciation of Goethe, although included in his appreciation of Schiller. Primarily through the influence of Goethe and Schiller aesthetic culture in Germany became purer and better. The *Xenien*, published jointly by Goethe and Schiller, cleared the literary atmosphere, says Felsenthal, and, under the blows of these stinging distichs, the petty poets whined and shrieked and tried in vain by their parodies to destroy the effectiveness of these epigrams. Thus, he says, these two geniuses, Goethe and Schiller, by negative criticism and positive teaching, by theory and example, developed and ennobled German taste. But Felsenthal is not unaware that in many respects these two great personalities are utterly opposed to each other—that Schiller could never have written a *Tasso* or an *Iphigenia*. For such a theme we need, he says, the nature of Goethe, that nature which could maintain its inner calm and undisturbed equanimity amid the seethings of the outer world, that Hellenic temperament which, completely absorbed in its themes, attained a clearness and perfection of poetic and prose form that will be admired for all time.

An unsigned contribution to the *Chicago Sonntags-Zeitung* in the year 1865<sup>13</sup> contains a bit of humorous criticism: "In a recent periodical Casper has a rather long article on 'Goethe, Werther Reminiscences and Friederike,' the daughter of the Sesenheim minis-

<sup>12</sup>*Chicago Sonntags-Zeitung*, den 14. Dez. 1862. B. Felsenthal, "Schiller als dramatischer Dichter."

<sup>13</sup>*Chicago Sonntags-Zeitung*, den 6. August 1865.

ter. Of course, everyone knows of Goethe's youthful love affair with Friederike Brion, but, in the words of the contributor, the discovery that the frivolous Goethe forsook poor Friederike when she was eight or nine years old, is entirely new." The writer quotes from Casper: "In August of the year 1771 Goethe left her. For several years she taught school in Steinthal and later went to Weissenheim. She died there in 1815 at the age of fifty-three." The contributor, being of a mathematical turn of mind, notes that between 1771 and 1815 there are 44 years and since Friederike died in 1815, she was just nine years old in 1771 when Goethe left her. But the writer's sense of humor, appreciation of Goethe, and ridicule of Casper is best conveyed by the rhyme with which he concludes his article:

Goethe schreibt von Werther's Lotte,  
 Dass sie Butterbrote schmierte,  
 Casper schreibt von Friederike,  
 Das sie früh schon carresirte!  
 Goethe war ein grosser Dichter,  
 Aecht in Form und aecht im Brauch;  
 Wie die Kohlköpf' sind Gesichter,  
 Ist es wohl der Casper auch!

In the June 1863 issue of the *Sonntags-Zeitung* the title "Schenkendorf oder Goethe"<sup>14</sup> arouses our curiosity and we find that we have here a question as to the authorship of a part of Goethe's elegiac poem *Hermann und Dorothea*, 1797, which prefaced the epic of that name. The writer calls this work one of the purest gems of German literature which, he had always believed, could never be forgotten by a cultured German. To his astonishment he finds that Professor A. Hagen of Königsberg attributes the last four lines of the elegiac poem to Max Schenkendorf. The quotation from Professor Hagen is to this effect: "German verse (in autograph albums) in ancient meter is rare. The only verse of this type that Schenkendorf composed he wrote to his intimate friend Friedländer in 1816"; and then follows the quotation of the four lines in question beginning:

"Blicket heiterer nun auf jene Schmerzen zurücke, usw." The writer concludes correctly that it is easy to see from the content that these four lines are not independent but refer to a preceding thought and further asks if this is the only case in which a German poet

<sup>14</sup>*Chicago Sonntags-Zeitung*, den 28. Juni 1863. The article is unsigned.

expresses his sentiments in an autograph album by the well-known lines of another, and we know he needs no answer. This article shows not only a knowledge of Goethe's works but also the alertness necessary for literary criticism.

Similar keenness is evident in a discussion by H. A. Rattermann in volume XIV of the *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter*.<sup>15</sup> He calls attention to an error in a book entitled *Deutsch in Amerika*, (Chicago, 1892) and edited by Dr. G. A. Zimmermann. Lines 2911-17 of the first part of *Faust*, beginning "Und wenn der Sturm im Walde braust und knarrt" are cited as the composition of a German-American poet, Johannes Kelpius. Rattermann settled the controversy which ensued by showing conclusively that the style and spirit of Kelpius' works, twelve religious songs in all, are absolutely different from the lines of *Faust*—so different that no Kelpius could have written them; and further, that the article in *Der Deutsche Pionier*, which was cited as attributing the lines to Kelpius, was incorrectly interpreted; that is, Dr. Seidensticker, the writer of the article in *Der Pionier* describes the clearing in the forest at Wissahickon, where the hermit Kelpius lived, as the refuge where his struggling spirit may have cried out the words in these lines from *Faust*:

"Und wenn der Sturm im Walde braust und knarrt"—

A *Faust* article of an entirely different nature is found in a report of a lecture on Goethe's *Faust*, delivered by William Vocke before the Philosophical Society of Chicago, April 9, 1876.<sup>16</sup> Prefacing his lecture with the statement that, with the exception of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, probably no other literary production has been so much discussed and so generally admired, he presents the origin of the *Faust* legend and then points out the differences between the *Faust* legend, Marlowe's *Faustus* and Goethe's portrayal of the problem. With the master's touch Goethe developed from the legend the figure of an ideal life as also the striving of humanity toward the Infinite. Within himself he had the consciousness of victory over all opposing forces and therefore he felt that *Faust*, though damned in the legend, in his drama had to be saved. How Goethe develops this fundamental idea, leading *Faust*

<sup>15</sup>*Deutsch-Amerikanische Dichter und Dichtungen des 17ten und 18ten Jahrhunderts* von H. A. Rattermann.

<sup>16</sup>*Der Westen*, den 9. April 1876. "Goethe's *Faust*—eine Vorlesung" von William Vocke.

by means of untiring scientific investigations and the study of all the arts to the purification of his spirit, to the realization that work for the welfare of humanity is the real task of life, the lecturer points out by a detailed analysis of the drama. He presents a very thorough, careful, and clear piece of work.

A few words on Denton J. Snider's *Faust* cannot be omitted. The author calls his book "A Commentary on the Literary Bibles of the Occident."<sup>17</sup> The work is in two volumes of about 400 pages each, published in Chicago in 1886. The first volume contains a history of the Faust legends and of Goethe's *Faust*, critical standards, structural outline and a commentary on the first part of *Faust*. The second volume contains an introduction and a commentary on the second part.

"Faust in the Viennese Forest" by Z. K. Lecher<sup>18</sup> is an account of a presentation of the old puppet play, which, Lecher says, had some hundred twenty-five years before inspired the young Goethe in Frankfurt to the most sublime and profound literary production which the German nation can boast. Still more interesting is W. Marr's story of how Goethe's *Faust* came to be presented on the stage.<sup>19</sup> As the story runs, Duke Carl of Brunswick was very fond of the theater. On October 31, 1828 there was presented in the court theater of Brunswick "Faust—Dramatic Legend in Five Acts." The author, whose name did not appear, was none other than Dr. August Klingemann, the director of the ducal court theater. After this performance Duke Carl hastened behind the scenes and enthusiastically clapped Klingemann on the shoulder, saying: "Fine, my friend! That was great! Splendid play!"—whereupon Klingemann very modestly replied: "Your Highness, it is not a Goethe's *Faust*." Serenissimus, one of the actors, cried out: "Goethe? Goethe? Did he also write a *Faust*? We'll have to produce it!" Klingemann, stunned by these words, immediately explained that Goethe's *Faust*, though a dramatic work, was not for stage production. "Why not," rejoined the duke; and thereupon insisted that it be staged. Klingemann, fearful of making the attempt, wrote a deferential letter to Exzellenz von Goethe, explaining the situation and asking for suggestions in staging the drama. After several days, Goethe, in a

<sup>17</sup>Denton J. Snider, *Goethes Faust*, Chicago, 1886. For an outline of this work, see *Deutsch-Amerikanisches Magazin*, Vol. 1 (1887) page 628.

<sup>18</sup>*Der Westen*, den 23. Jan. 1887. "Faust im Wiener Wald," Z. K. Lecher.

<sup>19</sup>*Der Westen*, den 14. Nov. 1875. W. Marr, "Wie Goethe's *Faust* auf die Bühne kam."

rather curt note, acknowledged Klingemann's letter and added that, since he had for some time not concerned himself with the theater, he (Klingemann) should do as he pleased with his *Faust*. Deeply disappointed, Klingemann set to work with unusual vim and produced the excellent stage edition of *Faust* that is still used. On January 19, 1829 Goethe's "Faust" was produced for the first time on the stage of the Brunswick Court Theater. After the marked success of the production, Goethe acknowledged the Klingemann edition. Not until some months afterward, on August 29 to be exact, was "Faust" produced in the Weimar Court Theater.

From a later unsigned article (June 1876)<sup>20</sup> we learn that, according to the *Berliner Blätter*, the production in Weimar lasted from six until twelve o'clock, that not a scene was omitted, and that, notwithstanding the length of the performance, interest never flagged. Our informant continues, however, that the *Berliner Tageblatt* was not quite so enthusiastic but agreed that the producers must be congratulated as thoroughly successful.

While *Faust* seems to have received the most attention, as is generally the case, acquaintance with Goethe's works is not limited to it. The title "Goethe's Freudvoll und Leidvoll auf der Völkerwanderung"<sup>21</sup> or "The Migrations of Goethe's Freudvoll und Leidvoll" calls attention to an unusual piece of work entitled: "Freudvoll und Leidvoll—A Polyglot Attempt" by J. F. H. Schlosser. Six of twelve translations of this song from *Egmont* are quoted from Schlosser, first the Dutch, the English and the Swedish as the most successful, and then the French, the Italian and the Spanish versions, of which the Spanish is the best. The other versions, not quoted, are the Low German, Portuguese, Latin, Modern and Ancient Greek and Polish.

