

## PART TWO

# Fertile Ground

WEIMAR, 1890 – 1897

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LOOKING BACK ON MY life, the first three decades appear as a self-contained chapter.<sup>252</sup> At the end of that period, I moved to Weimar to work for nearly seven years in the Goethe-Schiller Archives.<sup>253</sup> My time spent in Vienna between the trip to Weimar (already described) and actually settling in Goethe's city, I view as a time when all I had inwardly worked toward until then reached a certain conclusion. The efforts toward *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path* lived on from that conclusion.

The ideas I used to express my views were substantially related to the fact that, to me, the sensory world was not true reality as such. In the articles and essays I published during that period, I constantly stressed that the human soul manifests as a true reality when engaged not in thinking drawn from the sensory world but in the free activity of thinking that goes beyond sensory perceptions.<sup>254</sup> I presented such "sense-free" thinking as what the human soul utilizes to stand within the spiritual being of the world.

But I strongly asserted that, while living in such sense-free thinking, human beings in fact find themselves consciously within the spiritual foundations of existence. To me it made no sense to speak about limits of knowledge; to *know* was to rediscover the spiritual meaning experienced through the soul in the perceived world. Speaking of any limit to knowledge seemed to me a confession that true reality is not experienced spiritually in the soul and, consequently, is unavailable to being rediscovered in the world perceived externally.

My primary concern in bringing forth my own insights was to refute the theory that there are limits to knowledge. I wanted to reject the path of



*The Goethe-Schiller Archives*

knowledge that looks at the sensory world and then wants to go outward through the sensory world to break through to true reality. I wanted to show that true reality must be sought by going more deeply into the inner human being, *not* by attempting to break through toward the *outer*. Those who want to break through toward the outer and then find it cannot be done, speak of limits of knowledge. It is not that it cannot be done because the human capacity for knowledge is limited, but because one is looking for the impossible, as is shown by proper self-reflection. By attempting to penetrate further into the sensory world merely continues the physical, so to speak, behind the sensory. It is as though someone living in illusion attempted to find the cause of the illusion in more illusions.

The sense of my presentation is this: Human beings confront the world with the power of cognition, which they develop in earthly life from birth on. First they gain a concept of the physical realm. But this is merely an outpost of knowing. This ideation does not yet reveal everything contained in the world. The world has an inner living reality, but human beings do

not immediately reach that living reality, remaining closed to it. Because they have not yet faced the world with their own being they form a picture of the world without being. The world image they form is, in fact, an illusion. When we perceive the world through our senses, we see an illusion. But when we add thinking that is free of the senses—from our own inner being—to sense perception, illusion is permeated with reality and ceases to be illusion. The human spirit then experiences itself within us and meets the spirit in the world, which is no longer hidden *behind the physical world, but weaves and lives within it.*

I thought that discovering the spirit in the world was not a matter of logical reasoning or a continuation of physical perception, but that it comes about when we move from sense perception to the experience of sense-free thinking.

In 1888, I wrote for the second volume of my edition of Goethe's natural scientific writings. It is permeated entirely with these views:

If one grants to thinking an ability to perceive beyond the senses, one must also acknowledge that the objects exist beyond physical reality. Those objects, however, are the *ideas*. As soon as thinking takes hold of an idea, it merges with the primordial foundation of existence; what has effect outwardly enters the human spirit: the human being becomes one with objective reality in its highest potency. *Becoming aware of the idea within the reality is the true communion of the human being.*

Thinking has the same relationship to ideas that the eye has to light and the ear to sound. *It is the organ for apprehending.*<sup>255</sup>

At that time it was really my intention to show that the being in the sensory world is spirit rather than to describe the spiritual world as it appears when sense-free thinking goes beyond the experience of itself to perceive spirit. My intention was to state that nature is in fact spiritual. This was because destiny led me to wrestle with contemporary epistemological theories. They assume that nature is void of spirit and thus see a need to demonstrate the extent to which human beings are justified in formulating in their spirit a spiritual image of nature. I wanted to use a very different theory of knowledge in order to oppose that view. It was my intention to show that *in thinking one does not form images "about" the world as though outside it, but that cognizing is experience.* In the act of knowing one is within the being of things.

