

# Goethe, Walter Pater and 'the Aesthetic Consciousness'

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The idea of this article occurred to me when I noticed, on re-reading Edward Bullough's lectures on *The modern conception of aesthetics*, privately printed at Cambridge in 1907 and providentially brought to the notice of a wider public in 1957 by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson through her edition of Bullough's main writings,<sup>1</sup> that my old teacher had included Goethe among the historical personages who were men of what he called 'aesthetic culture'. It seemed clear to me from several references in these lectures that Walter Pater, whose reputation in 1907 was still under a cloud because of the failings of successors like Arthur Symons and Oscar Wilde, had nevertheless had a great influence on Bullough's thinking. What, I asked myself, had Pater thought of Goethe? And what relevance had his views to Bullough's conception of the 'aesthetic consciousness'? There is a good article on Pater by Hans Hecht<sup>2</sup> which mentions several German theses on Pater, chiefly about his influence on Oscar Wilde, and there is a very full bibliography in the most thorough study of Pater by Germain d'Hangest,<sup>3</sup> but 'Walter Pater and Goethe' seems to be a rather neglected subject, on which a few pointers, with special reference to Bullough's ideas about Goethe, may still be of interest.

Born in Stepney in 1839 as the son of a surgeon, who died when the boy was five years old, Walter Pater was brought up in a mainly feminine household in the country, and educated at home till he was thirteen, when he was sent as a day-boy to King's School, Canterbury. His devoted mother's death a year later left his aunt in charge of the four Pater children. During his first year at Oxford, where Walter Pater had won a scholarship at Queen's College in 1858, this aunt settled with his two sisters at first at Heidelberg and later in Dresden, no doubt, like so many British residents in Germany at that time, to make the best of their small income. Visiting them for long periods in vacations Pater learned German and saw something of German life and art. German influence on Oxford philosophy was at that time of course very strong, and by his third year he was reading Hegel's *Phenomenology* in German. He had discovered Goethe two years earlier through Matthew Arnold and was also reading much French. It is not surprising, when we know the extent of his general reading, to learn that in spite of his brilliance he had to be content with a second class

in *Literae Humaniores* in December 1862.

Pater had come up to Oxford with a career in the Church in view, and he persisted in that intention after taking his degree, until the Bishop of London was informed of the free-thinking attitude he adopted towards his friends. It was in his second year that Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared and Pater had witnessed the sensation it created at Oxford. He began to shock his orthodox school friends from Canterbury with Voltairian biblical criticism, while continuing to go to College chapel and apparently to be deeply attached to religious ritual. After supporting himself for a few months by coaching he was fortunate enough to be elected to a fellowship at Brasenose and appointed tutor and later dean. He seems to have carried over into his aesthetic philosophy an attitude to life rooted in old habits of thought and feeling, very much the kind of thing that Nietzsche delighted in unmasking in German 'Bildung'. His closest friend in his undergraduate days, Ingram Bywater, who became Benjamin Jowett's successor in the Chair of Greek, later wrote about him to a German friend: "I always thought that there was a possibility of his ending his days as a Catholic. If he had come across a really great Catholic like Cardinal Newman he would have satisfied his emotional and aesthetic nature."<sup>4</sup>

A quotation from Pater's first book, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), joins one from Aristotle and one from Goethe on the title-page of Bullough's *The Modern Conception of Aesthetics*. It runs: "Philosophy serves culture, not by the fancied gift of absolute or transcendental knowledge, but by suggesting questions which help one to detect the passion, and strangeness, and dramatic contrasts of life." There are four or five references to Goethe in the main body of Pater's *Renaissance*, but they are most frequent of course in the last and longest essay in the book, on Winckelmann, and the epigraph chosen by Bullough is one of them. Winckelmann, as Pater's preface explains, 'belongs in spirit to an earlier age' than the eighteenth century, and may be regarded as 'the last fruit of the Renaissance,' - one that 'explains in a striking way its motive and tendencies.' Pater opens this essay with a discussion of Goethe's contribution on Winckelmann to the collective volume *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert*, Tübingen 1805, and frequently refers to Goethe in what follows. " 'One learns nothing from him', Goethe says about Winckelmann to Eckermann, 'but one becomes something.' If we ask what the secret of that influence was, Goethe himself will tell us - wholeness, intellectual integrity." Pater has to admit Winckelmann's insincerity in becoming a convert with the sole aim of studying Greek art in Rome, but pleads for his absolution on the ground that this "was only one incident of a culture in which the moral instinct, like the religious or political, was merged in the artistic." This might be regarded as already a plea for the recognition of what Bullough was to call the 'aesthetic consciousness' as a complete 'Weltanschauung'.

