THE POETICS OF AFFIRMATIVE FATALISM:

LIFE, DEATH, AND MEANING-MAKING

IN GOETHE, NIETZSCHE, AND HESSE

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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The fundamental role that tragedy has played in the development of European philosophy and, by extension, psychology, has in part been due to its inextricability from an understanding of human life, facilitating its many transformations alongside major shifts in the political and social landscapes where it plays out. This dissertation draws a thread from the traditions of tragedy and German *Trauerspiel* through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, focusing on the legacy of the tragic as it lived on in Nietzsche's psychological philosophy and was taken up by Hermann Hesse in his literary explorations of spiritual development and the fate of the German soul. Affirmative fatalism is the conceptual name for a tendency that I observe specifically in German literature from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, finding its clearest articulations in Goethe's *Faust* and Nietzsche's *amor fati*, and then becoming thematized itself in Hesse's *Glasperlenspiel*. This study illustrates how ultimately in Hesse's texts the sharp distinction is drawn between affirmative fatalism in its authentic sense – a *love* of and dynamic engagement with fate – and the passive fatalism of authoritarianism – a prostration before a prescribed fate, the obsequiousness of which is veiled in the language and pageantry of patriotic heroism.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With rare exception, tragedy as a genre is lost to modernity, and its reception has become increasingly difficult as the colloquial use of the word (especially in an English-speaking context) has emptied it of its former significance. Everything sad and lamentable is conflated in the term, but this is, as any literary pedant would have one know, hardly a requisite of tragedy. Yet the tragic has not left us. And not only has it undergone transformations across compositional forms, but the understanding of the tragic imprinted itself so thoroughly on the thinkers of the nineteenth century – most importantly, in the context of this study, on Nietzsche – that it remains a key aspect of western philosophies and theories of psychology. As far as European thought and literature are concerned, tragedy plays a fundamental role in the conception of the individual human subject. And as far as European thinkers preoccupied with the structures and problems of subjectivity are concerned, the German philosophical and literary tradition is indispensable.

The emergence and prominence of the individual in Enlightenment thought is inextricable from the development of capitalism in Europe. Hence does Goethe's *Faust* serve as a launching point for the exploration of affirmative fatalism in modern German literature. This most legendary figure, whose apostasy is not only religious but thoroughly political, prefigures the coming crisis of meaning and faith embodied in Nietzsche's Zarathustra. The spiritual rebellion against God and all gods is mirrored in the individualist and capitalist rebellion against absolutism, but even these are haunted by

a faith – in the self and in capital to produce a sense of meaning. No longer handed down from a higher power, meaning for the modern subject issues from within itself. But the essence, nature, and function of the self become a grand series of questions for Faust and Zarathustra, both of whom are also consumed by a tragic pathos, thus placing the question of the individual self squarely within the tradition of tragic literature, preoccupied as it is with sacrifice. And it was Nietzsche above all who opened a proverbial vat of worms with his writing, inviting the next generation to languish over these problems while confronted with an unbelievably fast-changing and disorienting social and political reality.

Hermann Hesse was one such author of that immediate post-Nietzsche generation. He indisputably ranks among the most celebrated, translated, and widely read German authors in the world, but for decades has been more or less neglected by literary scholarship – and perhaps precisely because of his popularity. While universities, in their tireless search for revenue streams, seem incapable of resisting the Faustian temptation to indulge every fresh and fleeting interest in new media with minimal historical distance and hindsight, literary scholars, expressing a need for a contrived intellectual austerity, have embraced a reactionary attitude toward Hesse's nearly century-old corpus. It is a tragedy of its own kind, to be sure: once beloved in the United States by hippies and university students as an author of the radical search for one's authentic self, Hesse has become a name muttered or chuckled with a tinge of nostalgia by that same generation, grown and jaded, his work regarded as trite feel-goodery that has lost its utility as intellectual capital. As is the wont of tragedy, a sacrifice has been made. "Ah, yes, I read Hesse when I was younger," says the older man, well-dressed, stably employed, wedded,

entrenched in his position, but his gaze is suddenly detached from the world before him, looking back and inward at images now hazy and discolored, a blurred memory more akin to a realistic dream, arousing affect but now, here, impractical, unrelatable, inconceivable. It is this tragedy of subjectivity, of integration, of aesthetic-ethical orientation, that is taken up in this dissertation, and its operative existential comportment, affirmative fatalism, is the common thread that connects Goethe's *Faust*, Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, and Hesse's *Glasperlenspiel*. This study cannot claim to save Hesse's work from the neglect that it has suffered at the hands of capitalist free-market necessity over the last fifty years, but it is a step in that direction, and, attempting to implement an affirmative fatalist orientation, embraces the suffered neglect as a necessary component of this process which seeks to revive interest in Hesse as an author whose writing on self-discovery and individualism is indeed very sincerely engaged with the German intellectual tradition.

The first chapter, which effectively functions as an extension of this introduction, provides a definition of the concept of affirmative fatalism, situating it within a tradition of tragic literature and surveying works from the Enlightenment to early twentieth-century modernism that contain representations or expressions of the affirmative fatalist worldview. The survey follows George Steiner's argument in *The Death of Tragedy*, which illustrates that the form of tragic literature underwent transformations according to social and political changes in Europe, and applies an understanding of fate drawn from the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin. Here fate is reformulated and is no longer a divine judgment or singular moment of doom, but rather a representation of reflection and evaluation that informs an existential comportment toward the inevitability

of death, typically imbuing this with a significance that reproduces the sacrificial gesture characteristic of tragedy.