Others of Goethe's poems are recalled by parodies. The poem "Gefunden" appears in two rather frivolous versions; "Heidenröslein" forms the basis of a Saxon Kaffeelied, and "Der Fischer" under the pen of Jochen Grobian, the realist, is changed into a criticism of Goethe's poem of that name. Grobian's contribution follows:

Das Wasser rauscht, das Wasser schwoll,  
Ein Fischer sass daran!

<sup>20</sup>*Der Westen*, den 4. Juni 1876. "Faust in Weimar." No author is given.

<sup>21</sup>*Der Westen*, den 19. März 1882. Unsigned article.

In dieser Weise, wie bekannt,  
Fängt Goethe's "Fischer" an.

Und weiter heisst es: "Aus der Fluth  
Stieg da ein feuchtes Weib."  
Natürlich, wer im Wasser liegt,  
Kriegt einen nassen Leib.

"Halb zog sie ihn, halb sank er hin,  
Und ward nicht mehr gesehen."  
Der Mensch ertrank. Was ist dabei?  
Das ist schon oft gescheh'n.<sup>22</sup>

With the approach of the nineties criticisms and interpretations of Goethe's works become more numerous. Marion V. Dudley's *Poetry and Philosophy of Goethe* 1887, Professor R. G. Moulton's *Story of Faust* 1892, Paul Carus' *Goethe and Schiller Xenions*, translated 1896 and later a work on the philosophy of Goethe, Martin Drescher's "Goethe und die Neue Welt" in *Die Glocke* 1906-07, Professor von Klenze's work on the Italian Journey 1907—these few titles will serve merely to indicate the continued and growing interest in Goethe.<sup>23</sup> The scope of this paper, however, will not permit a more detailed discussion.

But was it only Goethe, the great literary genius, that interested Chicagoans? By no means. From the earliest period, Goethe the man, in the little intimate details of life, makes, it seems, at least from the sixties to the nineties an equally strong appeal. The extravagances of unlimited praise and bitter condemnation that appeared, some abroad and some in the eastern section of our country, have, for the most, passed over; and Chicagoans respect and esteem the great genius and enjoy the man, accepting him as he was—and realizing that he was, as they, just human. No more intimate picture could be given than one by Neumann Strela (1884) entitled "Goethe bei Tisch"—Goethe at his Meals.<sup>24</sup> We read that Frau von Stein prepared sausage so deliciously flavored that Goethe wrote her at times asking her to prepare some especially for him; and that for many years his mother sent to him every week in Weimar a "Frankfurt Delicacy" known as *Schwartenmagen*. Goethe enjoyed

<sup>22</sup>*Der Westen*, den 13. Mai 1888. "Herbe Kritiken des Realisten und Anti-Lyrikers Jochen Grobian."

<sup>23</sup>The works mentioned and many others were all published in Chicago.

<sup>24</sup>*Der Westen*, den 27. Juli 1884.

a good table and, therefore, during his first years in Weimar he usually ate dinner at the home of friends. But after Christiane Vulpius, who was an excellent cook, came into his home in 1789, he almost always ate at home. When there were guests, which was often—so often that Christiane was wont to say that her house was a hotel—Goethe designated the various foods and the number of courses and Christiane ordered the delicacies from Erfurt, Gotha, Dessau, or Leipzig. Some years later, when at Jena, he was going to leave because of the poor food served at the hotel; but the people of Jena, to prevent such a catastrophe, engaged a special cook for him and thereafter all was well and Goethe prolonged his stay for some time.

A lively tale from the court of Weimar gives expression to another aspect of Goethe's experiences.<sup>25</sup> It is said to be "Aus der tollten Zeit in Weimar" which means the period when the youthful Carl August and his favorite Goethe indulged in many an escapade. They particularly enjoyed going hunting and often disturbed the quiet countryside with the crack of their whips and the barking of their dogs. On one of these occasions the Duke and his poet companion had become separated from the rest of the party and entered a farmhouse to get a drink. While the comely matron, who had been engaged in churning butter, left the room to get her unknown guests some milk, the Duke grabbed a big tomcat, lying in front of the stove, stuffed him into the churn and carefully put the cover in place. When the woman returned, Goethe and the Duke in turn plied her with questions until both had emptied their glasses and then took leave before she had time to discover their mischief. Some time later, on another hunting trip, the Duke and Goethe looked up the farmhouse to reimburse their hostess. The Duke said: "We are the fellows who played that trick on you; but here is a compensation for the butter, which, of course, was spoiled." The honest woman silently accepted the goldpiece and then, with a twinkle in her eye, said laughingly: "Oh, that butter went to the Court of Weimar; there they eat everything" or in the German "da freten (fressen) sie alles!" For a moment the two hunters stood speechless and looked at each other. The Duke shuddered and Goethe with tragic pathos uttered just one word: "Nemesis." What vengeance that was to wreak on a person so particular about food as Goethe!

<sup>25</sup>An unsigned article in *Der Westen* den 5. Nov. 1882.

In 1887 in an unsigned article, "Goethe über Mozart's Don Juan,"<sup>26</sup> the writer states that it is well known that Goethe was no authority on music but yet that no one understood better than he how to express the sentiments produced by music in the human heart. He was a lover of music all his life and an enthusiastic admirer of Mozart. He was so deeply impressed by the first presentation of Don Juan in Weimar on January 30, 1792 that at the time he wrote to Schiller that in it he (Schiller) would find the culmination of his hopes for the opera. He himself had been more than satisfied with it and it was his most ardent desire that his *Faust* should be set to music as *Don Juan* had been.

Another interesting article is Theodor Winkler's: "Auch Bücher haben ihre Geschicke."<sup>27</sup> While decrying the petty amounts paid to authors for their literary productions, he tells us that Goethe received from the publisher Mylius in Berlin only twenty thaler for his drama *Stella*, although already famous because of *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Werther*. Worse even than the treatment of publishers is that meted out by the critics. We need only recall in the case of Goethe, says Winkler, some of the adverse criticism of him in France and England (referring to the year 1881) and the discussion among the Germans themselves of the idle question: which is the greater, Schiller or Goethe?

Goethe's love of flowers and his custom of designating certain of his women acquaintances by them is charmingly portrayed in an article by Mr. H. Child.<sup>28</sup> He suggests that the custom in vogue in the Shakespeare garden at Stratford-on-Avon be adopted and plans made so that each year the plants and flowers that appear in Goethe's life and works should fill the garden behind the Goethe house in Weimar. Above all Goethe's favorites should be included—violets, poppies, hydrangea, the linden-blossom in *Werther* and Gretchen's Sternblumen. Violets signify Christiane Vulpius; the peony stands for the gossips of Weimar, Caroline von Herder and Fräulein von Göchhausen; the red poppy, or die Klatschrose, Goethe also used especially to designate Fräulein von Göchhausen, who by her spying and plotting filled Weimar with all kinds of gossip. Tulips, carnations, buttercups, geraniums, and mignonette should also be included as well as the lily, the modest cornflower, and the dainty forget-

<sup>26</sup>*Der Westen*, den 27. November 1887.

<sup>27</sup>*Der Westen*, den 11. Sept. 1881.

<sup>28</sup>*Der Westen*, den 11. Sept. 1887. H. Child, "Goethe und die Blumen."

mé-not, typifying the little blue-eyed Countess von Fritsch. The garden Mr. Child describes would hold among its beautiful blossoms the secrets of several of the ladies at the Court of Weimar.

The close of Goethe's eventful life is described in two articles, one by Georg Horn in 1863<sup>29</sup> and another, unsigned, in 1882.<sup>30</sup> Nature seemed to have made an exception of Goethe, for in his eighty-third year he was still creatively active. In addition he devoted much of his time to the training of his two grandsons, the younger of whom, his Wölfchen, as he called him, was his favorite. For almost sixty years he had enjoyed fame; his name had penetrated to the most distant parts of the inhabited world. Next to Germany he enjoyed the greatest popularity in England, where Carlyle was his ardent admirer. But like all great men, continues Mr. Horn, he was not free from superstition. He considered the twenty-second of March, which ushered in the spring-time, unlucky, for on that day the Weimar theater had burned down and likewise a friend of long standing, Geheimrath Voigt, had died. Was there not perhaps in Goethe, asks Mr. Horn, a premonition that this day would be the Ides of March for him? Both writers give a picture of him in his last illness, his thoughtfulness for those associated with him, and his attention to his duties as Minister of the State of Weimar. At the news of his death, grief spread from Weimar through Germany and through all Europe.

It has often been said that great writers belong not to one country but to all humanity. The more one reads and studies in the Goethe field, the more one is convinced that this is true of Goethe. Not only in Germany, not only in Europe, but practically in every center of cultural influence homage is rendered to his memory. Here in the city of Chicago, at a very early date, 1844, one of the streets on the near North side was named in his honor. Many years later, September 3, 1899, at the invitation of the Schwaben-Verein, hundreds of individuals assembled in Sunnyside Park to celebrate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his birth. That the tribute paid to Goethe might have permanency, an outline of the programs and the texts of a number of articles written for this occasion were published in a festival pamphlet.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup>*Chicago Sonntags-Zeitung*, den 20. und den 27. Dez. 1863. Georg Horn, "Goethe's letzte Tage."

<sup>30</sup>*Der Westen*, den 23. April 1882. "Wie Goethe starb," author not given.

<sup>31</sup>*Festprogramm und Denkschrift zur Goethe-Feier (1749-1899)*, Chicago, 1899. Goethe-Feier der Deutschen von Chicago zu Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's 150-jährigem Geburtstag.