Pater is chiefly concerned, of course, with Winckelmann's important contribution to our understanding of the Greeks. "The supreme characteristics of the

Hellenic ideal", we learn from him, "are *Heiterkeit* - blitheness or repose, and *Allgemeinheit* - generality or breadth." "The basis of all artistic genius lies in the power of conceiving humanity in a new and striking way, of putting a happy world of its own creation in place of the meaner world of our common days." (p. 213). Of the 'law of restraint' many examples are to be found in Greek sculpture, the most striking being for Pater "the *adorante* of the museum of Berlin, a youth who has gained the wrestler's prize, with hands lifted and open, in praise for the victory." (p. 218). A long quotation from Hegel's *Aesthetik*, the lecture course which he gave four times in the 1820s in Berlin, later admirably edited by H.G. Hotho from students' notes, follows (pp. 219f.), to suggest that the general intellectual, literary and philosophical outlook of the Greeks can best be understood as an *aesthetic* approach to life, the key to which is to be found in Greek sculpture. It may strike some readers now as an example of that 'Tyranny of Greece over Germany' which Professor E.M. Butler deplored, but it certainly anticipates the central ideas of the 'aesthetic consciousness' passage in Edward Bullough's *Lectures*. Instead of Pater's excellent translation I quote the paragraph as it appears in the second German edition:-

Dieser Sinn für die vollendete Plastik des Göttlichen und Menschlichen war vornehmlich in Griechenland heimisch. In seinen Dichtern und Rednern, Geschichtsschreibern und Philosophen ist Griechenland noch nicht in seinem Mittelpunkt gefaßt, wenn man nicht als Schlüssel zum Verständnis die Einsicht in die Ideale der Skulptur mitbringt, und von diesem Standpunkt der Plastik aus sowohl die Gestalten der epischen und dramatischen Helden, als auch der wirklichen Staatsmänner und Philosophen betrachtet. Denn auch die handelnden Charaktere, wie die dichten und denkenden, haben in Griechenlands schönen Tagen diesen plastischen, allgemeinen und doch individuellen, nach außen wie nach innen gleichen Charakter. Sie sind groß und frei, selbständig auf dem Boden ihrer in sich selber substantiellen Besonderheit erwachsen, sich aus sich erzeugend und zu dem bildend, was sie waren und sein wollten. Besonders die Zeit des Perikles war reich an solchen Charakteren; Perikles selber, Phidias, Plato und vornehmlich Sophokles; so auch Thukydidēs, Xenophon, Sokrates, jeder in seiner Art, ohne daß der Eine durch die Art des Andern geringer würde, sondern schlechthin sind diese hohen Künstlernaturen, ideale Künstler ihrer selbst, Individuen aus einem Guß, Kunstwerke, die wie unsterbliche Götterbilder dastehen, an welchen nichts Zeitliches und Todeswürdiges ist. Von gleicher Plastik sind die körperlichen Kunstwerke der Sieger in den olympischen Spielen, ja selbst die Erscheinung der Phryne, die als das schönste Weib von ganz Griechenland nackt aus dem Wasser emporstieg. (II, 376f.)