The second chapter proceeds to elaborate on this transformation of fate through a reading of the last scenes of Goethe's *Faust II* and Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, placing particular emphasis on the transience and temporal situatedness of the subject reflecting on fate and orienting itself toward the future. The reading also juxtaposes Faust's confrontation with fate (his final monologue before death) and his eventual redemption, positing that the latter, while compositionally awkward and conciliatory, underscores the religiosity implicit in both Faust's proto-Nietzschean affirmation of fate and Nietzsche's own *amor fati*. Both contain an appeal to grace, insofar as the act of affirmation issues from the good faith that not only will the past and fate be made meaningful, but that this will also make the future more bearable, if not beautiful. And it is that other Nietzschean dictum, that "only as an aesthetic phenomenon is this existence still bearable," which informs the affirmative fatalism of *amor fati* to seek an accord between the interior and exterior worlds that might provide meaning and justification. Thus these figures and authors underscore the power of narrative texts in communicating the contemplation of fate and the creation of meaning for the individual subject.

The lingering religiosity described above is carried into the third chapter, which focuses first on a reading of Hermann Hesse's "letter to the German youth," *Zarathustras Wiederkehr*, in which the author revives Nietzsche's teacher of the Eternal Return in Germany in the wake of the First World War. The reading compares moments in the text that mirror scenes from Nietzsche's book, centering particularly on how Hesse's Zarathustra discusses fate, suffering, and God, and then moves into a reading of excerpts

from his essays on religion. Throughout these texts Hesse draws on the imagery of Nietzsche's poetic philosophy and attempts to reconcile the anti-theism therein with his own lingering Christianity, highlighting the appeal to grace discussed in the second chapter. Hesse sets out to offer a modern understanding of God that acknowledges his metaphoricity while also expressing an appreciation of his psychological reality, allowing for an articulation of faith which is neither dogmatic nor metaphysical, but rather a development of Nietzsche's thought and sincere reflection on the overcoming of nihilism. It is ultimately in the human capacity for creative thought and expression that Hesse seems to identify the source of divinity, and it is in narration that possibility and the meaning of the subject's life and death are negotiated as in the affirmative fatalism of Nietzsche's tragic psychology.

The fourth and final chapter takes up the idea of writing as an existential-psychological thought experiment and walks through the four incarnations of Josef Knecht in *Das Glasperlenspiel* as Hesse's grand exercise in the exploration of affirmative fatalism. Throughout the narratives it is not only a question of the tragic sacrifice implicit in the formation of the subject that Hesse illustrates, but also of the question that he took upon himself regarding the writer as a representative of a tradition within the broader context of European and world history. Castalia represents not merely the educational institution, but the German literary tradition, and Knecht is the writer in exile. If the sacrificial gesture of the tragic figure functions to imbue his life with a meaning that might inform and inspire the future generations of the community, for which community and what kind of legacy does this figure perform the gesture in the face of social upheaval, dehumanizing racial politics, and horrifying, large-scale military conflict?

Affirmative fatalism itself does not have a defined political orientation, but its manifestations bear political and religious inflections that are carried forward in the sacrificial gesture. Knecht embodies the artist and intellectual whose devotion to an ideal refuses recuperation – and who, in striving to craft a humanist legacy, is willing to fling himself into the deadly unknown for the sake of future generations, that they may liberate themselves from thoughtless belligerence.

CHAPTER II

THE CONCEPT OF AFFIRMATIVE FATALISM

What is Affirmative Fatalism?

An expression that implicates two apparently dialectically opposed philosophical comportments requires some clarification. Fatalism implies a resignation, its origins lying in the tradition of tragedy and the hero's subjugation to the divine powers of fate. It describes the comportment of a fated subject toward a telos terminating in an impending doom, the conditions of which seem to provide no effective means of escaping its grasp. Affirmation, on the other hand, implies a sense of subjective autonomy, stemming from humanist and Enlightenment thought. It describes a more active, creative comportment toward a telos the termination of which is not fixed, but rather might be influenced by the affirming subject. Affirmative fatalism suggests a synthesis that overcomes the apparent contradiction, an orientation toward the telos of mortality that acknowledges fatedness – materially and psychologically – but endeavors through time, the constantly unfolding space between the present and death, to endow life with meaning and dignity in the face of its inevitable dissolution. The affirmative fatalist worldview recognizes the material limits placed on possible action while striving nevertheless to act, often in acknowledgement that the action will, by virtue of its defiant character, necessitate or become a sacrifice for the sake of posterity. Its concern is beauty as the symmetry of becoming through the subject's interiority and the exterior world in which it finds itself. Thus affirmative fatalism seeks to craft a narrative of the self that allows the interior and exterior to align so that thought and action may be united through conviction and the

human life, subject as it is to fate and death, may exhaust itself meaningfully.

While perhaps a conceptual novelty, affirmative fatalism has its literary roots in Greek tragedy, which remains its modality, despite undergoing various formal and stylistic transformations, continuing into the twentieth century. Indeed, one can sniff it out wherever a well-crafted tragic narrative is in play, but more than functioning as a mere survey, this study concerns itself with particular German expressions of affirmative fatalism. The crux of this investigation is Friedrich Nietzsche, as both heir to and father of oscillating revolutionary and reactionary manifestations of the affirmative fatalist comportment. Tracing this existential comportment through its transformations and appearance in varying genres, affirmative fatalism eventually coincides with and proves its inextricability from the modern problem of freedom. What follows is a cursory sketch of the movement of the tragic modality from the Enlightenment (in the form of the *Trauerspiel*) through the nineteenth century (distilled in Nietzsche's declaration of *amor fati*) and into the early twentieth century. It is finally Hermann Hesse who, in the form and narrative structure of *Das Glasperlenspiel*, thematizes affirmative fatalism itself, seizing on the import of moments of existential isolation – the modern form of fate – and exploring the ethical implications of orientations toward freedom.

