Nietzsche and Goethe—the two names do not meet without a shock. At first sight it is the sharp contrast that emerges—the mellow note of Goethe, the shrill, the strident note of Nietzsche; Goethe’s reflected sunshine, Nietzsche’s thunderbolts; Goethe’s mastery of life, Nietzsche’s appalling collapse. Would Goethe have shrunk from Nietzsche, one wonders, as he shrank from Heinrich von Kleist, uneasy at the volcanic destructiveness of the man? Perhaps not—for, as I shall indicate, there are other aspects of Nietzsche—yet the contrast remains. Certainly there is much in Nietzsche that Goethe might have repudiated. Most of all, he might have repudiated his haste, his apprehensiveness of catastrophe, his prophetic suspense. Had he not himself lived through the French Revolution and seen the French come and go? And why should not Nietzsche have taken a leaf from his book and looked more to the long future and less to the near? All this and more he might say if he could return to earth and read the works of his junior.

In the biography and the writings of Nietzsche Goethe does not appear prominently as one of Nietzsche’s masters. Nietzsche’s obvious masters are, first, the Greeks and especially the Pre-Socratic philosophers, then Schopenhauer, then Richard Wagner. None of these points unmistakably to Goethe. Yet there is an underground connection between Schopenhauer and Goethe which Nietzsche may have sensed. For he writes in “Schopenhauer als Erzieher”: “Schopenhauer . . . hatte das unbeschreibliche Glück, nicht nur in sich den Genius aus der Nähe zu sehen,

---

1 A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on the 14th of March, 1934.

298
sondern auch ausser sich in Goethe” (I, 473)—a very significant sentence for those who know the third book, the aesthetic book, of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, which reads almost like an elaboration of this thought. And elsewhere he notes “Schopenhauer: vertieft die Weltbetrachtung der Goethe-Schiller-Kultur” (X, 253). But these are only indications. On the whole Schopenhauer and Goethe reached him separately; they are not nearly as closely associated in his mind as they might have been.

If we ask again whether Nietzsche was alive to the vital relationship between Goethe and the Pre-Socratic philosophers, which it is not hard for us to see to-day, remembering that Thales and Anaxagoras are among the *dramatis personae* of Faust, the answer is once more in the negative. The only hint of the connection that I have been able to find is the note which says “Meine Vorfahren Heraklit, Empedocles, Spinoza, Goethe” (XIV, 263). But while this may suggest an inter-connection, it says no more than that Nietzsche was indebted to them all or that they all meet somehow in his personality. Had he been less strangely indifferent to the meaning of Goethe’s scientific studies he would have seen and expressed the connection more clearly.

Yet in spite of the lack of easy evidence in the works, Goethe was very close to Nietzsche from the start. Nothing betrays the mind more surely than the things it quotes and echoes when it is off its guard. Now if there is one writer whom Nietzsche as a young man quotes and echoes constantly it is Goethe. The evidence is strongest in the early letters. Writing to Erwin Rohde on Jan. 16, 1869—Nietzsche is twenty-four at the time—he says, “noch vorige Woche wollte ich dir einmal schreiben und vorschlagen, gemeinsam Chemie zu studieren und die Philologie dorthin zu werfen, wohin sie gehört, zum Urväterhausrat.” Not only is this said in Goethe’s spirit—though it must be added that Goethe followed up his scientific impulses and Nietzsche did not—but Urväterhausrat is obviously from Faust’s monologue

> Mit Instrumenten vollgepropft, Urväterhausrat dreingestopft.

The quotations from Nietzsche’s works are all taken from the (Kröner) Leipzig edition in 20 vols.
Indeed the passage continues, "Jetzt lockt der Teufel 'Schicksal' mit einer philologischen Professur." One reference to *Faust*, you see, leads to another. And it is usually *Faust* that Nietzsche quotes, sometimes playfully, as when in an earlier letter to Rohde of Nov. 20, 1868, he parodies the suicide scene and lets Faust drain his inkwell in lieu of a poison-goblet. Less obviously he writes to Rohde—it is always Rohde in these happy days—on March 24, 1871, "Mir würde sonst um meine Unsterblichkeit bange" which almost certainly—quite certainly, I think, in view of its self-irony—echoes Mephistopheles' ironical words to the freshman,

Dir wird gewiss einmal bei deiner Gottähnlichkeit bange.