On June 13, 1914 the dreams, long cherished by the Schwaben-Verein, of establishing in Chicago a lasting memorial to Goethe finally became a reality, for on that day in the presence of many thousands of Chicagoans there was dedicated the Goethe monument, the work of Professor Hermann Hahn, a member of the Munich Academy of Fine Arts. The celebration consisted of a monster parade, the unveiling of the monument, preceded by addresses by Professor William H. Carruth of Leland Stanford University and Count Bernstorff, the German ambassador, and an evening program under the auspices of the women of the city in the Auditorium, where Professor Kuno Francke of Harvard gave the principal address.<sup>32</sup>

The imposing granite monument, bearing the inscription: "To Goethe, the Master Mind of the German People," stands as a permanent record of the admiration and appreciation of Chicagoans of Goethe's rare genius. Recalling all the struggles and strivings, all the enthusiasm, sacrifice and devotion that led up to this accomplishment, we are glad that in this year, the centennial of his death, the effort is again being made to pay fitting tribute to his memory. The German Club of Chicago and the Literarische Gesellschaft initiated their activities this year by inspiring Goethe programs. The University of Chicago has devoted these two days, March 8 and 9, to honoring Goethe's memory; and within the remaining days of this month the Woman's University Club of Chicago is to have a Goethe evening and the Schwaben-Verein, to whom great credit for stimulating and promoting interest in Goethe is due, will have its celebration. As we note the numerous expressions of interest in Goethe's life and works—on the stage, in the press and in public celebration in Chicago—we feel that the message in these words of his, inscribed upon the monument,

Was du ererbt von Deinem Vätern hast,  
Erwirb es, um es zu besitzen!

has been and will continue to be a part of the cultural development of our people.

<sup>32</sup>*Sonntagsblatt der New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, den 14. Juni 1914.

MICHAEL NAIMY AND THE SYRIAN AMERICANS IN  
MODERN ARABIC LITERATURE

BY MARTIN SPRENGLING

MODERN Arabic literature, written and read by many cultured men and women today—no mean part of it in these United States—is a factor in modern culture unknown to most non-Arabic Americans. It has been alluded to both by Professor Olmstead and Mr. Mokarzel in the preceding number of the *Open Court*. Its beauty and importance is great enough to have attracted serious attention by great scholars, notably the Russian Krachkovskij, the German Kämpffmeyer, the Englishman H. A. R. Gibb, the Italian Nallino. All four of these and others have published extensive essays on it and some translations. At the University of Chicago the writer and some of his students have been engaged in the study of Arabic literature for something more than ten years. To introduce this significant literary movement to American readers, it will be best to let a representative of Modern Arabic Letters talk to us and lay his own and his fellow-authors' case before us.

The choice of such a representative is not easy, not because there is too little, but because there is so much material to choose from. A native Syrian or Palestinian, living and working in his home-land, might have been selected; but what the writer has available of such as these has already been promised to the *American Journal of Semitic Languages* of the University of Chicago, where it will presently appear in print. In casting about among the Syrian Americans it seemed unnecessary to present to our readers such men as Gabran Kh. Gabran and Ameen Rihany; some of their work in English has been published in America, and, indeed, my friend Rihany will himself appear as a contributor in a later number of this journal. Yet it seemed most apt and most interesting to American readers, that an American writer of and on Arabic literature should present to them its worth and work. And so, guided by the great Russian Arabist, Krachkovskij, the writer decided to introduce herewith a less well-known, but by no means less able and significant member of the American Arabic Authors' Club, whose headquarters are in New York City.

Michael Naimy so writes his own name in English, and we, of



MICHAEL NAIMY

course, follow him in this usage. An Arabic writer, reporting on his work in an article written in English for the German periodical *Die Welt des Islams* in 1930, writes Na'imah. The classical Arabic form, as Naimy himself writes the vowels, would be rendered by Nu'aimah. The popular pronunciation of this form in present-day Syria would be something like Nu'aimy. The more reason all this for letting our young author choose his own English spelling and the pronunciation it suggests.

For fifteen years now, and, indeed, somewhat more, Naimy has occupied a recognized place as a writer and critic in the new world of Modern Arabic Letters. He is well known and widely read in Syria and Egypt as well as among educated Arabs in the Americas. Almost from the very beginning of his career, he attracted the attention of Krachkovskij as representing a somewhat later and rarer strain than the general run of Arabic writers who are at work on the creation of a new and different Arabic literature. The modernism of most truly modern Arab authors for a century past and, indeed, to the present day is signalized on the one hand by the distinctively French, on the other by just as clear an English, chiefly American-English color in its thought, its forms, and its style. Naimy as we shall see, is not wholly uninfluenced by America himself. Yet to the Russian Krachkovskij he gave unmistakable evidence in his work, that through him a clear stream of influence of the great modern literature of Russia was being led into the crucible in which the new prose and poetry of the Arabs is taking shape.

A man out of the common, therefore, and yet not so uncommon among modern Arabic writers as to be unrepresentative, is Michael Naimy, who now shall speak to us first of all in his own English as he spoke to Krachkovskij in a letter which he wrote to the master in Leningrad on May 27th, 1931, and which was published with an introduction and notes in German by Krachkovskij in *Die Welt des Islams* for January, 1932.

Since you give me option, [says Naimy] of writing you in Russian, Arabic, or English, I am choosing the latter because I happen to own an English typewriter—and a typewritten letter is much easier to read than one written in longhand. . . .

I believe that you are one of the first European scholars to give attention to modern Arabic letters which can no longer be brushed aside, or ignored as unworthy of real consideration.

An awakening has finally come to the Arabic-speaking world. Its most potent evidence is to be seen in the honest efforts of present-day writers and poets to charge their words with something of their souls and the soul of life all about them. But a decade or two ago this honesty was all but non-existent. Everything was sacrificed to form; and form, in order to be acceptable, had to follow very closely all the lines set by the ancients, even pre-Islamic times. The consequence was a terrible spiritual and artistic stagnation. Literature—if such it could be called—was entirely divorced from life. It was a trinket, an ornament, a pastime, a series of stunts and acrobatic games, with words for tools and instruments. It was this literary stagnation throughout the Arabic-speaking world that stared me in the face when I left Russia. It was oppressive and offensive in the extreme to one fed on the delicate art of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Turgueniev; on the tearful laughter of Gogol; on the sweeping realism of Tolstoy; on the literary ideals of Bielinsky, and, finally, on the profound humanity of the mightiest, deepest, broadest, and most penetrating of all the Russian writers—Dostoyevsky. Perhaps you can easily understand why my first literary efforts in Arabic were mainly critical. There was hardly any literature worthy of criticism at the time I began to write—about 1913. That literature had yet to be born. The soil for it had to be prepared. But there was much pseudo-literature which had first to be smothered; there were many weeds that had first to be destroyed before the seed of the new literature could take root. That is why my first efforts were to tear down and to remove debris. Happily it was not a vain effort. Others have followed in the same track, and we are now witnessing the birth of a *new* Arabic literature, which is destined before many decades to take a respectable place among the literatures of the world. Today it is very strongly influenced by the West. But some day it shall influence the West. I have faith in the genius of the Arabic language. And I have faith in the basic qualities of the peoples for whom it is a mother tongue. . . .

You want my biography, I can give you only a hasty sketch, a mere skeleton of dates and events. As to the “flesh” that makes the skeleton alive and the human values that give meaning to dates and events, I fear that it would require more than a letter.

I was born November 22, 1889, in the town of Beskin-

ta, Mt. Lebanon. My parents are simple, hard-working, God-fearing mountaineers of the Greek Orthodox faith. I am the third of a family of five brothers and one sister. About the year 1895 a Russian school was opened at Beskinta by the Imperial Russian Palestine Society. My two older brothers and I attended it. In 1899 my elder brother emigrated to the United States and settled in the Far West, in the State of Washington. In 1902, I was chosen from my school to go to the Teacher's Institute in Nazareth, also conducted by the Russian Palestine Society. At the end of my fourth year there, 1906, I was selected to go to the Seminary of Poltava. My purpose never was to become a clergyman, but to go back to Nazareth and teach, or, if possible, to finish the Seminary and later enter a university and study some profession. My favorite subject, even in Nazareth, was literature. Even in those tender years I wrote some poetry. In the Seminary I soon plunged into Russian literature. It was like discovering a new world full of wonders. I read voraciously. There was hardly a Russian writer, poet, or philosopher that I did not read. My inner revolt against the Church and its dry dogmas made me seek and find comfort in Tolstoy's later writings. In less than a year I had mastered Russian to an extent that I was able to write in it poetry which was pronounced, at least by some of my professors, as having much merit. At the beginning of my fourth year in the Seminary, the fall of 1909, there was a students' *zabastovka*. I was made by the students to deliver an oration which put me in the "suspected" class by the school authorities. All the members of my class were suspended for a year, myself included. Early in the spring of 1911, I petitioned the faculty to allow me to pass a special examination for the first four classes. The petition was granted, and I passed my examination successfully and was given a diploma for the first four classes. In March, 1911, I left for Lebanon, where I spent the summer preparing to go to the Sorbonne. Towards the end of the summer my elder brother, who had been away in America for eleven years, came back for a visit. He prevailed upon me to come with him to America. In December, 1911, I found myself at a small town by the name of Walla Walla, in the State of Washington. I immediately applied myself to the study of English, which, in October, 1912, I had mastered enough to be able to enter the University of Washington; in June, 1916, I was graduated from the Liberal