Hegel is expressing here what had long been the attitude to life of many

of the most cultivated in the Germany of Goethe's maturity. "Their ideal, as Troeltsch puts it, was 'a full and free development of the mind and heart for its own sake', and many members of the intellectual élite began to see in the realisation and propagation of this ideal the specific mission of the Germans. Culture had become a supreme good, an ideal to live for."<sup>5</sup> A strong Protestant tradition, challenged by eighteenth-century Enlightenment, preceded of course the emergence of this ideal in Germany, and Pater's own acceptance of Hegel's aesthetic interpretation of Greek classicism followed upon the disturbance of his religious views by 'enlightened' criticism and above all by Darwin's bombshell. Clear traces of this religious crisis are to be seen in Pater's early essays, from his only surviving paper to the Old Mortality discussion club in Oxford, entitled *Diaphanéité*, of July, 1864, to the anonymous review articles on Coleridge, Winckelmann and William Morris (1866 to 1868). The Winckelmann article was the earliest of these essays to be included in 1873 in the *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, and part of the William Morris article was to become the famous 'Conclusion' of those *Studies* in the first edition, omitted in the second edition and restored in the third. 'Diaphanéité' would seem to mean something like 'transparent clarity', but the essay itself is very obscure. It is here that we find Goethe mentioned by Pater for the first time. "This intellectual throne is rarely won", we are told, for "like the religious life, it is a paradox in the world (. . .) It is a mind of taste lighted up by some spiritual ray within (. . .) Perhaps there are flushes of it in all of us; recurring moments of it in every period of life. Certainly this is so with every man of genius. It is a thread of pure white light that one might disentwine from the tumultuary richness of Goethe's nature. It is a natural prophesy of what the next generation will appear, renewed, modified by the ideas of this."<sup>6</sup>

The view of Goethe presented in the Winckelmann essay is more clearly defined. It is Pater's aim, he tells us, "to place Winckelmann in an intellectual perspective, of which Goethe is the foreground. For, after all, he is infinitely less than Goethe." Goethe, Pater says, continues Winckelmann's revolt against the eighteenth century. "Goethe illustrates a union of the Romantic spirit, in its adventure, its variety, its profound subjectivity of soul, with Hellenism, in its transparency, its rationality, its desire of beauty - that marriage of Faust and Helena, of which the art of the nineteenth century is the child." (pp. 226f) "For Goethe, possessing all modern interests (. . .) he defines, in clearest outline, the eternal problem of culture - balance, unity with one's self, consummate Greek modelling." (p. 228) A little later Goethe's Hellenism, 'the completeness and serenity of a watchful, exigent intellectualism', is said to be summed up in the line: "Im Ganzen, Guten, Wahren, resolut zu leben" - unfortunately a repetition of Carlyle's misquotation from Goethe's mock-sermon *Generalbeichte*.

In other early essays of Pater Goethe's name continues to appear, in the very striking study of Coleridge, for example, which came out first as a review article,

unsigned, in the *Westminster Review* in January, 1866. "Modern thought", Pater tells us here, "is distinguished from ancient by the cultivation of the 'relative' spirit in place of the absolute. (. . .) To the modern spirit nothing is, or can be rightly known, except relatively and under conditions." "Now the literary life of Coleridge was a disinterested struggle against the relative spirit", but modern science "gives us, not the truth of eternal outlines ascertained once for all, but a world of fine gradations and subtly linked conditions, shifting intricately as we ourselves change - and bids us, by a constant clearing of the organs of observation, and perfecting of analysis, to make what we can of these. To the intellect, the critical spirit, just these subtleties of effect are more precious than anything else. (. . .) It is no vague scholastic abstraction that will satisfy the speculative instinct in our modern minds. (. . .) The true illustration of the speculative temper is not the Hindoo mystic, lost to sense, understanding, individuality, but one such as Goethe, to whom every moment of life brought its contribution of experimental, individual knowledge; by whom no touch of the world of form, colour, and passion was disregarded."<sup>7</sup>