Or again he writes to the inseparable Rohde at the beginning of 1870: "Die Philologenexistenz in irgend einer kritischen Bestrebung, aber tausend Meilen abseits vom Griechentum, wird mir immer unmöglich. Auch zweifle ich, ob ich noch je ein rechter Philologe werden könne; wenn ich es nicht nebenbei, so zufällig erreiche, dann geht es nicht. Das Malheur nämlich ist: ich habe kein Muster und bin in der Gefahr des Narren auf eigne Hand." Once more a Goethe-like reflection, combining, exactly as Goethe did, a distrust of the schools with a reverence for tradition and, more than that, two half-concealed quotations from Goethe. First, the "kritische Bestrebung" is Wagner's

Mir wird, bei meinem kritischen Bestreben,
Doch oft um Kopf und Busen bang,

in the conversation with Faust, while—more interesting still—the "Narr auf eigne Hand" is from that late epigram of Goethe's which being less familiar might easily have escaped the memory of a more perfunctory reader,

Ein Quidam sagt' : "Ich bin von keiner Schule!
Kein Meister lebt, mit dem ich buhle;
Auch bin ich weit davon entfernt,
Dass ich von Toten was gelernt."
Das heisst, wenn ich ihn recht verstand:
"Ich bin ein Narr auf eigne Hand."

Moreover, the two quotations are closely related, provided one knows Goethe. From Wagner's conversation with Faust to the scene between Mephistopheles and the student is an easy
transition. Less easy, because *Faust II* was little enough read in those days, the transition to the scene between Mephistopheles and the Baccalaureus, where, exactly as in our epigram, a conceited scholar repudiates all indebtedness to the past and to experience.

Erfahrungswesen! Schaum und Dunst!

Clearly Nietzsche’s mind was running on these passages as he wrote the letter. He knew his author well enough to travel effortlessly up and down him and to find in him exactly the words he needed.

Nietzsche was faced with a very critical decision at this time. No sooner was he established at Basel with a professorship of Classical Philology than he found himself inwardly at loggerheads with philology. Should he play safe and accept all the insincerities of his profession, or should he go out for larger stakes and release the deeper forces of culture and philosophy that were seething in him? We know what choice he made. *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, published in 1871—within two years of his going to Basel and while he was still in his middle twenties—was not the work of one who could have lived the academic life indefinitely. If ill-health had not taken him out of it, something else would. The decision was quickly made. Yet this does not mean that it was made easily. And in so far as he relied on his masters to guide him, Goethe may have helped him as much as Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer with his unbridled contempt for the profession helped him destructively. Nietzsche writes to Rohde on Dec. 15, 1870: “Auf die Dauer nämlich sehe auch ich ein, was es mit der Schopenhauerischen Lehre von der Universitätsweisheit auf sich hat. Es ist ein ganz radicales Wahrheitswesen hier nicht möglich.” Constructively—and his mind was all constructive at this time—he may have got more useful support from Goethe, who pitted Faust’s idealism against Wagner’s pedantry, and in glowing words showed Nietzsche the better way:

Sitzt ihr nur immer! leimt zusammen,
Braut ein Ragout von ander Schmaus
Und blast die kümmerlichen Flammen
Aus eurem Aschenhäufchen ’raus!
And in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* itself—a work truly written from the heart—while on a first reading it looks like a straightforward triple brew—Ancient Greece and Schopenhauer with Richard Wagner added after it had come to the boil—there are other ingredients. Here as in his letters he turns to Goethe for quotations, using the words of the Erdgeist to bring out what he means by Dionysus, using Faust's curse to point his condemnation of Socrates, using Goethe's Prometheus to explain the Greek Prometheus, and so on. What someone has said of Schopenhauer's quotations from Goethe is true also of Nietzsche in this book. Here he quotes Goethe as if Goethe had written to be so quoted. The borrowed words take on a new life in this setting.