Arts and the Law with the degrees of A.B. and LL. B. I did not follow the law profession, for I conceived a strong dislike for it as contrary to my ideals of truth and justice. In October, 1916, I came to New York to assist in editing an Arabic magazine, called *al-Funūn* and published by Nasseeb Arida, a Nazareth school-mate. The magazine was doing remarkable work in infusing new life into Arabic literature and blazing a new path, but it was not sufficient to support two. So I left it and entered the employ of the one of the Russian commissions purchasing at that time ammunition for the Russian army. There I remained until February, 1918. In May of that year, although a great hater of wars and all manifestations of organized brutality, I entered the American army, feeling that the whole world was aflame and that my life, along with millions of others, might help to stop the conflagration. In June I was sent to France. There I was on the firing lines in the Meuse-Argonne drive from November 1 until November 8. In March, 1919, while still with the Army in France, I was chosen to go to the French University of Rennes in Brittany. The American government, as a gesture of goodwill towards the French, selected about four thousand students out of an army of two million and distributed those students among various French universities, to study, until the end of the scholastic year. In July, 1919, I was back in the States. By that time *al-Funūn*, to which I had regularly and liberally contributed, had suspended publication. The only other available medium of publication was a semi-weekly paper published by another of my Nazareth school-mates, Abd-ul-Massih Haddad. In 1920 *Arrabitat-ul-Kalamiyah* (*The Author's Club*) was organized with Gibran for president and myself for secretary. All its members, only three of whom were really contributing something new to Arabic literature, rallied around Haddad's publication called *As-Sayeh*. We made it a sort of official organ for Arrabitah which never was an organization in the strict sense of the word, but a small band of like-minded men, unafraid of saying what they have to say and, what is more, having something to say. The "spirit" of Arrabitah has become widely diffused through the Arabic countries. My earliest published book is the play *Al-Abāi w-al-Banūn* (*Fathers and Sons*), published in 1918; and *Al-Ghurbal* (*The Sieve*), published in Egypt in 1923. My poems, which have been printed and reprinted in many Arabic papers and periodicals have not yet been published in book form, nor have several of my articles and stories. Of late I have been writing mostly in English, principally poetry. Several of my poems have appeared in the *New York Times*. But I have not written enough to publish a book, since I do not depend on

my writing for a living, but am compelled to devote most of my time to commercial effort in the employ of others. Besides, my literary taste has changed considerably. Only writings that have a cosmic flavor about them, that seek the deeper verities of life, the ultimate and the absolute, hold my attention now. The older I grow, the less interested I become in all forms and appearances which change from day to day and from age to age.

Thus, neatly and succinctly, Naimy describes for us together with his own life the American section of the Syrian contribution to the rise of modern Arabic Letters. He overshoots the mark a bit, as when he seems to say that no Arabic literature worth criticizing existed before this venture, but that is natural in a youthful author. The fine, unselfish earnestness, so characteristic of the movement as a whole, more than makes up for so slight a defect.

And if Naimy's English here and there halts a bit, or rather shows a trace of foreign flavor, not so his Arabic. In fact this flows so simply and so smoothly into fluent, idiomatic American-English, that it seems to the writer and translator of these lines, pure, clean-cut, modern Arabic expressing thought-patterns, in which is interwoven a clear American strain.

We choose here the fine prose foreword with which Naimy, introduced his play *Fathers and Sons*. It is a sincere and earnest statement, whose straightforward, vivid style will not, we hope, lose in translation too much of its quite extraordinary excellence. At the same time it will introduce to Americans some of the great problems which these courageous creators and innovators are facing, and something of the force and manner with which they are trying to overcome these difficulties.

The Arabic text from which we translate was edited by another of Naimy's friends from Nazareth, Madame Kulthūm Nasr Ōde-Vasilieva in a book of *Selections from Modern Arabic Literature*, published in Leningrad in 1928.

#### THE ARABIC DRAMA

Some (Arabs) rage against the West because of their belief that Western civilization has envenomed with the spirit of libertinism, profligacy, and unbelief our beautiful and pure life, which was luxuriating in security under the wings of angels and saints. Others sing the greatness of the West and call aloud to us, Come, let us serve the West and all that the West has created!

As for us, we think it best to remain neutral between these two parties, leaving to them the privilege of straightening out their controversy with poniards and pickaxes if they please, on condition that they do not interfere with us, if we venture to admit, though it be but one superior excellence of the West—that is the superiority of their literature over ours.

What some have become accustomed to call a “literary revival” among us is nothing but a perfumed breeze which has blown upon some of our poets and writers from the fruit-gardens of Western literature. It has pervaded their fancies and the temper of their minds as new health pervades the members of an invalid on the road to recovery after a long siege of sickness. The disease which had fastened itself upon our tongue for many successive generations was a species of dry-rot, which stopped in it the movement of life, and made of it, after the passing of its ancient glory, a corpse, upon which fed the pens of enslaved epigones of a great race and the talents of versifiers and blind worshippers of the past. Today we have returned to the West which was but yesterday our pupil, to learn from it a pattern, which we have made the cornerstone of our “literary revival.” That pattern is this: That life and letters are twins which cannot be separated from each other; that literature rests on life, and life on literature; that it—I mean literature—is as broad as life and as deep as its secrets; that this is reflected in that and that in this. We have learned, thanks to the West, that it is possible to compose poetry outside of the classic forms of erotic lyric and lovelorn introduction, eulogy and satire, description and elegy, tribal boast and heroic praise. For this reason we find delight in the lilt of some of our modern poets who have dared to step beyond the sacred limits. There has also been transferred to us—thanks to the West, likewise—the story, what is called in English the novel, in French *roman*. We were among the first of the outside peoples to appreciate this type, and we found in it a broad field for the portrayal of life and for the making of our impress on minds and hearts by means of the pen. We learned that prose was not restricted to serried ranks of rhymed phrases, the heaping up of obsolete words found buried in the bellies of dictionaries, and the ornamental use of hackneyed sayings on trite subjects. There arose among us some who tried to depict our daily life in home-land stories.

This was a step in advance.

Yet our "literary revival" is still in its swaddling clothes. The language it speaks to this day is nought but the lisping of babes, still tongue-tied, limited in emotional equipment, weak of sinew. Nor would it be right for us to blame it for this weakness. But we will not conceal the fact that our hope in its future is not strong, when we consider that it has neglected altogether a great section of literature, if the West be consulted for its choice between it and all other branches of literature,—we mean the drama.

The drama has been part and parcel of Western literature since its rise and has been established as one of its pillars. The Westerner has reared for it rendezvous of presentation (theaters), and these have become a part of his daily life like the school, the home, and the church. In the theater his mind, famished and weighed down with the weariness of toil and the worries of life, finds rest and comfort and recreation. From the mires of his wage-earning life, whose mornings and evenings, todays and yesterdays are all alike, his spirit rises to a world in which human emotions, beautiful and ugly, weak and strong, noble and mean, run riot. He sees with his eyes upon the stage human beings like himself plunging into the battlefield of being, uncovering before him the secrets of their hearts and the hidden affairs of their consciences; he finds in these secrets and in these hidden affairs something of the essence of that which he calls "I," and he finds help in some of them toward setting his own mind in order and adding to the store of his experiences. The author and the actor coöperate—the one by his thoughts and the other by his voice and action—to break through the ban of his essential solitude. They enter the corners of his heart and touch its every string and search about in the folds of his conscience and set in motion the machinery of his thoughts. In short, they rouse in him every force of his being, and he becomes aware that he exists and lives. Many a word falls upon his ear, which his mind forthwith embraces and with which his spirit is leavened. To many a movement on the part of the actor does his heart respond. Many a scene shakes his entire being, as the whirlwind shakes the trees from their very roots. It is, of course, impossible to produce this impression on the hearer and spectator, unless the drama presents living scenes of real life, and the actor is able to grasp the idea of the author and his purpose and to translate these ideas and to convey this purpose to the hearer by his voice and action. So the author depends upon the

actor and the actor upon the author; and it is a well-known fact, that the most excellent of dramas in the hands of a poor actor may lose all its strength and splendor, and, conversely, a skilled actor can sometimes cast about a most defective drama a cloak of beauty and power. Hence the West holds high the estate of actors and authors alike. It showers them with gifts and surrounds them with fame in life and makes fair their renown after death.

And what do we?

We still look upon the actor as an acrobat, upon the actress as a harlot, upon the theater as a house of ill repute, and upon acting as a species of jesting and horseplay. Our people have not yet learned to recognize the seriousness of the acting profession, because it has not yet seen dramas, which depict before it scenes from a life which it knows from A to Z. It has not yet seen itself upon the stage. The blame for this falls squarely upon our writers, not upon the people. The bulk of what up to now we have presented to the people is restricted to comparatively few plays translated into Arabic, most of them worthless rubbish, all of them strange to the people, far from their tastes, and remote from their understanding. I do not doubt at all, that sooner or later we shall see among us a native stage, upon which will be represented scenes from our popular life. To this end it is necessary before all things that our writers turn their attention to the life which recurs about them every day, to our own life with its weaknesses and defects, with its joys and its sorrows, with its beauties and its uglinesses, with its evil and its good, and find in this subject-matter for their pens; and it is rich in such subject-matter, if only they know how to search for it.

The revolution which has recently come upon the domain of our letters will presently bring us glad tidings of the arrival of a national theater, even though there be still many obstacles in its path. One of these obstacles, widely spread throughout our social order and deeply rooted in the minds of many, is the idea that the theater corrupts pure morals, especially of girls and women—mercy, goodness! Another is our poverty in dramatic writers and native dramas. But the greatest obstacle which I encountered in writing *Fathers and Sons* and which everyone who knocks at this gate will encounter, is the language of the common people and the place which should be assigned to it in compositions such as these. It is my opinion—and I believe that many will agree with me in this—

that the persons of the drama should speak the language in which they are accustomed to express their thoughts and feelings, and that the writer who tries to make a simple farmer speak the language of collected poems and learned works on linguistry does injustice to the farmer, to himself, and to his reader and his hearer. Nay, he presents his characters in a comic aspect where comedy is not intended and commits a crime against a craft whose beauty lies in depicting man as we see him in the scenes of real life. And here is another matter which deserves careful consideration in connection with the language of the common people: this language hides under its uncouth exterior much in the way of popular philosophy, sayings and beliefs, in trying to transfer which into polished language you would be as one who translates poems and proverbs from a foreign tongue. In this matter we have frequently met opposition from men who carried dictionaries under their arms and were armed with all the books of grammar and syntax and maintained that "all the hunt is in the hollow of the wild ass"\* and that there is no eloquence nor rhetoric nor elegance in the language of the common people which the writer could not equal in the polished language of literature. To such we counsel that they study the life of the people and their language assiduously and in detail.

Of all classes of literary composition it is the drama which cannot do without the speech of the people. The knotty problem, however, is, that if we should follow this rule, it would be necessary that we should write all our plays in the language of the people, since there is no one among us who speaks Pre-Islamic or Early Islamic Arabic. But this would mean the abolition of our classical language—a national disaster which we are far from desiring. Then what is the way out?