Although its modality and ostensible origin is tragedy, affirmative fatalism necessarily transcends genre – this being a foil through which affirmative fatalism, as the expression of an existential comportment, finds expression. In similar fashion it transcends religion, at least in the German context, representing at times the preeminence of a pagan attitude that contradicts the Christian emphasis on divine providence and justice. George Steiner writes in *The Death of Tragedy*: "All men are aware of tragedy in

life. But tragedy as a form of drama is not universal. It has become so much a part of our sense of the possibilities of human conduct...that we forget what a strange and complex idea it is to re-enact private anguish on a public stage. This idea and the vision of man which it implies are Greek" (3). Contrasting it with the Judaic tradition, which insists on the justice of God's unknowable plans, he continues: "Tragic drama arises out of precisely the contrary assertion: necessity is blind and man's encounter with it shall rob him of his eyes, whether in Thebes or in Gaza" (5). And while Christianity attempted to sublimate the tragic and justify it, especially in the martyr drama, its core sentiment has persisted against all of these attempts, quite notably and ironically in German literature from the Enlightenment through into the twentieth century, that span of time in which reason was to exert its power against myth and free European civilization from the cryptic forces of fate. As science and rational philosophy demystified nature with increasing clarity, there lingered a sense that the world – natural as well as social – no matter how mechanistically explicable, still exerted its power with an indifference that could not be distinguished from cruelty; that the Enlightenment ideal of freedom, as both an impossibility as well as the ineluctable compulsion of modern subjectivity, maintained a fated quality that seemed still to constrain the human striving for meaning to gestures of sacrifice. This is the existential perspective on which affirmative fatalism insists and the tragically repetitious mode through which it persists.

The dialectical nature of affirmative fatalism signifies an inextricable entanglement in the question of freedom, as it implies a sort of determinism while undermining its authority, thereby revealing the necessity of limitations for the very conceptualization of freedom, the absolute form of which is also thereby revealed to be

an illusion. The thematization of affirmative fatalism in German literature since the Enlightenment has its roots in the historical emergence of the individual, as problematized in Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* where he writes: "the structure of modern society affects man in two ways simultaneously: he becomes more independent, self-reliant, and critical, and he becomes more isolated, alone, and afraid" (Fromm 104). Freedom becomes a question of one's orientation toward the inevitability of death in an increasingly complex social world, thus leading to the various political inflections of affirmative fatalism. Fromm asserts that two courses of action open up to the individual in the assessment of freedom, which is to some extent illusory, insofar as it is limited, and to another the burden of each living subject, insofar it is the demand of modernity that the individual choose a course of action. "By one course," Fromm writes, "he can progress to 'positive freedom'; he can relate himself spontaneously to the world in love and work, in the genuine expression of his emotional, sensuous, and intellectual capacities" (139). This is the course of action represented in Hermann Hesse's work, the ultimate object of this study. "The other course open to him is to fall back, to give up his freedom, and to try to overcome his aloneness by eliminating the gap that has arisen between his individual self and the world" (139). This is the course of action against which Hesse wrote, Germany's descent into fascism.

The political inflections of affirmative fatalism are informed by the conditions in which the subject – either real or imagined – confronts fate in a moment of recognition, as well as under what conditions the subject's relation to death and a contingent sense of freedom develop. This is also in large part Fromm's concern: by what means available the subject reckons with present conditions and the possible consequences of any course

pursued, how value is assigned and how action is thereby determined. Underlying this consideration, however, and also informing it is a more fundamental concern, the preponderance of which Keiji Nishitani, a Buddhist thinker and Nietzsche scholar of the Kyoto School, posed as the basis of inquiry in his book *Religion and Nothingness*:

> "Religion poses as a starting point the question: 'For what purpose do I exist?' We become aware of religion as a need, as a must for life, only at the level of life at which everything else loses its necessity and its utility. Why do we exist at all? Is not our very existence and human life ultimately meaningless? Or, if there is a meaning or significance to it all, where do we find it? When we come to doubt the meaning of our existence in this way, when we have become a question to ourselves, the religious quest awakens within us" (Nishitani *RN* 3).

Before the subject might contemplate the limits and bounds of freedom, before an orientation of any kind, much less the affirmative fatalist standpoint, might be assumed, the very possibility for meaning poses itself as a question, the object of which is the essence of the religious impulse. Affirmative fatalism, as a comportment which seeks to assert the value and meaning of life in the face of limitations and the inevitability of death, rests upon a religiosity springing from this most basic question, absent as it might seem from discourse, but indispensable to this study, especially as it implicates both Nietzsche and Hesse.

What follows is a brief survey of representations of affirmative fatalism in German literature from the Enlightenment to the early twentieth century. The seeming leaps between genres go hand in hand with George Steiner's general thesis in *The Death of Tragedy* – that the literary space in which tragedy plays out shifted alongside social

and political changes in Europe from lyric drama into prose – to illustrate that the home of affirmative fatalism lies in moments of tragic recognition. Each particular iteration of affirmative fatalism, by virtue of its historical and material determinations, speaks to the complicated relationship between aesthetics and ethics in literary representations of human subjects confronting the ambiguous possibility of meaning for life and death; each orientation, as an affirmation of necessity and recognition of the dialectical nature of freedom, speaks to the conception and existential concerns of the subject and the continued relevance of the preponderance of the tragic through the developments of modernity as a broader phenomenon.