Let there be no mistake. Nietzsche in his twenties was soaked in Goethe and nearer to him than he knew. And if in general there appears to have been a certain aloofness in Nietzsche's attitude to him—the very aloofness that Goethe invites—here it would seem as if Goethe's creative life and wisdom had impinged directly on Nietzsche and given him practical guidance at a vital moment.

At this point I must qualify what others have said—Ernst Bertram in the *Festschrift für Berthold Litzmann*, 1921 and Heinz Nicolai in the *Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift*, Sept.-Oct., 1933—to the effect that Nietzsche responded only to the so-called Classical Goethe and was indifferent to the Goethe of Sturm and Drang. Bertram says (p. 321), "In diesem fragmentarischen Goethebilde . . . schwingt so gut wie nichts von dem phantastisch-faustischen Reichum der Jugendlyrik und Dithyrambik, nichts von Sturm und Drang," and Nicolai (p. 358), "Es war mehrfach darauf hinzuweisen, dass eine Grenze von Nietzsches Goethebild darin zu sehen war, dass er nur durch den mittleren, den klassischen Goethe bestimmt wird, während der junge Goethe völlig in ihm fehlt." This is to set aside all the evidence of Nietzsche's early letters and of the Goethe quotations in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. Bertram does so on the strength of
Nietzsche's having said to Peter Cast in 1887 that his earliest and strongest impression of Goethe came from the *Löwennovelle*, which is, of course, late Goethe. But this cannot be allowed to shake the abundant evidence that in Nietzsche's first creative period his response to Goethe was as whole-hearted and undiscriminating as his early response to Schopenhauer and Wagner. How else should he have been able at the height of his impassioned argument in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* to turn in such ardent sympathy to the Erdgeist and to Prometheus, to say nothing of other less obvious references to early Goethe. Moreover, it is fair to ask whether in 1870—before the discovery of the *Urfaust*—it was possible for the student of Goethe to draw the sharp line between Frankfurt and Weimar that we draw—a little too sharply perhaps—to-day. Be that as it may, Nietzsche drew no line at all till after *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. The beginning of his discrimination against certain aspects of Goethe came somewhat later after he had felt the early mood—especially the early Faustian mood—to the full.

The subsequent history of Nietzsche's response to Goethe is not what one would expect from these beginnings. If at the start it was partly, perhaps chiefly through *Faust* that Nietzsche saw Goethe, it is *Faust* that he now reacts against decisively and finally. His ridicule of *Faust* begins almost immediately. We may not find it explicitly in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, where his allegiances are still those, essentially, of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, but in *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* it can be seen in full blast, as for example, "Man soll auch gegen den Teufel honnett sein und seine Schulden bezahlen, sagte ein alter Soldat, als man ihm die Geschichte Faustens etwas genauer erzählt hatte, Faust gehört in die Hölle!"—"Oh ihr schrecklichen Männer! rief seine Gattin aus, wie ist das nur möglich! Er hat ja nichts gethan, als keine Tinte im Tintenfass gehabt! Mit Blut schreiben ist freilich eine Sünde, aber deshalb soll ein so schöner Mensch doch nicht brennen?" (III, 226).

This is characteristic of the change and it is a change that has come to stay. The references to *Faust* from now on are either indifferent or destructive, usually the latter. Faust is sentimental or it is wrongheaded, there is no reprieve. If in one place
Nietzsche goes the length of suggesting—not with much foundation, it must be admitted—that Napoleon’s example led Goethe to revise his conception of Faust, there is nothing to show that Nietzsche has revised his.