To us now there seems to be a big difference between Goethe's imaginative use of every perception and the restless pursuit of aesthetic experience that seems to be commended to the reader in some of Pater's purple patches, especially in the 'Conclusion' of the collection of Renaissance studies of 1873, a passage taken over from the already mentioned unsigned review of some of William Morris's poetry. Appearing, as these *Studies* did, at a time when there was much controversy in Oxford about the abolition of religious tests for degrees and the removal of clerical restrictions for fellowships, as well as about academic reforms stimulated by the example of the German universities, they aroused a storm of criticism, the Oxford theologians in particular treating the book 'as an attempt to destroy the moral and religious basis of character'. The Bishop of Oxford for instance expressed his fear 'that the Oxford tutors, when free from clerical restrictions, would instil, the principles of the book into their pupils', destroying the traditional pastoral relationship between tutor and undergraduate.<sup>8</sup> Even Pater's old friend Bywater, in the letter from which we have quoted, said that though he greatly admired Pater's literary sensitivity, he found his style 'affected and pretentious and often sadly wanting in lucidity.' It was much admired, he said, "by a small but devout body of followers - very superior persons in their own view, though of little importance in the view of the large literary public."

The 'Conclusion' is headed by a quotation from Heraclitus, whose philosophy of the eternal flux is often mentioned by Pater in later writings, and it opens with the sentence: "To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought." (p. 233) Pater goes on to illustrate this statement from our physical life, as science had by then learnt to see it, as a constant recombination of physical elements in the body, elements that are also to be found everywhere in the

external world. "This at least of flamelike our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways. (. . .)" In "the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring." (p. 234) "To such a tremulous wisp constantly re-forming itself on the stream (. . .) what is real in our life fines itself down." (p. 236). The conclusion Pater draws from the analysis of human life in its physical and mental aspects by contemporary science and philosophy is based on the dictum of Novalis: "Philosophieren ist dephlegmatisieren, vivifizieren", which Pater takes to mean that "the service of philosophy, of speculative culture, towards the human spirit, is to rouse, to startle it to a life of constant and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us, - for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself is the end." Pater's mood at that time of pure impressionism culminates in the notorious assertion: "To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life." (p. 236)

In a footnote to the text of this passage in the third edition of what was now called *The Renaissance* in 1888, the author refers us to the work which had appeared in 1885, *Marius the Epicurean*, generally considered his greatest achievement, for a fuller statement of the ideas of the 'Conclusion'. All Pater's great skill in the writing of colourful and musical prose went into this historical Bildungsroman, which traces the life and thought of a young Roman of good family in the later days of the Roman Empire, from his boyhood on a country estate, governed by venerable traditions, to his early death, surrounded by Christians, in a half involuntary martyrdom. But although, as Graham Hough has written in his sympathetic study of Pater, 'the religious development of a cultivated agnostic in the time of Marcus Aurelius is meant to indicate a possible development for a cultivated agnostic in the time of Queen Victoria', Pater's tone is quite different from that of any of the Honest Doubters before him. He has none of Matthew Arnold's 'nostalgia for the ages of faith, for certitude', but rather 'hails the deliquescence of all rigid forms of belief', aiming as he does 'not to defend a threatened set of moral values, but to release the sensibilities, to set them free to form new ones.'<sup>9</sup>

This is a point of view which, inspired by contemporary science, sees ideas too as subject to a natural evolution. "Nothing man has projected from himself is really intelligible except at its own date, and from its proper point of view in the 'secular process', that 'eternal process of nature'," as Pater puts it, "of which Goethe spoke as the 'Living Garment', whereby God is seen of us, ever in weaving at the 'Loom of Time' " (*Marius* I, p. 97) "How reassuring, after so long a debate about the rival *criteria* of truth, to fall back upon direct sensation, to limit one's aspirations after knowledge to that!" (I, p. 104) And so Marius resolved "as far as possible to exclude regret and desire, and yield