In vain did I search earnestly for a solution of this difficulty. It is too great to be solved by one single mind. The best method I arrived at, after much thought, was to let the educated persons of my play speak a fully developed language and the simple folk the language of the common people. But I freely confess that this method does not solve the fundamental problem. The question continues to demand earnest attention from our greatest masters of language and of the art of writing.

\*The wild ass is difficult game. Hunting him comprises all other manner of hunt. A great matter makes unnecessary and of no account all minor matters.

Another difficulty, before which I hesitated, perplexed and questioning, was the fixing of the popular language in writing in such a way as to avoid ambiguity and uncertainty and to bring out the pronunciation intended. The matter of dialect, which differs greatly according to provinces and places, I left to the ingenuity and skill of the actor. But I shrank back in terror from laying down conventional rules for the fixing of popular speech for this one play alone. Yet we sorely need such conventions, if we would come near to the people and educate them by our pens. The people use sounds for which there are no symbols in the accepted alphabet, e.g., French *e* and *o*, and the pronunciation of *q* in most places as the glottal stop or catch. So we must add to the equipment of our language some conventionally accepted means to indicate these sounds. These conventions must, further, be generally accepted, so as not to occasion confusion and disorder where we desire agreement and unity. Who shall undertake this important task for us? If we only had a Society of Letters or something like an Academy, we would gladly shift this matter to its shoulders.

But even without an Academy, shall dreams come true, and will their zeal for Arabic language and letters lead some of our literati in Syria and Egypt to the creation of a permanent commission to attend to the raising of the level of the language, its preservation, and its modification according to the needs of time and circumstances? It will be best to say nothing further about the *dramatis personae* and the play itself except this, that I tried to analyze in it a limited section of a great, living topic in the life of all peoples in general and of our East in particular, namely the perpetual conflict between fathers and sons, the never-ending contrast between the old and the new. And if my part in this be no more than to induce some of our writers of more abundant ability than mine in the treatment of social subjects to undertake the writing of plays, I shall have attained my goal.

If we wish to raise our literature from the stagnant marshes in which it is mired, it is incumbent upon us that we strive from this very moment to lay a firm foundation for an Arabic stage by cultivating our dramatic tastes and cherishing the native tale, so that, when we truly rise, our rise shall be the rise of a hero waking from a long sleep, not the rise of a weakling, who opens only to stare death in the face.

\* \* \*

This is the noteworthy pronouncement with which Naimy pre-faced his first and thus far his only play, the first serious play to be written by a Syrian American, and one of the first Arabic plays written anywhere.

We are very loath to stop here. We would love to give our readers something of the highly significant defense of the critic and his place in literature and life, which Naimy presented in his book, *The Sieve*. We would love to have our readers share with us something of that admirably simple sincerity strangely coupled with haunting subtlety which Naimy exhibits in some of his beautiful shorter poems. We have no room for more here. Perhaps this tribute to his place and powers will induce this fine fellow-citizen of ours to lay before us in a not too distant future, something of his very own.

## SPIRITUAL BELIEFS OF THE OVIMBUNDU OF ANGOLA

WILFRID D. HAMBLY,

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THE Ovimbundu are a Bantu Negro tribe of Angola, a territory sometimes known as Portuguese West Africa. Historical evidence suggests migration of the Ovimbundu from the southwest Congo region, and an examination of their language and culture gives support to this supposition. Therefore consideration of the spiritual beliefs of the Ovimbundu is but a sample of a widely distributed complex of spiritual concepts and magical practices which may be regarded as representative of Bantu Negro religion.

The word religion is here used with its broadest connotation, and for anthropological purposes the assumption is made that the term may legitimately include concepts of a supreme being, ideas concerning spiritual parts which survive bodily death, the veneration of ancestral ghosts, omens, spiritual sanction for conduct, funeral rites as an indication of spiritual beliefs, and finally a series of practices by which the medicine-men seek to control powers or forces that are superior to human agencies.

Discussion of philosophical problems concerning the inter-relatedness of spiritual beliefs and their sequence of development has been intentionally ignored since the primary aim has been a presentation of factual material for the general reader. The data given here are a fragment of those collated during my leadership of the Frederick H. Rawson-Field Museum Expedition of 1929-1930.

### *The Supreme Being*

Suku is the name of the most important dead person mentioned by the Ovimbundu. The name is known throughout the great territory inhabited by them. Ngonga, my interpreter, says that Suku made the mountains, rivers, sky, and people. Evidence regarding Suku was supplemented at Ngalangi by two Ovimbundu boys who agreed Suku was very important. They associated him with rain; but the word Suku does not mean rain, water, or food; these are expressed by *ombela*, *ovava*, and *okulia* respectively. I know of no meaning of the word Suku which might assist in explaining the

attributes of this respected spirit. Names of medicine-men are remembered and used but they are not associated with the name Suku. Names of kings are sometimes coupled with the name Suku.

At Ngalangi I was told that in the beginning everything was water. A man, dropped from above, caused land to appear, and began hunting. At the side of a stream he saw an animal which disappeared beneath the water. He was about to shoot when he saw that the animal was a person like himself but different. He took the animal home, tamed it, and soon found that he had a family. This story is told also at Chilesó about two hundred miles from Ngalangi. At Ngalangi I was informed that the first being was a calf with human attributes, who walked about on the rocks leaving mixed tracks of animal and human kind, which may be seen to this day.

### *Survival After Death*

I am quite unable to think that the Ovimbundu have a definite idea of a future life, but they certainly do think of survival after death in a vague and confused way. There is no idea of punishment or reward, but a bad man has a bad ghost which can do evil things. Spirits will follow their relations on earth, moreover they will come to the house of bows where their property is preserved. A man returning from a hunt or from the collection of honey will leave a little of these on a grave. There is no idea of spirits in rivers and trees, but the first tree felled for building the house of a man of importance must not be allowed to fall violently. Spirits move at night only. Mentioning the dead by name or whistling at night calls spirits. There are many instances of sacrifice more or less connected with the idea of a spirit who has to be appeased. The medicine-man can induce a spirit into an image of wood. Thus there is an endowed image which can show travelers the right path, and so forth.

Osande is a good spirit who will "bring good luck and do good things for the people." Ondele is a bad spirit who harms the people. When a person is sick, mad, or dizzy he has Ondele. Only a powerful medicine-man can cast out Ondele. There is an evil bird of the night whose name is Esuvi, who can catch a spirit in order to make it die a second death. A person who has bad health says, "The spirit of my grandfather has been caught by Esuvi."

Later when I asked Ngonga about Osande and Ondele, he spoke in the plural of these spirits, calling good spirits *olosande*; bad

spirits, *olondele*. The medicine-man will visit a hut to tell the family news of the future, and while there he will put a concoction in an image to which he addresses questions. He stops his nostrils, then feigns answers from the image in a falsetto voice. The father of a family, or possibly the mother's brother, may kill an animal in front of the hut. He says to Osande, "We hope when we kill this there will be no more sickness." The Ovimbundu are afraid of death, and will sacrifice to Osande to ask that there shall be no death in the family.

I do not think that the Ovimbundu distinguish ghosts, spirits, and souls. The part of a man which does not die is sometimes called *utima*; this is the word for heart. Ngonga seems certain that every person irrespective of age, rank and sex has a spirit. When a man kills himself or if he is murdered, he is buried near a river so that his spirit will go to the sea. Women who commit suicide generally do so by hanging or drowning; men stab themselves in the heart or use a flintlock gun, pulling the trigger with their toes. It is feared that the spirit of a suicide will return to induce another suicide in the family.

#### *Taboos and Omens*

There is a taboo against killing *oka kuhu*; but it is not quite certain whether *oka kuhu* is the yellow-backed duiker or the hartebeest. When Ngonga was sick he was forbidden to eat the flesh of the duiker *ombambi*; neither is this flesh to be eaten by people who are dizzy. In former days women were not allowed to eat eggs. The flesh of sheep and goats is said to be indigestible for children between the ages of three and six years. The flesh of the lion, leopard, and hyena is forbidden as food for the king, but other people may eat of it. The king is, in fact, forbidden to eat the flesh of any animal which has paws; neither may he eat the bush buck. A medicine-man must not eat the flesh of the dog except before a ceremony for curing the sick.

A woman must not step over the legs of a male, nor a man, over the legs of a woman; to do so causes weakness of the knees. A man or woman may step over the legs of a child.

Omens are numerous. It is bad to see a snake holding a frog. The person who sees this must go to the medicine-man at once. If anyone, setting out from home meets a woman carrying corn meal or any other white substance, he must take a little of it, whiten

the face, and all will be well. A fly in the mouth is a good sign because the fly knows where there is some meat. A stranger visiting a village is pleased when a dog is the first animal to enter the guest house. Dogs are fed, so the entry of a dog is a sign that the visitor will be fed. The appearance of a goat is a bad omen, because goats pick up a frugal living as best they may.

### *Religion and Conduct*

I could not discover that any beliefs influenced conduct. The Ovimbundu have many high standards of conduct. However, there is no idea of sin; that is to say, there are no commands laid down by some authority which is more than human. The idea of crime is well developed. Many actions are known to be punishable because they contravene the laws of the tribe. Adultery is a crime on a par with theft, but is not a sin.

Perhaps *ekandu* is the only word which could express sin. An Ovimbundu would say that murder is the chief *ekandu*. "Ekandu is to make anything have a bad time." To send a stranger along the wrong path is *ekandu*. It would be *ekandu* to throw an animal on the fire. It is *ekandu* to be guilty of fornication with the sister of one's wife. Such an act appears to be *ekandu* only if the wife's sister is visiting the house of the culprit. The male defaulter appears to be blameless. The people of the village from which the wife's sister came would be expected to pay the wronged wife. For sexual offences against young children the death penalty or banishment would be inflicted.