This is strange, for Nietzsche is himself of the Faustian sort. Not only was he close to the Faustian mood in Goethe at the beginning but, as he grows, one would say that he becomes more Faustian, that the Nietzsche of Zarathustra has moved towards Faust, not away from it. Why then this volte-face? Is it because he was so near to Faust that he turned against it, in the spirit in which the extreme left of a movement is quickest to pick holes in the less extreme? Probably, for Nietzsche seems always to have envisaged Faust as one like himself—a seeker after the truth. This theoretical enquiry accords well enough with the opening monologue, but it is, as Nietzsche found, a poor guide to the rest of the poem. From this fixed angle the Gretchen tragedy is a sad declension, we are no nearer to true knowledge at the end than at the beginning. And so on throughout. Nietzsche never seems to have weighed the question how Faust should be read. He insisted on reading it as he first read it in the days when he wrote to Rohde that one could not be a professor and honestly seek after the truth. In this spirit he writes in Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft: “Man muss den Deutschen ihren Mephistopheles ausreden: und ihren Faust dazu. Es sind nur zwei moralische Vorurteile gegen den Wert der Erkenntniss” (V, 187). And again, “Und sein Faust—welches zufällige und zeitliche und wenig notwendige und dauerhafte Problem! eine Entartung des Erkennenden, ein Kranker,—Nichts mehr! Keineswegs die Tragödie des Erkennenden selber! Nicht einmal die des freien Geistes” (XIII, 335). One sees here how close he was to Faust, how personally he took it—he the “free spirit” and tragic moralist. And a little earlier he had noted “Faust, die Tragödie der Erkenntniss? Wirklich? Ich lache über Faust” (XII, 246).

From this point of view, seeing Faust in this strictly theoretical—instead of in a more human, flexible, autobiographical—light there was nothing else for him to do. Besides, in so far as Faust ranked as the greatest of German books, Nietzsche was chal-
lenging it with his Zarathustra and confident that he would succeed in ousting it.

But this does not mean that Nietzsche had done with Goethe. Far from it. True, Goethe comes in for his share of the knocks. Nietzsche, the swift master of prose, does not spare the dictated prose of Goethe's old age; he finds it heavy and he finds it garrulous. He also took every opportunity to stress the cautious side of Goethe; he does this in "Schopenhauer als Erzieher," when he contrasts the unheroic ideal of Goethe with the heroic ideal which he himself upheld. And in the years that followed it is the calmly Classical Goethe that he usually singles out, excluding henceforth not only the Faustian side of the man but also the more problematic, the more dangerous, aspects of his Classicism. The hints of Dionysian ecstasy that we find in Satyros, Prometheus, and Faust II; the radical moral issues of the Italian Journey; the playful but far from Winckelmannish adventure into Greek origins that produced the Klassische Walpurgisnacht—of these indications and more than indications Nietzsche takes no notice at all. In short, he ignores or tends to ignore all those aspects of Goethe that brought Goethe near to him and looked only at what was further away—the calm, the poise, the tolerance, Goethe "danebenstehend," as he put it. Here again I am not in complete agreement with Bertram. If there is truth in his "Maskentheorie" that Nietzsche used Goethe, as he used others, in order to express himself in disguise, thus distorting Goethe's image into a likeness or a caricature of himself, it is equally true that he saw him in contrast with himself and distorted him in the opposite way. Nietzsche's reaction to Goethe was one of extraordinary complexity and even Bertram's subtlety is unable to do justice to the iridescence of it.

In this baffling light Nietzsche seems a dangerous guide. Yet when all abatements have been made, Goethe comes off in the long run better than any of the great thinkers whom Nietzsche scrutinised. And towards the last, in the forty-ninth aphorism of the Götzendämmerung he rises in his astonishing way to a concentrated word-picture of Goethe which we can safely rank with Schiller's masterly letter to Goethe of August 23, 1794, and with the best that the best critics have said since. It is the only
summing-up of Goethe that we find in Nietzsche; all other references are partial or by the way. And here, for once, he seems splendidly impersonal.