himself to the improvement of the present with an absolutely disengaged mind. *America is here and now - here, or nowhere*: as Wilhelm Meister finds out one day, just not too late, after so long looking vaguely across the ocean for the opportunity of the development of his capacities." (I, p. 105) Marius seeks this development through what Pater expressly calls an 'aesthetic education', one which makes him however "no frivolous *dilettante*, but graver than other men: his scheme is not that of a trifler, but rather of one who gives a meaning of his own, yet a very real one, to those old words - *Let us work while it is day.*" And Pater, like Bullough later, contrasts this 'pre-occupation with the *aspects* of things, with their aesthetic character, as it is called' with more usual attitudes to life. "As other men are concentrated upon truths of number, for instance, or on business, or it may be on the pleasures of appetite, so he is wholly bent on living in that full stream of refined sensation." (II, pp. 19f.) In his aestheticism, growing under the influence of Darwinism out of a deep devotion to Greek literature, art and philosophy, combined in his fatherless youth with Protestant religiosity and thoughts of the ministry, Pater often reminds one of Nietzsche, but his scope is far narrower and his egotism far less pronounced.

There is much in Edward Bullough's 'The Modern Conception of Aesthetics', in addition to his use of the quotations already mentioned, that points to his deep interest in Pater's ideas. Discussing current objections to aesthetics in general, he soon mentions Pater's rejection of definitions of beauty based on abstract principles. "Beauty", Pater says (on the first page of the Preface to his *Renaissance*), "like other qualities presented to human experience, is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness. To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics." Proceeding to present the aim of modern psychological aesthetics, Bullough says that it studies primarily the effects on our consciousness of works of art, but that beyond these, Pater has written "of the aesthetic spirit pervading all things that partake in any degree of artistic qualities: the furniture of our houses, life itself, gesture and speech, and the details of daily intercourse; these also, for the wise, being susceptible of a suavity and charm, caught from the way in which they are done, which gives them a worth in themselves." (*Renaissance*, p. 138) A German psychologist (E. Meumann) had in fact spoken in this connection, Bullough adds, of a sphere of 'aesthetic culture', which he describes as permeating our whole psychic life. Some realise it intensely only at rare moments, before a work of art, before some great event. With others it is habitual, going out to even the most trifling objects or circumstances with a kindly sympathy. For instance, "what we call tact is essentially a form of behaviour actuated by aesthetic habits of thought and feeling. What might be termed the education of the heart, as distinct from the education of the intellect, means the development of our aesthetic

sensitiveness to life. Culture, as distinct from learning, education in its fullest sense, pure humanity (. . .) rests fundamentally upon such an education of the heart, such an aesthetic philosophy of life." (pp. 65f.)

Many actions are performed in daily life, Bullough suggests, "especially deeds of great power, of enthusiasm, passion or heroism, deeds, that is, of the highest importance both to the individual performer and often to others", which we often do not judge from the moral point of view. To do so would "depreciate their intrinsic worth and impoverish their essentially human value. Even a crime may, to this view, be a 'great' crime, while a perfectly moral act may repel us by its sterility, its want of vivifying warmth or manifested livingness. Generally speaking, the conduct of our contemporaries concerns our personal interests too closely (. . .) to allow this full aesthetic appreciation." (p. 67)

Obviously, such a shift from the moral to the aesthetic judgment is commonly expected of us towards characters in a novel or in drama, not to speak of films and television, but according to Bullough, "it is towards historical personages that it operates most freely and comprehensively. Here, unblinded by personal interest, we can appreciate characters who realised this ideal of aesthetic culture. The great men of Athens or the Renaissance, Pericles or Plato, Pico della Mirandola, Leonardo da Vinci, Lorenzo the Magnificent or Julius II, men of the stamp of Goethe, were men of such aesthetic culture, *human* beings compared with whom some of the greatest intellects, when divested of the glamour of their achievements in special spheres, are but insignificant pigmies." Bullough goes on to praise "the marvellously many-sided and yet perfectly balanced inward largeness of these *human* heroes" as representing more truly the real peak of human achievement than men to whom we owe useful inventions, scientific discoveries or abstract scholarship. "For everything else is a means to living; this alone is an end in itself, a fragment of concretely realised Life." (pp. 68f.) The rest of the lecture puts forward Bullough's conception of Aesthetics as the systematic study of aesthetic consciousness, "regarded as distinct from, though coordinate with, the practical, scientific and ethical consciousness, as they reveal themselves in practical life, scientific constructions and ethical ideals" respectively. (p. 69).