A Brief Historical Survey

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* serves as a late example of the German attempt at the martyr drama and the affirmative fatalist worldview manifest in the tradition of the *Trauerspiel*. After resisting a scheming prince's attempts to seduce her, the eponymous protagonist learns that her betrothed has been murdered and that the prince plans to come and take her by force. Her father, having resigned himself to the loss of his daughter to the wicked monarch, speaks in indicative statements about her future: "Denke nur: unter dem Vorwande einer gerichtlichen Untersuchung, – o des höllischen Gaukelspiels! – reißt er dich aus usern Armen, und bringt dich zur Grimaldi" (85). This is mere fatalism, however, and it is Emilia who speaks the language of affirmative fatalism, a simultaneous recognition of her helplessness and existential demand upon herself to choose the direction of her fate, as odious as it may be. "Reißt mich? bringt mich?" she asks, "– Will mich reißen; will mich bringen: will! will! – Als ob wir, wir keinen Willen

hätten, mein Vater" (85)! She is no fool, she knows the limits of her will and its realization, but the sacrifice to which she commends herself is mortal, not moral; in depriving herself of life, she deprives the prince of the fulfillment of his lascivious desire.

But it is for the sake of the moral order that the mortal sacrifice is made. Tragedy takes as its subject the intersection of these forces, as cryptically described by Walter Benjamin in his study on the *Trauerspiel*: "Fate leads to death. Death is not punishment but atonement, an expression of the subjection of guilty life to the law of natural life" (*OGTD* 131). The affirmative element of the fatalism so prevalent in the German literary canon is the desire to maintain honor and autonomy in the confrontation with fate. Thus the subject of the tragic is mor(t)ality: the intersection of visceral life, defined by death, and the fraught experience of its contingencies; the intersection of life as such, which is always already a physically interdependent phenomenon, and the web of guilt, the schema of interdependence that prescribes social existence and describes its consequences – literally and sonorously expressed through the inscription of the t, where the tongue strikes at the teeth and speaks the collision represented in crossed lines, thereby affixing a *memento mori* to the questions of good and evil. The tragic appears where the composition of a drama or narrative illustrates the power of the natural law in human affairs with such intensity that it takes on the qualities of divine judgment. Affirmative fatalism is the worldview that attempts, in the face of such apparent cruelty, not only to draw meaning from these collisions, but to translate it into an attitude that asserts with equal force the value of human experience, even where its convictions are self-evidently illusory.

But affirmative fatalism need not necessarily be couched in a morality like that of

Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*. The old order, sanctifying innocence and justified anew by rational philosophy, bore the seed of a reactive fascination with the moral and emotional frailty of the human in Romanticism. Here the mortal self is not offered as a sacrifice to uphold the moral order, but often in spite of it, affirming it while refusing to obey its dictates, to bestow even the basest human suffering with a redemptive power which in its impotent defiance stakes a tragic claim. But it is in spite and because of the ambivalent significance of the sacrifice – whether an act of rebellion or obedience – that the tendencies at hand may be discussed under the category of the tragic.

> "The tragic is to the demonic what the paradox is to ambiguity. In all the paradoxes of tragedy – in the sacrifice, which, in complying with the ancient statutes, creates new ones, in death, which is an act of atonement but which sweeps away only the self, in the tragic ending, which grants the victory to man, but also to god – ambiguity, the stigma of the daimons, is in decline. ... It is rather that in tragedy pagan man realizes that he is better than his gods, but this realization strikes him dumb, and it remains unarticulated. ... The paradox of the birth of genius in moral speechlessness, moral infantility, constitutes the sublime element in tragedy" (Benjamin 109-10).

For Benjamin the tragic gains its significance through its implementation of paradox, thereby challenging and reaffirming the tyranny of paradox, thus formally imitating the world or myth that it simultaneously questions and reinforces in its content. Franco Moretti similarly characterizes tragedy in his essay *The Great Eclipse*, echoing Nietzsche when he writes, "Yet new ages are not brought into being merely through the development of new ideas: the dissolution or overthrowing of old ideas plays an equal

part in their emergence" (42). Affirmative fatalism likewise has its home in paradox, expressed in ancient tragedy as well as modern narrative: to challenge the way of the world, one must pay a toll in the currency of that which one seeks to emancipate from the demonic or cosmic order, be it property, sanity, or life. It is not an appeal to justice, but to the power of the spectacle of sacrifice, even if there are no literal witnesses. The literary form itself provides that possibility.

Heinrich von Kleist, known for his particular brand of macabre Romantic irony, crafted his story *Der Findling* around a web of uncanny intrigue, throughout which a young man, Nicolo, overcome by lust and treacherous resentment, ruins the lives of his adoptive family, ultimately driving his father, Piachi, to defy the legal order that guaranteed his property to the wicked foundling. In his inimitable style Kleist weaves a tale of increasing frustration through often long, winding sentences replete with relative and dependent clauses, such that the details of the unfolding action are hidden in labyrinthine formulations, defusing vital, explosive acts in the larger haze of social life. Building the tension around a series of private and social scandals that unfold in this way, uncanny moments are likewise defused, until the finale, Piachi's confrontation with the law and his fate, where his encounters with death and the consequences of his actions, as well as the questionable legitimacy of the prevailing order, inspire in him a rebellion against the conciliatory gesture of absolution.