. . . Er nahm die Historie, die Naturwissenschaft, die Antike, insgleichen Spinoza zu Hilfe, vor Allem die praktische Tätigkeit; er umstellte sich mit lauter geschlossenen Horizonten; er löste sich nicht vom Leben ab, er stellte sich hinein; er war nicht verzagt und nahm so viel als möglich auf sich, über sich, in sich. Was er wollte, das war Totalität; er bekämpfte das Auseinander von Vernunft, Sinnlichkeit, Gefühl, Wille (—in abschreckendster Scholastik durch Kant gepredigt, den Antipoden Goethe’s); er disciplinirte sich zur Ganzheit, er schuf sich. . . . Ein solcher freigewordener Geist steht mit einem freudigen und vertrauenden Fatalismus mitten im All, im Glauben, dass nur das Einzelne verwerflich ist, dass im Ganzen sich Alles erlöst und bejaht. . . . (VIII, 162-3).

It is perhaps worth noting—this rejection of Faust and this exalting of Goethe to a supreme position. The more so as English criticism, never quite at home with Goethe, has yet to learn the lesson it teaches, namely, that great as Faust is—Nietzsche’s injustice to it is patent—Goethe is much greater. Everything goes to show that Nietzsche in the very act of writing this magnificent eulogy was as contemptuous of Faust as any of its most hostile critics. One may well ask whether Goethe has ever been paid a higher compliment.

It is very characteristic of Nietzsche that in this aphorism he tends to see Goethe in isolation. Beginning with the characteristics of his century, Goethe—he says—draws away from his century and becomes “a realist in an unreal age,” a genius self-contained and self-determined. Elsewhere he describes Goethe as “der Ausnahme-Deutsche” (V, 137), and again he calls him
“in der Geschichte der Deutschen ein Zwischen fall ohne Folgen” (III, 265). And far from reading him in terms of any century, eighteenth or nineteenth, he says that Goethe has outleapt several generations and that we have not yet caught him up. Here again is an aspect of Goethe too little regarded in English criticism, which prefers to see him rather as the representative of a past epoch than as an individual not yet fully comprehended.

Nietzsche unsettles our easy historical survey; he always does. He throws inter-relations aside and plunges us deeper into personalities than we are accustomed to go. By the time we have submitted to him fully and digested his remarks on this personality and that—Goethe, Shakespeare, Pascal, Rousseau, Herder, and so on—our attitude to the history of literature and to aesthetics is subtly transformed. The easy time-perspectives disappear and new and exciting ones take their place. It is here rather than in the Apollo-Dionysus theory that Nietzsche’s greater service to criticism lies.

This leads back to Goethe by another door. In the searching light which Nietzsche throws on the problems of personality in art and letters he is with Goethe and no other. Their outlook is not identical and Goethe’s outlook is the more profound, yet they pull strangely together. Nietzsche for his part seems to see personality everywhere and to be content with that. Speaking of philosophical systems he says that even if they are all wrong they have something irrefutable in them, namely, the personal note. "Wer dagegen an grossen Menschen überhaupt seine Freude hat, hat auch seine Freude an solchen Systemen, seien sie auch ganz irrtümlich: sie haben doch einen Punkt in sich, der ganz unwiderleglich ist, eine persönliche Stimmung, Farbe . . .” (X, 5). From this, he says, we can reconstruct the philosopher just as from a plant we can infer the soil in which it grew. The simile is fundamental and he meant it to be. He continues: "Diese Art zu leben und die menschlichen Dinge anzusehen ist jedenfalls einmal dagewesen und also möglich.” For Nietzsche, it would seem, personality is final and we cannot or need not go beyond it. He says it or hints it a thousand times, and he teaches us to see personality where we had never dreamed of seeing it.
Goethe teaches us to do the same, not because he talks about it—he hardly ever plays the professional critic—but because he practises it, making himself, his own personality, the instrument of his own truth in a way for which there was no precedent. When we have finished reading Goethe—if we ever finish—we read all books differently. All our comfortable generalisations about impersonality and truth, about subjective and objective are impossible now. In him the personal merges into the impersonal, the particular into the general in such a variety of ways that like Nietzsche he gives us a new standard, a new orientation in aesthetics. The professional writers on aesthetics are altogether less potent than these two, Nietzsche and Goethe, who did not on the whole choose to compete with them. Nietzsche teaches us better or more directly than Goethe how to discover the personal in the works of others; Goethe teaches us better than Nietzsche that the personal cannot be circumvented and that it can be turned to the ultimate ends of man. Between them they offer what is perhaps the most radical experience in the field of aesthetics that the modern reader can find.