This subject of moral responsibility leads naturally into the question of laws and penalties. There are among the Ovimbundu well defined moral codes and clearly formulated tribal laws but these are not dependent on divine commands neither do they result from injunctions laid down by ancestral spirits.

### *Funeral Rites*

In the village of Chilema in the district of Elende, I witnessed the funeral rites of a boy of twelve years. When a few hundred yards from the village I heard sounds of drumming coming from a secluded place in the tall grass. On reaching the clearing I saw four drummers each with a tubular drum between his legs. The man on the left of the drumming squad played with an up-and-down movement of his left hand only; this provided the base tone. Other drum-

mers played with palms and fingers of both hands. Thirty feet away stood a group of women who started the rhythm for the drums by clapping their hands and continued it as an accompaniment to the drums. Near by were men seated on the ground, while a large number of women walked about or sat on the ground chatting and smoking their pipes. The general impression was not one of solemnity.

My interpreter, Ngonga, who was a relative of the deceased boy, explained to the people that I was seriously interested. I sat down by the father of the dead boy and talked with him through my interpreter. In the meantime I observed visually and by aid of the olfactory sense that the corpse was in a cloth-covered box slung on a pole and supported on the shoulders of two men who stood very close to the drummers. The bearers remained immovable except for the occasional changing of the coffin pole from one shoulder to the other. At intervals women came out of the group to dance near the coffin, one, two, or three at a time. A boy was particularly energetic in making wild leaps and whirls in front of the coffin. These detached and spontaneous performances lasted each about two minutes.

After two hours the bearers of the coffin moved away, followed on one side by some of the men, on the other side by some of the women. A large number of men and women remained behind with the drummers who continued their music while the solo dancing proceeded as before. The corpse was removed to a place about a hundred yards from the spot where the initial ceremonies had been performed. The bearers still held the coffin on their shoulders while men and women arranged themselves in sitting positions on each side of the bier. This part of the proceeding was quiet and solemn; there was very little conversation, though I observed that some tobacco-smoking continued among both men and women.

A woman of about forty-five years of age held a plate of corn meal in her hand while she stood close to the corpse and in line with the bier. She addressed the corpse very earnestly and paused intermittently for a reply. While speaking, the woman looked intently at the foremost of the bearers. Both bearers stood immovable with heads inclined forward and eyes directed to the ground. This woman was the sister of the father of the dead boy. My interpreter said that she must be the oldest sister. The woman was asking why the boy died.

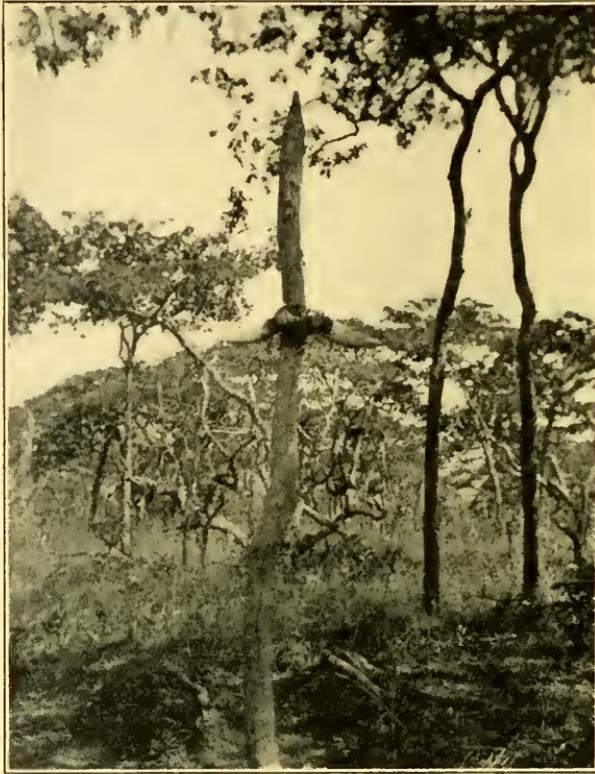
After she had addressed the corpse, an old man, the brother of the father's mother took her place. He held up the plate of meal and earnestly asked questions. Ngonga explained that the woman addresses the corpse "to give him sense so that he will not be ashamed to tell all about it" (that is, about the manner of his death). The old man said, "*Etali* (today) *omalange* (my boy) *tu yongola* (we want) *okn* (you) *tu* (us) *sanjuisa* (make glad) *o tu* (to us) *sapuila* (tell) *muele* (indeed) *cosi* (all) *ca* (that) *ku upa* (you takes) *kilu lieve* (from earth.)"

The pause which follows a question was intended to give the corpse time to reply. It is supposed that if the answer is in the negative the corpse causes the pole to swing slightly backward. An affirmative answer is given if the corpse makes the pole swing forward. The old man demanded "Is it witchcraft that hates us and killed you? If it is witchcraft, come to the front." I could see no swing of the corpse on the pole, but Ngonga said that he could see the coffin swing backward to indicate a negative answer.

The next question, whether Sambulu caused the death, calls for a detailed explanation. Sambulu is a bad spirit which is able to cause death when there are crying women and children. The mother of the dead boy was a slave whose husband was absent from the village for a time. During this period her master threatened to sell her; consequently she went to the mission with her children. They were crying, hence the possibility that the evil Sambulu had at this time entered the person of the boy now deceased. This happened a year ago, but the lapse of time apparently made no difference. The corpse made a negative answer to this ingenious suggestion. While the corpse was interrogated, males among the spectators spoke to the old man who was asking the questions, suggesting inquiries which might be made as to the cause of death. Eventually the corpse indicated that death was due to a "bad belly." If no answer is returned affirmatively recourse is made to the medicine-man who carries out divination.

The day was now far advanced, so Ngonga and I returned across the hills to Elende. From further inquiries respecting funeral customs, I elicited the following information from him. Burial would take place a mile or more from the village in a grave dug by the father's sister's children. The depth of the grave is about six feet. Each village has its own burial ground. The woman who questioned the corpse carried a sleeping mat which is spread on the bottom of

the grave, or placed outside the grave on the mound of earth. Ngonga said that the box of a well-to-do person would be broken and placed on the grave; the breaking is necessary in order to prevent theft. I could find no trace of the idea that property is broken so that its spirit will accompany the man to a world of spirits. I have found among the Ovimbundu no indication of animism or animatism.



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HORNS OF AN OX ON THE GRAVE OF AN OCIMBUNDU, CACONDA

I was unable to see the corpse, which was in a wooden box covered with a thin piece of blue and white checkered cloth tightly wound about the coffin. Ngonga explained that the corpse was prepared in the following manner before it was placed in the coffin. The body was extended in a supine position with the thumbs tied, the palms together, and the hands on the pubes. The great toes were tied together and the upper arms were bound to the torso with bands of bark or cloth.

At the funeral of a baby one of the grandmothers carries the dead child to the grave on her back. The ceremony of questioning the corpse is carried out if the child is old enough to walk and talk. If the child were unable to talk, the parents, accompanied by their brothers and sisters, would visit the medicine-man to inquire the cause of death. There are a few special observances connected with the burial of twins. When the children were alive the mother had to shake a rattle or to blow a small horn instead of giving the usual greetings to a passerby. This she has to do at the funeral. The wooden figure which a barren or bereaved woman nurses at her breast is interesting in this connection.

When a medicine-man dies the people call in another medicine-man to take charge of the ceremonies. The corpse is tied in a sitting posture which is the attitude for burial. His charms are attached to his body. The head ornament, which may be feathers, quills of the porcupine, or hair from a goat's beard, is placed upright on the head and fastened by a band under the chin. The corpse is kept in a seated position lashed to a stool for three days. There is no coffin. The corpse is carried in a seated position to the grave which is dug at cross paths. The corpse of a medicine-man is questioned in the same manner as that of a commoner. When the corpse is placed in the grave the medicine-men dance; they have "spirit in their heads," shake their heads while dancing, and without pausing, each eats a living chicken which he carries in his hand. At the side of the grave a dog, a chicken, and a goat are killed. No part of the flesh is buried; it is consumed by the people. A sleeping mat is placed in the grave. On the mound of earth are placed horns filled with medicine, and in addition there will be the skins which used to hang from the waist of the man when he was performing. The rain-making charms are not buried in the grave, because their interment would cause the rainfall to diminish; the charms may, however, be placed on the outside of the grave. No food is placed in or on the grave. The mound of earth is painted with a human male figure. An *osoma* or a *sekulu* (king or chief) will visit the grave of a medicine-man to ask for rain or other favors.

When a new medicine-man is making medicine or performing ceremonies he uses the name of a deceased medicine-man. It is thought that the dead medicine-man has spirits which he is able to send to earth. No images of the medicine-man are made. Medicine-

men visit a grave at night in order to take parts of a corpse to include in their medicine. At Caconda in western Angola I obtained the complete outfit of a medicine-man who included in his equipment two small hoe blades which he used for disinterring the dead. There was a portion of a human tibia in the basket.

The funeral of a medicine-woman is the same as that of a male, except that medicine-women carry the corpse.

A chief is buried in a specially constructed enclosure in the village over which he ruled. The mausoleum is a small hut with a substantial wooden door. This is surrounded by a strongly built wooden fence ten feet high. In the capital of Ngalangi the king showed me the inside of the burial place of kings which contained four mounds of earth each of which covered the body of a king. A little distance away were the graves of the principal wives. The hut contained pottery and gourds, also a small fire which, replenished by an attendant, is not allowed to be extinguished.

Ngonga says that the burial chamber at Elende contains the head of the chief in a box. After one year from the time of burial the box containing the head is opened in order that a libation of beer may be poured over it. Sometimes the head is anointed with palm oil and a new band of cloth is added. These attentions are paid to the head in time of sickness and drought. If the head shows signs of desiccation an ox is killed in order to provide a piece of skin in which the head is sewn. The tomb is visited by men who come to ask for good fortune when they are departing for a journey to the interior. These supplicants are led to the tomb by the ruling chief. Near to the burial place of the chief at Elende there was the house of bows, which is typical of several I have seen in different parts of Angola. I have been inside these repositories which always contain staffs, bows, arrows, sleeping mats, and possibly other articles which belonged to dead chiefs.