> "In dem Kirchenstaat herrscht ein Gesetz, nach welchem kein Verbrecher zum Tode geführt werden kann, bevor er die Absolution empfangen. Piachi, als ihm der Stab gebrochen war, verweigerte sich hartknäckig der Absolution. Nachdem man vergebens alles, was die Religion an die Hand gab, versucht hatte, ihm die

> Strafwürdigkeit seiner Handlung fühlbar zu machen, hoffte man, ihn durch den Anblick des Todes, der seiner wartete, in das Gefühl der Reue hineinzuschrecken, und führte ihn nach dem Galgen hinaus. Hier stand ein Priester und schilderte ihm, mit der Lunge der letzten Posaune, alle Schrecknisse der Hölle, in die seine Seele hinabzufahren im Begriff war; dort ein andrer, den Leib dess Herrn, das heilige Entsühnungsmittel in der Hand, und pries ihm die Wohnungnen des ewigen Friedens. – 'Willst du der Wohltat der Erlösung teilhaftig werden?' fragten ihn beide. 'Willst du das Abendmahl empfangen?' – Nein, antwortete Piachi. – 'Warum nicht?' – Ich will nicht selig sein. Ich will in den untersten Grund der Hölle hinabfahren. Ich will den Nicolo, der nicht im Himmel sein wird, wiederfinden, und meine Rache, die ich hier nur unvollständig befriedigen konnte, wieder aufnehmen" (64)!

In his defiance of the church as well as the law, which are here notably asserted together in the designation "Kirchenstaat," Piachi draws the explosive power of the various transgressions together with the eerie, spectral atmosphere crafted by the narrator and, in his final declaration, summons the wrath of hell to earth in himself. The reality of that hell is inconsequential; it is enough to haunt Nicolo with the threat of doubled torment in death. Only the curse, lingering into posterity, for the sake of which Piachi sacrifices himself, can give meaning to his death in the face of the injustice that he has suffered. His damnation, by invoking the prevailing order's most terrible threat, contains the possibility to erode faith in that order by virtue of the conviction of his impotent defiance.

Whether Christian martyrs or infernal avengers, the figures of the literature thus far surveyed share in common a general lack of classical nobility. It is the shift that

George Steiner observes in *The Death of Tragedy* as a hallmark of the modern transformation of the tragic: the movement from lyrical drama concerned with high personages to prose drama and narrative that speak of the struggles of the middle and lower classes (194-5). Kleist is likewise a central figure for this pivot, in that, while some of his dramas still present mythical heroes in verse, his more poignant works present the force of tragic fate in the more mundane, bourgeois world and language of prose. Steiner credits this Romantic with giving expression to "that characteristically modern insight into the plurality of individual consciousness" (220), as his vivid, shocking language charges the prosaic with a mystery that in verse was attributed to the distant, untouchable gods; in his figures the terror of fate does not merely fall from the sky, but rather exercises its power through the impenetrable fog of social relations and psychology.

These stylistic and topical changes run alongside a change undergone in the spiritual life of Europe, and specifically the German states. The fateful encounters that constitute the central struggles in the emerging tragic narratives of and after the Enlightenment signify the diffusion of powers formerly reserved for the gods into the fabric of social existence, which is to say: into human beings. The democratization of Europe decentralized power from monarchs as philosophy undermined the spiritual authority of the churches, and the struggles of the individual human being took moral and aesthetic precedence over the exaggerated tragedies of mythical gods and kings. In the *Trauerspiel*, in melodrama, in stories and novellas, the examination of the tragic figure's fate became less concerned with any divine judgment – be it just or arbitrary – and more concerned with psychological complexity, the ambiguity of guilt, and blind chance, the indifference of nature. The sense of the tragic and an accompanying affirmative fatalism

proved by this shift to be matters of interpretation, but also thereby gained a renewed power for the consideration of human – and historical – affairs.

For many this was nowhere more observable than in the French Revolution, which furnished Georg Büchner with dramatic material most suitable for a vivid expression of affirmative fatalism. In the so-called "fatalism letter" of 1834 Büchner reflected on how the revolution and its aftermath illustrated with frightful clarity the visceral horrors that still threatened to manifest even in emancipatory humanist movements.

> "Ich studierte die Geschichte der Revolution. Ich fühlte mich wie zernichtet unter dem gräßlichen Fatalismus der Geschichte. Ich finde in der Menschennatur eine entsetzliche Gleichheit, in den menschlichen Verhältnissen eine unabwendbare Gewalt, Allen und Keinem verliehen. Der Einzelne nur Schaum auf der Welle, die Größe ein bloßer Zufall, die Herrschaft des Genies ein Puppenspiel, ein lächerliches Ringen gegen ein ehernes Gesetz, es zu erkennen das Höchste, es zu beherrschen unmöglich" (*GW* 219).