It is not an accident that throws them together in this way, nor is it that the one was consciously or unconsciously following the other. If these two illuminate, as no others do, the relation of art and philosophy to personality it is because they were both artists and philosophers of an unusually personal kind. Goethe's case is less in need of elucidation. We are beginning to understand him in the twentieth century and to see how he clung always to the findings of his own experience and on these premises, and on these alone, felt his way to an independent position in philosophy alongside of Kant and Plato—Simmel, Cassirer, and others have indicated this sufficiently—with the result that in all his immense record we cannot touch his thought anywhere without touching himself and we cannot touch himself without touching his thought. Those who do not know this do not know Goethe.

Now can we not apply these very words to Nietzsche? Is it not arrestingly true of him that wherever we touch him we touch him to the quick and that, just as in Goethe, there is no escaping the personal in him. This is strange because it is evident that
he did not live as Goethe lived. We do not, if we read his life, find him again and again absorbed in living emotionally and practically with men and things to be driven back by them, laden and enriched, to his creative activity. On the contrary the more we examine him, the more he seems centred in his studies and his writing. Reading or writing incessantly from first to last, he goes from school—Schulpforta, a famous and strenuous school—to the University, where he passes quickly from freshman to professor, from the University to the life of a lonely scholar, with now and then a companion or two but often with none, from this to insanity and death. What chance was there here for rich experience, for living first and writing afterwards? Does he not cry out at the time of his rupture with Réé and Lou-Salomé, who had brought him nearest to an emotional adventure, "Es steht schlimm mit meiner Menschenkennerlei," and again, "Die Wahrheit ist, dass alle meine bisherigen Stellungen zu allen Menschen falsche sind"? And from then on to the end he was the loneliest genius in Europe. Here the contrast is extreme. Nietzsche's way of life was incredibly sequestered and intellectual; Goethe's by comparison was open to every wind that blew.

Yet there is not in Nietzsche the throttling of the emotions that we would expect. The last thing we can say of him is that he was all intellect. Instead, we find that his intellectual life was as constantly thrilled with emotional cross-currents as Goethe's. So much so that Janko Lavrin, in his Studies in European Literature (1929), says of him, and says truthfully, "Whatever our opinion of Nietzsche's views may be, we feel in them all the pathos, all the passion, all the contradictions of life." His inability to find emotional release in outer relationships—he was once, it seems, drunk with liquor, never quite in love with a woman—seems to have had the extraordinary effect in his case of pitchforking his emotions into his intellect. Instead of becoming atrophied, his emotions get into the wrong box and make all his thinking strangely excited and incalculable. It is as if his intellect were the seat of his emotions. Explain it

1 See Der einsame Nietzsche, pp. 236, 238.
as we may—there is no case like it—his emotional intellect—if I may call it that—enables him, forces him, to throw himself, whole and undivided, into all he writes and says in a fashion which compels us to associate him with Goethe as one who must speak with his entire personality or not at all.

It is for this inner reason that both Nietzsche and Goethe had no choice but to become "philosophers of life"—Lebensphilosophen—and to care only with heart and soul for the highest values. Here their attitude to poetry is characteristic. They were both poets—not Goethe alone—yet neither was content to indulge the vein of poetry that was in him for its own sake, as poets usually do. Goethe, as we know, distrusted or grew to distrust the free imaginative use that older poets had made of poetry and insisted tacitly on subordinating it to his living experience. Poetry for him had to come out of living or not at all; he jeopardised his poetic gifts, letting them lie unused for long periods, rather than compromise with them or let them function in vacuo. Nietzsche goes one step further and, with a rich vein of poetry in him, virtually refuses to be a poet. As far as may be, he suppresses or curbs his poetic voice, crowds it out intellectually. If it gets the upper hand now and then—in a few lyrics and in Zarathustra—it is not for long. He is not satisfied to be only a poet—"Nur Narr, nur Dichter." In his case as in Goethe's the vital philosophical passion dominates the poetic.