Bullough's mention of Goethe alongside Sophocles, Plato or Leonardo as one who realised the ideal of aesthetic culture, and represents a peak of human achievement, is typical of the more favourable Western estimates of Goethe in the twentieth century, to be set alongside the view taken of him by Paul Valéry, for example, as 'un monstre de compréhension et de force créatrice', 'un de nos meilleurs essais de nous rendre semblables à des dieux'.<sup>10</sup> As Nietzsche had reminded his fellow-countrymen thirty years before this, "Goethe stand über den Deutschen in jeder Beziehung, und steht es auch jetzt noch." He had written over their heads, and been appreciated only by a very small elite, whose views had been taken over by the Romantics for special reasons



and passed on to wider circles by the pupils of Hegel, "die eigentlichen Erzieher der Deutschen dieses Jahrhunderts."<sup>11</sup> Bullough may well have had the page of Hegel quoted by Pater in mind in writing as he did. To do Goethe justice we ought to remind ourselves also of his passion for natural history and biology as understood in his time, and of the vision of 'Gott-Natur' that was inseparable in his mind from those studies. Dilthey in his life of Schleiermacher has reminded us what an innovation that meant for German poetry:

Es unterscheidet seinen Gesichtskreis von dem Lessings, wie die Naturforschung ihn ergriff. Es unterscheidet denselben auch von dem der deutschen Aufklärung völlig, daß er von Naturstudien in der Ausbildung seiner Weltansicht geleitet ward. Durch die ersten Zeiten von Weimar geht, voll naiver Gewalt, ein Zug, mit der ewigen Ordnung der Natur, mit Sonne und Luft, mit Pflanzen und Wassern gleichwie mit befreundeten Mächten zu leben, den Schritt des Jahres über sich, den Sternkreis der Nacht über seinem Haupte stetig zu schauen und zu empfinden. Immer kehrt der tiefe Eindruck dieses Verhältnisses in neuer Gestalt wieder; wie in den Busen eines Freundes dürfe er in die Natur blicken.

Erich Franz, to whose *Goethe als religiöser Denker* I owe this reference, reminds us too that Goethe felt himself to be akin to Plato in this respect, and wrote (in the *Materialien zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre*): "So entzückt uns denn auch in diesem Fall, wie in den übrigen, wie Plato die heilige Scheu, womit er sich der Natur nähert, die Vorsicht, womit er sie gleichsam nur umtastet und bei näherer Bekanntschaft vor ihr sogleich wieder zurücktritt, jenes Erstaunen, das, wie er selbst sagt, den Philosophen so gut kleidet".<sup>12</sup> 'Erstaunen', in the sense of 'awe', is praised to Eckermann by Goethe as "das Höchste, wozu der Mensch gelangen kann; und wenn ihn das Urphänomen in Erstaunen setzt, so sei er zufrieden; ein Höheres kann es ihm nicht gewähren, und ein Weiteres soll er nicht dahinter suchen; hier ist die Grenze. Aber den Menschen ist der Anblick eines Urphänomens gewöhnlich noch nicht genug, sie denken, es müsse noch weiter gehen, und sie sind den Kindern ähnlich, die, wenn sie in einen Spiegel geguckt, ihn sogleich umwenden, um zu sehen, was auf der anderen Seite ist." (*Gespräche mit Goethe*, 18 February 1829)

The 'pure phenomenon' in question here is one related to the starting-point of Goethe's *Farbenlehre*. The observation mentioned is that dark figures on drinking-glasses look yellow against the light and blue against a dark background. But it would not be fanciful, I think, to read into Goethe's words a hidden reference to his religious views, to his admiration of Spinoza and his belief that God is not to be sought behind or beyond the universe, but that 'das Dasein ist Gott'.