For Büchner there is a violence (*Gewalt*) perpetrated even in human nature that ultimately reduces every individual to "foam on the wave." The force (*Gewalt*) of social existence, traditions and revolutions alike, transforms the actions of singular subjects into broad objective phenomena, infused with the same inscrutable power exercised by nature and the gods: "an iron law, the recognition of which is the highest, the mastery of which is impossible." The same pathos courses through his play inspired by the French Revolution, *Dantons Tod*, where the terror resulting from the revolution exerts its destructive power over the very men who led the charge. Facing his execution, Danton

utters his last words in simultaneous defiance and acceptance of his fate, striving even in his final moments to mock and invite his death, and says to the executioner as he and his revolutionary compatriots approach the guillotine: "Willst du grausamer sein als der Tod? Kannst du verhindern, dass unsere Köpfe sich auf dem Boden des Korbes küssen" (94)? As if this postmortem humiliation could cut more deeply than the guillotine. But the sardonic last words also contain a warning: whatever dark comedy or horror plays out on the scaffold, a more ancient myth repeats itself which should be taken to heart. "Die Revolution is wie Saturn," Danton says in the first act, foretelling his own demise, "sie frisst ihre eigenen Kinder" (29).

It is Büchner who for George Steiner represents the dissolution of the tragic into prosaic life, especially in the fragmented and torturous *Woyzeck*. For Steiner it is the literally unspeakable terror which the confrontation with fate evokes in the tragic subject that gives tragedy its name; with Büchner's *Woyzeck* and the eponymous character's inarticulacy the modern transformation of the tragic is complete.

> "Woyzeck...is driven by his torment toward an articulateness which is not native to him. He tries to break out of silence and is continually drawn back because the words at his command are inadequate to the pressure and savagery of his feeling. The result is a kind of terrible simplicity. Each word is used as if it had just been given to human speech. It is new and full of uncontrollable meaning. That is the way children use words, holding them at arm's length because they have a natural apprehension of their power to build or destroy" (Steiner 279-80).

Where the heroes of more classical tragedy made their sacrifices as gods and nobles, elevated above the communities bearing witness to their grand gestures, Woyzeck

presents the ineffable horror of the lowest person's suffering, not dignified, but grotesque and pitiful. Woyzeck's fate is hardly monumental or transformative in the classical sense. Instead, it lends itself to a pointed critique of social stratification as a signal of an emergent social awareness and historical consciousness. The heroes of old are a distant memory, unimaginable in the soldier's cruel and lowly circumstances, and in the form of pure drama, stripped of ancient tragedy's ritualistic character, Woyzeck merely enacts his hideous misery for the world to behold. There are no gods to pass judgment here; their power has been diffused into the doctor, the captain, the lover, the mocking or indifferent masses who likewise condemn Woyzeck to inarticulate madness. He cannot be discussed in terms of affirmative fatalism *per se*, but important here is the particular movement of power from the cosmos into banality. Infused with such mortal power, the social sphere becomes both the locus and focus of new tragic forms.

The tragic figure's gesture toward a future that can learn from the sacrifice becomes itself ironized under the cold gaze of realism, where it serves as an example of commonplace and calculated cowardice in the face of the prevailing order. In *Effi Briest*, a domestic novel about a marriage and its discontents, Theodor Fontane illustrates a thoroughly cynical affirmative fatalism in Geert von Instetten. Discovering his wife Effi's love letters from an affair over six years past, Instetten resolves in conversation with his friend Wüllersdorf that he must challenge her former lover, Major Crampas, to a pistol duel. Instetten delivers his decision, which is not conceived as a decision, in a long monologue to his friend:

> "Man is nicht bloß ein einzelner Mensch, man gehört einem Ganzen an, und auf das Ganze haben wir beständig Rücksicht zu nehmen, wir sind durchaus abhängig

> von ihm. ... Man braucht nicht glücklich zu sein, am allerwenigsten hat man einen Anspruch darauf, und den, der einem das Glück genommen hat, den braucht man nicht notwendig aus der Welt zu schaffen. Man kann ihn, wenn man weltabgewandt weiterexistieren will, auch laufen lassen. Aber im Zusammenleben mit den Menschen hat sich ein Etwas ausgebildet, das nun mal da ist und nach dessen Paragraphen wir uns gewöhnt haben, alles zu beurteilen, die andern und uns selbst. Und dagegen zu verstoßen, geht nicht; die Gesellschaft verachtet uns, und zuletzt tun wir es selbst und können es nicht aushalten und jagen uns die Kugel durch den Kopf. Verszeihen Sie, dass ich Ihnen solche Vorlesung halte, die schließlich doch nur sagt, was sich jeder selber hundertmal gesagt hat. Aber freilich, wer kann was Neues sagen! Also noch einmal, nichts von Hass oder dergleichen, und um eines Glückes willen, das mir genommen wurde, mag ich nicht Blut an den Händen haben; aber jenes, wenn Sie wollen, uns tyrannisierende Gesellschafts-Etwas, das fragt nicht nach Charme und nicht nach Liebe und nicht nach Verjährung. Ich habe keine Wahl. Ich muss" (264-5).

The web of guilt is drawn vividly here in Instetten's assessment of his situation. He is not entitled to happiness, and while he is not explicitly compelled by social forces to challenge Crampas, he cannot imagine continuing to live in society with the specter of Effi's infidelity hanging over him. Eventually, he muses, the shame would drive him to suicide. Under the scrutinizing gaze of others no slight can go unavenged; instead, that he may live, he must risk his life in the duel. "But truly, who can say anything new!" Instetten's exclamation speaks the words of a believer: the power of myth reveals itself within the social order, inscribed anew through Instetten's declaration that he has no

choice in the matter. It is filled with the echoes of Büchner's letter – the "iron law" that one must recognize, but which is impossible to overcome, the sense that the human being is "foam on the wave," that "greatness is merely a coincidence." Fontane illustrates in Instetten's calm, calculated consultation with Wüllersdorf the muted but undeniable force of social obligations and subsequent anxieties. The decision to duel Crampas represents once more the affirmative fatalism of one who, bowing to the power of fate, attempts, even if only for the sake of pride, to infuse compelled action with a sense of meaning.