Furthermore, destiny also led me to connect my own views with those of Goethe. This gave me ample opportunity to demonstrate that the external world is spiritual. Goethe himself worked toward a worldview that acknowledges spirit, but his views offered no opportunity to speak

in a similar way about the purely spiritual world as such; Goethe had not developed his spiritual view of nature as far as viewing spirit directly.

I was also concerned with expressing the idea of freedom. When we react to instincts, urges, passions, and so on, we are not free. Impulses then become conscious in us, just as sensory impressions do, and determine our actions. This is not the *true self* acting, but action on a level where the true self does not reveal itself at all. We no more disclose ourselves as human beings through such actions than the physical world reveals its being through mere sensory observation.

The sensory world is not really illusory, but the human being makes it so. As human beings, we can also make urges, cravings, and so on, which resemble sensory impressions, just as substantial as illusions through our actions. In this way, we allow illusion rather than we ourselves to act within us; we allow an act without spirit. Your spirit acts once you find an impulse to action that is a moral intuition in the realm of sense-free thinking. Then *you* act, and not otherwise. One is then a free being, acting from the true self.

I wanted to show that no one can understand freedom who dismisses sense-free thinking as a purely spiritual aspect of the human being, and that freedom is immediately comprehensible once the reality of sense-free thinking is understood.

Again, in relation to the concept of freedom, it was not so much my concern to describe a purely spiritual world where we experience moral intuitions, but more to emphasize the spiritual character of these intuitions themselves. If that had been my primary concern, I would have begun this way in the chapter “Moral Imagination” (in *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path: A Philosophy of Freedom*):

*Free spirits* act out of their impulses—that is, from intuitions experienced outside of physical existence in a purely spiritual world, beyond the awareness of ordinary consciousness.”<sup>256</sup>

But at the time I was concerned only with characterizing the purely spiritual nature of moral intuitions. Consequently, I indicated their existence within the totality of the human world of ideas and said:

*Free spirits* act out of their impulses—that is, from intuitions chosen by thinking from the totality of their world of ideas. (p. 180)

One who does not look to a purely spiritual world and could not write that first sentence would also be unable to fully claim the second. But there

are plenty of passages in *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path* that point to the first sentence.<sup>257</sup> For example:

The highest stage of individual life is conceptual thinking without reference to a specific perceptual content. We determine the content of a concept out of the conceptual sphere through pure intuition. Such a concept initially contains no reference to specific percepts. (p. 143)

This refers to sensory perceptions. If at the time I had intended to describe the spiritual world and not merely the spiritual nature of moral intuitions, I would have considered the contrast between physical and spiritual perceptions. But my only concern was to emphasize the nonphysical nature of moral intuitions.

This was the orientation of my world of ideas in my thirtieth year, as the first chapter of my life came to an end and I left Vienna for Weimar.

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AS THE FIRST CHAPTER of my life came to an end, I felt an inner need to become clear about certain orientations of the human soul. One such orientation was mysticism. I found, through my specified disposition, that it was difficult to find any relationship to mysticism as it appeared to my soul's eye through the various eras of human spiritual development—Eastern wisdom, neo-Platonism, Christianity during the Middle Ages, and cabalism.<sup>258</sup>

It seemed to me that the mystics fail to come to terms with the world of ideas, in which, to me, the spirit manifests. There seemed to be no real spirituality in a desire for inner fulfillment that plunges the life of ideas into a soul life that is void of ideas. In such a path I could not see a pathway to the light but only to spiritual darkness. To run from ideas in an attempt to attain spiritual reality seemed like a deficiency in cognition, because even though spiritual reality does not actually weave within them directly, it is only through ideas that one can experience such a reality.