It is in Goethe's correspondence with F.H. Jacobi, beginning in the early 1770s and extending over almost fifty years, that we can most clearly follow the development of these views, and in one or two passages from these letters

we have evidence enough that Goethe's apparent 'pre-occupation with the aspects of things' was not, like Pater's, purely aesthetic. Goethe's most revealing letter follows the publication in 1785 of Jacobi's *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, which started the famous 'Spinozastreit'. After saying that his friend's conception of Spinoza seems to be nearer to his own than he had expected, Goethe continues:

Du erkennst die höchste Realität an, welche der Grund des ganzen Spinozismus ist, worauf alles übrige ruht, woraus alles übrige fließt. Er beweist nicht das Dasein Gottes, das Dasein ist Gott. . . . Vergib mir, daß ich so gerne schweige, wenn von einem göttlichen Wesen die Rede ist, das ich nur in und aus den rebus singularibus erkenne, zu deren nähern und tiefern Betrachtung niemand mehr aufmuntern kann als Spinoza selbst, obgleich vor seinem Blicke alle einzelne Dinge zu verschwinden scheinen.

After admitting that he has never made a systematic study of Spinoza, Goethe points out several defects in Jacobi's account of him, and hopes that Herder will amplify his criticism. Writing from Ilmenau, he says: "Hier bin ich auf und unter Bergen, suche das Göttliche in herbis et lapidibus." (9 June 1785) A year later, acknowledging a further contribution of Jacobi's to the Spinoza controversy, he has to express his regret that after heaping earthly blessings upon his good friend Fritz, God has added a taste for metaphysics as a thorn in his flesh, "mich dagegen mit der Physik gesegnet, damit mir im Anschauen seiner Werke wohl werde." "Ich halte mich fest und fester", he continues, "an die Gottesverehrung des Atheisten und überlasse euch alles, was ihr Religion heißt und heißen müßt. Wenn du sagst, man könne an Gott nur glauben, so sage ich dir, ich halte viel aufs Schauen." He quotes Spinoza on *Scientia intuitiva* and says that his words give him courage to devote his whole life "der Betrachtung der Dinge, die ich reichen und von deren *essentia formali* ich mir eine adäquate Idee zu bilden hoffen kann, ohne mich im mindesten zu bekümmern, wie weit ich kommen werde und was mir zugeschnitten ist." (5 May 1786). It is the attitude to life still expressed in the aphorism found in Goethe's 'Nachlaß':

'Das schönste Glück des denkenden Menschen ist, das Erforschliche erforscht zu haben und das Unerforschliche ruhig zu verehren.'

#### Notes

- 1 *Aesthetics. Lectures and essays*, by Edward Bullough. Edited with an introduction by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson, London 1957.
- 2 DVjs 5 (1927), pp. 550-582.
- 3 Germain d'Hangest, *Walter Pater, l'homme et l'oeuvre*, 2 vols., Paris 1961.

- 4 From draft of letter from Ingram Bywater to Dr H. Diels, Bonn, quoted in W.W. Jackson, *Ingram Bywater*, Oxford 1917, p. 79.
- 5 W.H. Bruford, *Culture and Society in Classical Weimar 1775-1806*, Cambridge 1962, p. 3.
- 6 Walter Pater, *Miscellaneous Studies*, London 1900, pp. 217, 221.
- 7 Walter Pater, *Appreciations*, London 1910, pp. 66, 68.
- 8 Jackson, *Ingram Bywater*, p. 77.
- 9 Graham Hough, *The Last Romantics*, London 1940, pp. 145, 136.
- 10 Discours en l'honneur de Goethe, 1932, in *Variété IV*, Paris 1938.
- 11 Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches II*, Nr. 170.
- 12 *Goethe als religiöser Denker*, Tübingen 1932, p. 281, and Goethe, Hamburger Ausgabe, Band 14, S. 18.