The movement of cosmic fatal power into the mundane sphere of everyday personal life is drawn up vividly in the fourth book of Nietzsche's *Gay Science* in aphorism 341. In the paragraph preceding the introduction of Zarathustra, Nietzsche writes:

> "*The heaviest weight*. – What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!' Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.' If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly

> crush you; the question in each and every thing, 'Do you want this again and innumerable times again?' would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal" (*GS* §341)?

This thought experiment heralds a new reckoning with the spirit of tragedy for a rapidly modernizing Germany, as well as for countless thinkers thereafter. The moment of tragic recognition, the confrontation with fate that inspires unspeakable fear, asserts itself as a creeping demon, a haunting thought that might occur at any time. Here the fateful moment is reimagined as an existential-psychological phenomenon, an intrasubjective confrontation between the past and present, the latter being a self-aware amalgamation of experiences issuing from the former. As a being who is ever only becoming through time, the self grasps itself as the endlessly developing and impossible consummation of its past thrust forward toward the future. With the end of point of its trajectory being only death – and with death and the hereafter looming as unpredictable, unanswerable questions – fate is transformed from a predetermined doom or divine judgment into the stuff of self-consciousness itself. To overcome the fear inspired by this proposition, one must embrace that this process of assessing and accepting the past as not only part of oneself, but as the very material from which the self crafts itself. Does the proposition that the thought experiment contains not threaten to turn life itself into a repeatable drama? "This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again." Taking stock of one's decisions and actions in such a way, could one affirm this life with all of its woe and joy alike, as if it were a tragedy that would repeat in an endless

cycle? The question distills the essence of the tragic and situates it in the monotony of everyday life, reformulating the mythical proposition in personal and psychological terms. Even if this life is indeed finite, as the past reasserts itself in memory, the confrontation with fate as a force in social and intersubjective activity provokes a reaction and orientation.

The orientation that Nietzsche ostensibly promotes – or at least confesses as his ardent desire – is affirmatively fatalistic. The thought experiment cited above echoes the opening aphorism of the fourth book, which lays out in no uncertain terms the formula for this comportment:

> "*For the new year*. – I'm still alive; I still think: I must still be alive because I still have to think. *Sum, ergo cogito: cogito, ergo sum*. Today everyone allows himself to express his dearest wish and thoughts: so I, too, want to say what I wish from myself today and what thought first crossed my heart – what thought shall be the reason, warrant, and sweetness of the rest of my life! I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them – thus will I be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now! I do not want to wage war against ugliness. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers. Let *looking away* be my only negation! And, all in all and on the whole: some day I want only to be a Yes-sayer" (*GS* §276)!

The proposition is not new, nor was it at the time of its composition. It speaks to a particular tragic bent in German literature, the import of which was not lost on Nietzsche in his broad critique of philosophy in the wake of the conceptual death of God.

Underlying this tradition of affirmative fatalism is a lingering and profound faith which is not necessarily Christian, but which is no doubt inflected by centuries of Christianity. Key to Nietzsche's thought is the dissolution of those inflections – the insistence upon divine justice – and the development of a kind of philosophical faith in the creative power of one's interpretive faculties. George Steiner's characterization of tragedy harkens back to such a view: "The Greek tragic poets assert that the forces which shape or destroy our lives lie outside the governance of reason or justice. Worse than that: there are around us daemonic energies which prey upon the soul and turn it to madness or which poison our will so that we inflict irreparable outrage upon ourselves and those we love" Steiner 6-7). The expression of this senseless suffering in tragedy and its subsequent incarnations presents the possibility for the tragic figure – and by extension the spectator or reader – to craft an interpretation that affirms fate, if not cosmically, then as personally and aesthetically justified.

This position, it must be noted, is not political in itself, but the scope of history provides the insight that there are naturally and inevitably political ramifications entailed in whatever decisions are made, whether these are perceived as voluntary or imposed. The affirmatively fatalistic position, however, is also wont to tend toward spiritual exhaustion in matters of politics and ethics. No author was perhaps more overcome by this feeling than Franz Kafka, whose work is steeped in a hopelessness that cannot but help in spite of the specter of doom to strive for understanding and redemption. A similar sense of the simultaneous necessity and futility of human action permeates the atmospheres of his strange world, and in a parable called "The Emperor" he gives expression to his affirmative fatalism that eerily echoes Büchner:

> "A man doubted that the emperor was descended from the gods; he asserted that the emperor was our rightful sovereign, he did not doubt the emperor's divine mission (that was evident to him), it was only the divine descent that he doubted. This, naturally, did not cause much of a stir; when the surf flings a drop of water on to the land, that does not interfere with the eternal rolling of the sea, on the contrary, it is caused by it" (183).