Or again, Nietzsche may study philology. Goethe may study science; yet they cannot isolate these pursuits. They both become unorthodox and offend the schoolmen by the very fact that their natures force them to relate these pursuits to their lives, to their morals, to their philosophy. It might be hard to find a third writer or thinker who, sharing their blend of poetry and philosophy, vied with them in the completeness of absorption, the all-or-nothing psychology, which these two lived by. Nietzsche feverishly, Goethe at a more normal temperature. It was not for nothing that Nietzsche was one of the first to sense the Goethean "Totalität" because in his own more febrile, less comprehensive nature he had experienced a similar assembling of all that was in him.

In points of detail it would be possible to carry the com-
comparison much further. Nietzsche himself did not fail to recognize some of the elements in Goethe's thought that anticipated his own. Thus, in the preface to that excellent essay "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie fur das Leben," he notes that Goethe "mit gutem Rechte gesagt hat, dass wir mit unsren Tugenden zugleich auch unsere Fehler anbauen" (I, 281)—a sentence which quietly lifts us "beyond good and evil" without making a noise about it. And a little later, in Menschliches Allzumenschliches, he refers approvingly to Goethe's maxim, "dass man oft dem Irrthume nicht schaden dürfe, um der Wahrheit nicht zu schaden" (III, 143), which voices the same open-mindedness in the sphere of knowledge. Points like these may have served to remind Nietzsche, as they serve to remind us, that behind Goethe's apparent acquiescence there is a sceptic and a radical—perhaps as fearless a radical and as searching a sceptic as Nietzsche himself.

But it would be mistaken on the strength of all this evidence to go the length of Korff in his Lebensidee Goethes and maintain that Nietzsche was only a pupil of Goethe's—"nur ein Goetheschüler." This is excessive. It is what happens when the critic is bent on relating his authors to each other without making sure that he has first gone to the heart of each one separately. Nietzsche was not Goethe's pupil in the sense that his main thought follows from Goethe, because—to say nothing of the difference between them in tempo—on the most important ground of all Nietzsche and Goethe are opposed. They are opposed in their conception of nature and one cannot disagree with Goethe at this point and remain his pupil. It is essential to Goethe's position that there should be laws and values in nature and that these should be basic in human morals. Take these away and there is no Goethe left. When Schopenhauer said to him in the usual idealistic terms that the sun only existed because he saw it and Goethe corrected him saying "No, you only exist because the sun sees you" he was not playing with paradox. He was moving back quickly, instinctively, to his true centre and coign of vantage—nature, for him the source of all reality. truth, morals. His whole life, we might say, was spent in investigating this profound conviction.
What does Nietzsche say of nature? He says many things. But on the essential point he is clear enough. He says, "Die Natur ist immer wertlos" (V, 231)—this at the most balanced time of his life in Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft. Elsewhere he says "Meine Brüder, die Natur ist dumm: und soweit wir Natur sind, sind wir alle dumm" (XII, 239), and again, "Es gibt keine Form in der Natur" (X, 156). To say that Nietzsche was quite able to maintain this extreme position would be to outdo him in violence of statement. There are passages which modify these extreme views and there are early statements—early statements only—which conflict with them. But all these are easily outnumbered, and in respect of law in nature there is no compromise. For Nietzsche law in nature is simply a misnomer—"schlechte Philologie" (VII, 34). If he had been present at the conversation between Schopenhauer and Goethe he would probably have disagreed with both in so far as, unlike these two, he tended to lose interest in purely metaphysical questions. But if they had transferred their argument to the moral sphere Nietzsche would have had to go with Schopenhauer against Goethe. For Nietzsche the only laws in nature are those we put there.