The corpse of a king is suspended to the top of the burial hut by a rope which is tightly fastened around the neck. Death is not admitted; "The king has a cold in his head." The head of a family, specially selected, twists the rope until the head is severed. The twisting is carried out gradually, a little each day, so that a week or more is required for the severance of the head. In former times severance was accomplished by twisting only, but at present a knife is used to help the friction of the rope. When the body of the king

has fallen into the basket placed underneath to receive it, the people may say that the king is dead; mourning then begins.

According to the arrangement I saw at the *ombala* of Ngalangi, the bodies are at the present time buried in a hut constructed as a burial place for kings. The older method was cave burial. The burial posture for a king is the same as that described for a medicine-man. Mourning for a king lasts for seven days, during which time the children and wives of the king wear strips of oxhide on their left wrists. The chiefs gather to choose a king from the "blood of kings." "Sometimes a bad man will make himself king without waiting to be chosen." The choice should be in favor of the oldest son of the chief wife, but "if she has stupid sons, a son of another wife will be chosen."

Sometimes in time of drought chiefs and their wives go to the grave of a chief. They say, "If you are angry tell us what you want. If you want an ox we will kill one." If they visit the tomb of a king, the king's corpse is asked, "Do you want a new box for your head? We will make one." The oldest chief takes from the tomb the box which contains the head. This is slung on a pole supported on the shoulders of two boys. The head is questioned after the manner of interrogating a corpse. The oldest chief carries out the sacrifice which is suggested by the forward movement of the head-box on the pole.

The house is not burnt after death has occurred within, but it is still customary to take down the surrounding fence and to build a new one. The house is then used as before. I was definitely told at the capital of Ngalangi, by the king himself, that he must continue to use the house of former kings until the structure collapses. Since no repair work may be done, it was in very dilapidated condition.

Tree burial I have not seen, but I heard of it near Ngalangi. It is the method for the very poor who have died in debt. Anyone who gives interment to the corpse takes over the responsibility for the debts; hence tree burial is the most convenient way of disposal. Tree burial has recently taken place at Chilesó.

In traveling in the District of Ganda, likewise in the Esole country of the hinterland of Novo Redondo, one cannot fail to notice the presence of rock tombs which are the mausoleums of hunters. These are invariably placed in commanding positions on domes of rock and are built up from pieces of granite de-

tached from the rocks which serve as a base. Horns of animals are placed on the tomb which is decorated by a stick bearing the tail of an animal. From a tomb of similar structure it was possible to detach a slab so that the interior could be seen. There were two male skeletons; one lay supine, the bones of the other were in disorder.

A mourning widow must leave her hair loose and undressed, and must wear a cloth which conceals her from crown to sole. For three days she has to sleep close to the corpse of her husband with only a stick, which is about the length of the bed, between them. During this time she has no food and is expected to wail continuously day and night. When the corpse is prepared for burial the widow says goodbye to it. Relatives hold the corpse up and make it advance toward her. She is held in the position of a bound corpse and supported by relatives. The widow does not go to the funeral. Mourning continues with fasting and periodical wailing at three o'clock in the afternoon and again twelve hours later. After a month, the widow lies for one night in the place where the corpse of her husband lay the night before burial. A beer-drinking marks the end of the period of mourning, at which the medicine-man guides her hand as she dips a ladle into the beer pot to distribute the drinks.

The widow may stay with her mother's brother or she may return to her parents, but she must not become the wife of another man until a year has elapsed. Mourning ceremonies of this kind are typical of Bantu ideas concerning the necessary propitiation of ancestral ghosts who are inclined to be jealous and vindictive.

#### *Magical Practices*

Training for the position of magician (*ocimbanda*) is not carried out with formality ending in initiatory rites, neither is the position hereditary; but the boy or girl who wishes to become an *ocimbanda* must have "spirit in the head." Among the Ovimbundu there does not appear to be an intensifying of natural neuroses by seclusion, starvation, or beating. When a boy is sick, the medicine-man says, "You have a spirit who wants you to be *ocimbanda*." He kills a dog, a goat, and four chickens. The boy must then go around with him carrying his apparatus and obeying him in every way. The female *ocimbanda* is called *chambula*

by other women; her services are preferred in cases of difficult childbirth.

Magical practices are of two kinds, social and anti-social. The man who carries out divination, rain-making, healing the sick, and many other functions is *ocimbanda*, while the secret worker of evil, the witch or wizard, is *onganga*. In one village there may be several men and women each of whom receives the name *ocimbanda*, though specialization in some particular form of magical practice is the rule. An *ocimbanda* who has the reputation for curing dizziness, madness, and *onyalai* is one of great repute; so also is the man who can cure a case of blood in the urine (*Portuguese biliosa*).

Indication of the equipment and method of the *ocimbanda* is given by an examination of the small divination basket. The contents of such a basket from Bailundu give an idea of the nature of inferences which are drawn, when certain of these objects come to the top after the basket has been shaken.

A figure with beads on its neck indicates that trouble is due to the ghost of a dead baby whose spirit wishes to come back.

A shell of a gourd with round orifice means that someone has been talking too much.

Two figures, male and female, whispering together, indicate that a husband and wife are planning to poison somebody.

A figure of a female with a large abdomen indicates that the spirit of a deceased pregnant woman is causing trouble.

A horn with shells on it indicates that the woman who is consulting the diviner will not bear children.

When a little figure with a black tuft on its head comes to the top of the basket, it indicates that trouble among the natives is caused by the white man. When dealing with this figure the medicine-man tries to speak like a white man.

A figure with a little crest on its head is the indication of trouble due to the spirit which likes to drink blood. When this figure comes to the top of the basket, the medicine-man induces the blood-drinking spirit to enter a man. This person dances with a small axe or a hair switch in his hand. When the dancing has induced a frenzy, the dancer kills a pig and drinks the fresh blood. The blood-drinking spirit is then exorcised from the community.

If the figure with joined legs comes to the top of the basket the meaning is that a medicine-man used to be in the family of

the consultant. The spirit of this medicine-man wishes some member of the family to become a medicine-man.

The snake signifies cords and binding. To dream of a snake indicates that the dreamer will be tied and sold into slavery. When the wooden snake comes to the top of the basket the significance is that a spirit has tied the sick person who is consulting the diviner.

If the wooden figure of a girl appears at the top of the basket the inference is, that the spirit which is causing trouble is that of a girl.

The appearance of a thin wooden figure at the top of the basket means that the troublesome spirit is that of a person who died when away on a long and fatiguing journey. The afflicted one has to make an offering to one of the wooden human figures which are to be found along trade routes.

A piece of iron in the basket may come to the top when the contents are shaken. In this case it is assumed that a death has or will take place. The death is attributed to something, for example, alcohol, which has come from white people.

A fragment from the hoof of an ox indicates that a troublesome spirit desires an ox to be sacrificed. If a sick man is consulting the diviner, he is told to take a drink containing the parings of the hoof of an ox.

The bone from a chicken's leg indicates that sickness has come from the road, that is from a journey. The Ovimbundu have been famous for their long journeys across Africa, hence the implication seems to be that a disease of an infectious kind has been brought from a distance.

A corn cob indicates that trouble has arisen from a spirit which can affect the growth of corn.

A coin indicates that the sick or deceased person was too fond of money; misfortune has come from the spirit who gives wealth and good luck, because it has been offended in some way.

There is in the divination basket a white bone which signifies laughter. A small cocoon of sticks, which I think belongs to a caddis-fly, means that some one has stolen a bale of cloth.

Small round shells indicate that everything is well.

A boat indicates that someone will be drowned.

The handle of a hoe is the symbol of cultivation. The appearance of a miniature handle at the top of the basket implies

that the spirit of a woman who was rich in corn is troubling the community.

Two connected, human wooden figures indicate that a twin will die. The Ovimbundu welcome twins; when one is dead the mother has a wooden figure made to take its place. This is nursed to induce another conception.

A little gourd means that the deceased person was poisoned for stealing from a field.



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#### INITIATION OF BOYS

At the final ceremony the boys pretend to be spirits of the dead.

The seed of the oil palm means that a large gourd of palm oil has been stolen.

The only musical instruments used by the *ocimbanda* appear to be the small friction drum and the rattle.

At Ngalangi I saw a medicine-man give a dance during which he slashed about him with a small axe, which was evidently a ceremonial object, as the construction was too light to make it effective as a tool or weapon. At Bailundu I was informed that the axe is used in a dance which is intended to cure a man who is sick because a spirit has entered into him. The sickness may have occurred because the man has broken a promise.

Without parallel among ceremonial objects used by the Ovimbundu is a small wooden cloth-covered box from Bailundu. This contains a piece of root of cylindrical form tightly bound with cloth, having at one end a cowrie shell. The box is the home of Kandundu, for whom a small hut is built in order to contain the box. Anyone who sees the contents of the box is said to go blind. Kandundu is believed to be the "spirit of dreaming who makes swellings come on the body."

Antelope horns are in general use as containers of magical potions. A large horn, filled with a mixture of goat's fat and charcoal is intended for use in curing the sick; the contents, liquid when heated, are dropped on the heads of the patients. One horn from Bailundu is used for holding sweet beer which is drunk by one afflicted by bad dreams. A horn with a piece of fur attached contains a mixture of fat and charcoal which is heated after sundown, near camp, when men are on the march. The spreading fumes keep away lions and thieves. It was said that the thief is kept away because the fumes make him cough.

A charm in the form of small neckbands of plaited fiber with two or three cowrie shells attached is worn by women who wish to induce conception. A tortoise shell containing fat and charcoal is worn by the mother of a child who is afflicted by the spirit of Kandundu, which may cause the baby to have skin eruptions or a very small amount of hair. In order to cure the child the *mother* must eat small quantities of the contents of the shell from time to time.