Nevertheless, I was drawn to one aspect of mystical endeavor—the *nature* of inner mystical experience. Mystics wish to unite inwardly with the source of human existence, not merely theorize about it as though it were an external thing. I saw clearly, however, that this same quality of inner experience can be attained by plunging into the soul's depths *accompanied by* the full, clear content of ideas, rather than by stripping off that content through meditation. I wanted to carry the light of the idea realm into the warmth

of the inner experience. Mystics seemed to be those who cannot see spirit in ideas, and are thus inwardly chilled by ideas. The coldness that mystics experience in ideas causes them to try to warm the soul by escaping ideas.

I experienced just the opposite; warmth flooded my inner life as I formulated my initially indefinite experience of the spiritual world into clearly defined ideas. Often I thought of how the mystics completely fail to grasp the warmth and intimacy of soul experienced by uniting inwardly with ideas permeated by spirit. To me this union had always been like a personal association with the spiritual world.<sup>259</sup>

Mysticism seemed to strengthen rather than weaken the position of a materialistically inclined observation of nature.<sup>260</sup> Materialists reject a spiritual world either because they do not recognize its existence or because they view human knowledge as suitable only to what is sensory perceptible. Where the senses reach their limit, materialists set up the boundary of knowledge. A typical mystic and a materialist have the same concepts of human knowledge gained through ideas. Mystics maintain that ideas do not reach spirit, and consequently human knowledge gained through ideas always leaves one outside the spiritual realm. Since mystics still want to attain the spirit, they turn toward inner experience empty of ideas. Consequently, they agree with materialists that knowledge gained through ideas is limited to what is physical.

To enter the inner being of soul without ideas is to enter a realm of feeling only. Then, one would say that what we usually mean by a path of knowledge cannot lead to the spirit—that to reach spirit one must leave the sphere of knowledge and immerse oneself in that of feeling. And materialists can agree with a view such as this, as long as they do not view everything said about spirit as meaningless, fantastic wordplay. They consider ideas about physical phenomena to be the only justifiable basis for knowledge, and consider a mystical relationship to spirit to be entirely personal. It is thought to be something one may or may not be inclined toward, depending on one's disposition, and it is certainly something that cannot be spoken about as one does of "sound knowledge." It is their view that the human relationship to spirit is all a matter of "subjective feeling."

The forces in my soul opposed mysticism with even greater strength as I placed this before my soul's vision. To me, perception of spirit within the soul was far more "credible" than what we perceive with the senses. To place limits on knowledge despite such soul experience was impossible for me. I resolutely rejected the path to spirit based only on feeling. Nevertheless, I still sensed a remote kinship to my own relationship to the spiritual realm in the *nature* of mystical experiences. I sought union with the spirit through

ideas irradiated by spirit, just as the mystic sought union with something void of ideas. I could also say that my spiritual perception was based on a “mystical” experience of ideas.

It was not very difficult for me to become clear and overcome this inner conflict. True perception of spirit illuminates the valid range of ideas and defines the proper limits of what is personal. Any observer of the spiritual realm knows that the personal is no longer effective once soul being becomes an organ for perceiving spirit.

The real difficulty was to find ways to express my inner perceptions in my writings. It is impossible to find new ways immediately for expressing observations unfamiliar to the reader. I could use the usual formulations used in the field of natural observation, or I could use those of mystical writers, which seemed to be accompanied by insurmountable difficulties.

I concluded that scientific forms of expression have a rich meaning, even though its meaning is conceived of materialistically. I tried to formulate ideas that would indicate spirit just as scientific ideas indicate the material. This would enable me to retain the character of the idea I wanted to convey, which seemed impossible with mystical formulations, which do not indicate an *objective reality beyond* the human, but describe only subjective experiences in the human. I wanted to avoid describing human experiences and show how a spiritual world is revealed through spiritual organs of perception within the human being.

From these foundations, the ideas formed that led to my *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path: A Philosophy of Freedom*. When I formulated these ideas, I did not want a mystical impulse to rule me. But it was clear that the ultimate experience of what needed to be revealed through ideas must bear the same character in the essence of the soul as it does in the inner perception of the mystic. Nevertheless, there is still a difference: on the path I describe, human beings surrender themselves and express the outer spiritual world objectively within themselves, whereas mystics enhance the life of their own inner being, thus extinguishing the true form of objective spirit.