The antithesis with Goethe at this point is a little surprising. For most readers of Nietzsche will agree that if the question were sprung on them they would be tempted to say off-hand that on philosophical questions of nature Nietzsche is with Goethe, not against him. There is a reason for this. Up to a point he is with Goethe; then and then only he turns his back on him. He is with Goethe in affirming and recovering the innocence of nature, in ridding it of evil associations. Hence he is able to write in apparent, but only apparent, opposition to the above passages his aphorism, Gegen die Verleumder der Natur (V, 224).

Das sind mir unangenehme Menschen, bei denen jeder natürliche Hang sofort zur Krankheit wird, zu etwas Entstellendem oder gar Schmählichem,—diese haben uns zu der Meinung verführt, die Hänge und Triebe des Menschen seien böse; sie sind die Ursache unserer grossen Ungerechtigkeit gegen unsere Natur, gegen alle Natur. . . ." Goethe would have endorsed this. And this too, "Es ist kein Schmutzfleck in der Natur, das
haben wir erst hineingelegt.” (XI, 248). Here again is a point on which he never wavers. But notice the difference. Nietzsche wishes to free nature of guilt in order that it may be a clean sheet for man to write on; Goethe frees it and keeps it free so that it may speak with its own voice. In Nietzsche the organic principle is lacking, in Goethe it is basic. Nietzsche is the psychologist making elbow-room for himself in the outer world; Goethe the metaphysician and searcher in religion deciphering the handwriting of nature spread before him.

Thus the essential point of sympathy between them and the essential point of divergence are closely juxtaposed. It is here—before they go off to right and left—that these two so different temperaments are closest to each other. What they share is a sweetness, a wholesomeness about the roots of life, possible only for those who see that wholesomeness in nature. That Goethe was possessed of this quality needs no arguing. It is written large over his long life. By virtue of it he remained naive, humble, ungrudging, undefensive, unpolemical to the last. Moreover, Nietzsche was fully and gratefully alive to this side of him. “Goethe, der Neidlose,” he calls him in more places than one. And he commends also his dislike of polemic and interference.

But these, you may say, are not Nietzsche’s qualities. Was not Nietzsche the great interferer, the great iconoclast among the moderns? Did he not end by styling himself the philosopher “with the hammer?” Was he not the scourge of all and the sparer of none? True, he was all that. But underneath, so deep-seated and inseparable from him that we cannot agree to call it secondary, is a nature of the Goethean sweetness and purity. That is why Nietzsche is for all who know him well enough so winning, so disarming a personality. A recent English critic, Mr. G. Sainsbury, in Some Makers of the Modern Spirit (ed. J. MacMurray, 1933) professes to find Nietzsche actuated by a sense of guilt. But he does not give chapter and verse for this opinion and I can find none for him. At the core his nature is all innocence—“immer kindlich”—like Goethe’s. The good conscience, the cleanness of spirit, which he strove to give to others was his always. Even the violent hostilities which
engaged him could not destroy it. The fragments of it lie strewn among his ruins.

As usual, Goethe, always master of himself in the end, exemplifies this quality in his art of living; he says little about it and leaves us to find it slowly for ourselves. Nietzsche drags it into the daylight and turns it this way and that, urging his fellowmen to sweeten the foundations of their lives, to unlearn their guilt and their fears, to accept things. Nietzsche is with the great teachers here. He will perhaps be read for this when his supermen and eternal recurrences are forgotten. "Denn eins ist noth: dass der Mensch seine Zufriedenheit mit sich erreiche" (V, 220), he says in that happy January of 1882—the Sanctus Januarius—and he says there also, "Ich will keinen Krieg gegen das Hässliche führen. Ich will nicht anklagen, ich will nicht einmal die Ankläger anklagen" (V, 209).

Here, if anywhere, is the starting-point for that conversation in the shades between Goethe and Nietzsche which all of us would be eager to hear, whether we hold it possible or not. The only certainty is that we cannot conduct it ourselves, but must leave it to them.