At Cangamba I saw an *ocimbanda* performing a ceremony which was supposed to make a thief return to the village for trial. The medicine-man sat on his haunches holding in one hand a small rattle and in the other a slender stick on which the decorated carapace of a tortoise was poised. Very earnestly the man talked, shook his head, and gazed at the tortoise shell which began to twist on its pivot. As the *ocimbanda* talked and shook his rattle, the movement of the shell grew faster. Presently the rotation of the tortoise shell was reversed, but so adroitly that I could not follow the movement or imitate it when allowed to try. The reversal of the movement of the carapace on its pivot represents the culprit turning back to his village. The operator was, I believe, a Chokue man, but at Cangamba there is a mixture of Ovimbundu, Valuchazi, Babunda, Ambuella, and Vachokue tribes.

It was also at Cangamba that I saw a female *ocimbanda* painting marks on the face of a sick woman. Twice at this place I witnessed the treatment of a sick woman by a male *ocimbanda*. In the first instance the sick woman knelt in front of a hut two feet high which contained a clay leopard marked with white dots. The *ocimbanda* dipped a bunch of leaves in water and stroked this along her spine from the neck to the sacrum.

The second performance was more elaborate. A screen of boughs was erected outside the hut of the medicine-man and on one side of this stood two male drummers, on the other side were three wooden posts, each two feet high, circular in cross-section, and painted with geometrical figures. Near the posts was a basket, so closely woven that it contained water, in which green twigs and leaves were soaking. The drums began to beat while a group of women clapped hands in rhythm. The patient knelt before the small painted wooden posts close to the basket of water, into which she dipped her face from time to time. The *ocimbanda* took wet twigs from the basket, which he drew slowly along the spine of the patient from neck to sacrum, as if painting with a brush. She would shiver from head to foot, then remain still except for the dipping of her face in the water until the next paroxysm shook her. This continued for ten minutes. The *ocimbanda* then knelt by the woman, dug a small hole in the ground, and pulled up one of the painted wooden posts which he placed in the patient's hands. He kept his hands over hers while she transferred the painted post to the new hole which he had prepared. Finally the basket of water and leaves was buried thirty feet from the scene of operations.

At Elende a hole in the ground contained a heap of stones and I was informed that this was a sweat bath. Cold water is thrown over the hot stones so that steam arises to the patient who crouches above the hole covered with a blanket. Among the varied duties of the medicine-man is washing the body of a king or a chief. This is performed in a hut specially reserved for the purpose, with water to which some of the blood of a freshly killed chicken has been added.

The guilt or innocence of suspects is still tested by giving poison to chickens brought to the medicine-man by the accused. The *ocimbanda* gives the dose. He whose chicken dies is guilty.

The only occasion on which I saw the rain-maker at work was at Ngalangi. He was reluctant to perform, as the rainy season was

far from due, but eventually he was persuaded to do so. He danced by springing from one leg to the other in quick time, while now and then he sprang into the air with a twisting motion. His arms were held high then drawn slowly down, as if symbolizing falling rain. He then stood still and went through arm and hand movements as if he were spreading something over the earth. Presently the dancing would be resumed, only to be interrupted again by the slow arm movements. At times the dancer stood still and gave a shrill whistle with his mouth. During the whole performance the rain-maker carried in his right hand a switch made by fastening hair from a cow's tail onto a wooden handle.

The foregoing observations suggest that the Ovimbundu have, in common with other Bantu Negroes, an idea of a supreme being who is remote and otiose, but a lively and energizing factor is found in veneration of ghosts of the departed who constitute a link between the spiritual and mundane worlds. Religious beliefs do not, however, appear directly to influence standards of conduct by laying down ethical principles for whose infraction punishments are prescribed, and for whose observance rewards are offered.

Almost every aspect of tribal life centers in the *ocimbanda* who by virtue of innate qualities and training is a mediary between the sacred and the profane, and as such he seeks to avert evil while securing the aid of spiritual forces. Opposed to the *ocimbanda* is the *nganga* who directs his magic toward anti-social ends, including impotence, sterility, sickness and death.

Around these spiritual forces the economic and social life gyrate, with the medicine-man as a pivotal point on whom the whole tribal structure depends.

LOCKE'S ESSAY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDER-  
STANDING AS A PARTIAL SOURCE OF  
POPE'S ESSAY ON MAN

BY GRANT McCOLLEY

THE importance of Locke to English poets of the first half of the eighteenth century is attested by their many references to him. In the particular case of Pope, Wakefield long ago pointed out an obvious parallel between the passage in *An Essay on Man* which opens with, "Why has not Man a microscopic eye?" and Locke's specific discussion of this point in Book II, Chapter XXIII, Section 12.

There are other parallel concepts. Although general in nature, and such as might well have been developed by Pope himself, or drawn from innumerable sources, they are principles which Locke made important and prominent. The first of these ideas occurs in the section from which Pope drew the parallel noted by Wakefield. In this section, Locke states that "we are furnished with faculties to discover enough in the creatures to lead us to the knowledge of the Creator, and the knowledge of our duty." Pope introduces the second half of the fourth section of Epistle III with the admonition, "Go, from the Creatures thy instructions take," and continues with an amplification of this theme. Although it is traditionally considered that this section, "finely improved," was taken from Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, it is important that Pope was indebted to this particular portion of Locke's *Essay* for the parallel established by Wakefield.

A more vital similarity, however, occurs in the purpose of the two essays. Both seek to turn the thoughts of man from the infinite realm of the universal to the finite world of man. These two phases of the generative purpose of the essays are noticeable in both works.

Pope opens Epistle II of his *Essay* with the injunction:

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;  
The proper study of Mankind is Man.

As expanded in the "argument" of Epistles I and II, and in the epistles proper, the scanning of God is the product of a quest for more knowledge. This quest is the result of pride, and occasions

in man error and misery. Although God be known in many worlds, it is the duty of man to trace Him only in his own. This assertion means, in turn, that it is the business of man to study himself, his nature, his powers and frailties, and the extent of his capacity.

According to Pope, to scan God is to philosophize, and particularly to study science. In the first section of Epistle II, the general theme of which is that man should not pry into God, Pope is severe in his comment on science:

Go, wond'rous creature! mount where Science guides;  
 Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides;  
 Instruct the planets in what orbs to run;  
 .....  
 Go, teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule—  
 Then drop into thyself, and be a fool!

Not only is the study of science an occupation for the fool, but it offers, according to Pope, little of value to mankind:

Trace Science then, with Modesty thy guide;  
 First strip off all her equipage of Pride;  
 Deduct what is but Vanity, or Dress,  
 Or Learning's Luxury, or Idleness;  
 .....  
 Then see how little the remaining sum,  
 Which serv'd the past, and must the times to come!

It was Pope's desire that man study himself rather than seek universal knowledge, that he place no faith in science which occasions thought concerning Deity, and that man know and respect his capacity.

Similar attitudes are generally expressed by Locke. In the Introduction of his *Essay*, he attacks the search after universal knowledge, and urges man to understand his capacity so that he may be "more cautious in meddling with things exceeding (his) comprehension." He next states that "we should not then, perhaps, be so forward, out of an affectation of an universal knowledge, to raise questions, and perplex ourselves and others with disputes, about things to which our understandings are not suited." Such disputes, he continues, only cause men to increase their doubts, and "confirm them at last in perfect scepticism." He concludes that "our business here is not to know all things, but those which concern our conduct."

In comparison with that of Pope, Locke's attitude toward sci-

ence is one vaguely expressed. Pope specifically labels the scientist as a fool and his work as almost worthless folly, but such unequivocal statements are not made by Locke. His most direct assertion occurs in the "Epistle to the Reader," wherein he discourses on worthless forms of speech which have "so long passed for mysteries of science," and perhaps by implication indicts science. This indictment, however, has little or no connection with Pope's objection to a science which scanned God.

Various references in the Epistle to the Reader and the Introduction suggest, however, that the origin of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* was connected with the scientific movement which then called the attributes of Deity into question. The epistle implies that Locke regarded himself as "an under-labourer in clearing the ground" for "the incomparable Mr. Newton, with some other of that strain." Since Newton, especially in the scholium of the *Principia*, held that God is as unknowable to man as colors are to the blind, it is not impossible that Locke considered a portion of his "ground clearing" a demonstration that a deistic interpretation of God was faulty because of the limits of man's capacity.

It is probable that Locke did have in mind various philosophic and scientific ideas of his period, particularly those concerning Deity. He speaks of disputes as something leading to scepticism, condemns an affectation of universal knowledge, and urges man that he be satisfied with what God has seen fit to give him. One of Locke's best statements of this last point is given in Book II, Chapter XXIII, Section 12, as follows:

The infinite wise Contriver of us and all things about us hath fitted our senses, faculties, and organs to the conveniences of life, and the business we have to do here. We are able by our senses to know and distinguish things, and to examine them so far as to apply them to our uses, and several ways to accommodate the exigencies of this life. We have insight enough into their admirable contrivances and wonderful effects to admire and magnify the wisdom, power, and goodness of their Author. Such a knowledge as this, which is suited to our present condition, we want not faculties to attain. But it appears not that God intended we should have a perfect, clear, and adequate knowledge of them, that perhaps is not in the comprehension of any finite being. We are furnished with faculties (dull and weak as they are) to discover enough in the creatures to lead us to the knowledge of

the Creator, and the knowledge of our duty ; and we are fitted well enough with abilities to provide for the conveniences of living ; these are our business in this world.

The *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *An Essay on Man* state that it is improper for man to seek universal knowledge, and that the proper study of mankind is man and his problems on earth. Both essays advise or suggest that man study the creatures, and agree that man is as perfect as he should be. They further agree in praising the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator, and in establishing a virtuous life as the principal consideration of man.

Although it is true that most of these concepts or principles are stated in that section of Locke's *Essay* which provided Pope with comments on the adequacy of the senses of man, it would be hazardous to assert that Pope drew them from this source. He may or may not have done so. In either case, however, Locke made a notable contribution to Pope's *Essay*, for more than any other man he gave to these concepts and ideas the prestige and validity essential to make them attractive to an accepted poet.

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