The oceanic imagery employed by both Büchner and Kafka effectively minimizes the individual in an atomic sense as the smallest constitutive element of a larger body, seemingly powerless to exert any influence over its movement while also implicitly responsible for the movement by virtue of its mere existence. This sentiment Kafka also transmutes into a more concrete example, so to speak, with "The Great Wall of China," where ineffable fate takes on the form of the massive project – not simply the wall itself, but the organization of social practices and institutions that make its continuous construction possible. As the narrator reveals with increasing clarity the emptiness of the rhetoric and popular explanations for the necessity or purpose of the wall, as well the general awareness of this fact among his fellow citizens, he maintains to some extent the indispensability of the fictions. Of the seemingly passive attitude that happily complies with the prevailing social and political institutions of a distant capital whence orders come from a probably already dead emperor, the narrator concludes: "All the more remarkable is that this very weakness should seem to be one of the greatest unifying influences among our people; indeed, if one may dare to use the expression, the very ground on which we live. To set about establishing a fundamental defect here would mean undermining not only our consciences, but, what is far worse, our feet" (80).

Kafka's parables speak to the developments of modernity in no uncertain terms: political engagement feels like an exercise in futility, the machinations of the state are cloaked in mystery, and the perpetual consumption machine of capitalism asserts itself as a self-evident social necessity. In similar fashion, Hermann Hesse sought to reveal in his early writings the reification of time as one of the mechanisms by which the social and economic order oppresses human subjects and suspends the possibility for spiritual growth by endowing time with an objective character that renders it impotent for the contemplation of fate. In his essay *Die Kunst des Müßiggangs* (1904) he compares the the art of storytelling in Europe to eastern traditions, noting their relationships to time:

> "Bei uns, im armen Abendland, haben wir die Zeit in kleine und kleinste Teile zerrissen, deren jeder noch den Wert einer Münze hat; dort aber fließt sie noch immer unzerstückt in stetig flutender Woge, dem Durst einer Welt genügend, unerschöpflich, wie das Salz des Meeres und das Licht der Gestirne. Es liegt mir fern, dem die Persönlichkeiten fressenden Betrieb unserer Industrie und unserer Wissenschaft irgend einen Rat geben zu wollen. Wenn Industrie und Wissenschaft keine Persönlichkeit mehr brauchen, so sollen sie auch keine haben" (9).

The reified, fractured, compartmentalized time of western capitalism is antithetical to genuine human experience – here "personality" – and the psychological state required to digest a narrative carefully. Instead, Hesse sees Europeans as consumers of literature and stories, using gastronomical metaphors in a fashion similar to Nietzsche, who wrote in the third essay of his *Genealogy of Morals* that "one skill is needed – lost today, unfortunately –for the practice of reading as an art: the skill to ruminate, which cows possess but modern man lacks" (157). Hesse is not, in the long run, interested in nuanced

political criticism, but is rather engaged with considerations of the relationship between narrative and subjectivity. A certain indebtedness to Nietzsche is of critical import here, for it is out of his tragic philosophy that a number of Hesse's more psychological texts provide an articulation of affirmative fatalism as a diegetic means of a character's coming to terms with the world.

Some twenty years later in an essay called *Die Sehnsucht unserer Zeit nach einer Weltanschauung* (1926) Hesse described the state of the "civilized world" as having lost the foundations of culture, "die Religion und die Sitte" (24). It is not a lamentation of the loss of a "true" culture, but of culture in general, a concern for the onset of nihilism as the abandonment of old spiritual traditions that provided a meaningful basis for social life and ethics. "Als Ersatz für die verlorene Sitte hat der moderne Durchschnittsmensch die Mode," Hesse claims, which provides templates for social interactions but does not provide meaning for all of this activity, such that the dictates of fashion – as custom – drive the human like a factory machine.

> "Der Mensch hat nicht bloß das Bedürfnis, in Brauch und Sitte, in Kleidung und Unterhaltung, Sport und Konversation durch eine gültige, vorbildliche Form, durch irgendein Ideal – sei es auch bloß das Eintagsideal einer Mode – regiert und geführt zu werden. Er hat in den tieferen Schichten seines Wesens auch das Bedürfnis, seinem ganzen Tun und Treiben, seinem Dasein, seinem Leben und Sterbenmüssen einen Sinn gesetzt zu sehen" (Hesse *MG* 25).

This religious impulse that Hesse describes is "so alt und wichtig wie das Bedürfnis nach Essen, dach Liebe, nach Obdach," and endows the activity of daily life with a meaning that the individual subject can incorporate into a sense of self and purpose (25). "Denn

auch der ungeistige, oberflächliche, dem Denken abgeneigte Mensch noch hat jenes uralte Bedürfnis, einen Sinn seines Lebens zu kennen, und wenn er keinen mehr findet, verfällt die Sitte, und das Privatleben steht unter dem Zeichen wildgesteigerter Selbstsucht und gesteigerter Todesangst" (25-6). Social life, unanchored from a personally meaningful cultural narrative, becomes a question of death, stoking fear and an intensified, myopic selfishness.

But this crisis also signified an oppotunity:

> "Aber unser Leben ist ein nie unterbrochenes Gewebe von Auf und Ab, Niedergang und Neubildung, Verfall und Auferstehung, und so stehen all den düsteren und kläglichen Zeichen eines Zerfalles unserer Kultur andere, hellere Zeichen gegenüber, die auf ein neues Erwachen des metaphysischen Bedürfnisses, auf die Bildung einer neuen Geistigkeit, auf ein leidenschaftliches Bemühen um eine neue Sinngebung für unser Leben deuten" (26).

Hesse saw in his contemporary society the possibility for "a new awakening of the metaphysical need," which he in his optimism tried to see from a reflective religious standpoint, but which also found its expression in the extreme and violent politics of his day, namely in National Socialism. While Hesse's appeal for spiritual renewal echoed those Romantic tones that, as Thomas Mann saw it[1], sought to resurrect an idealized past,

[1]It is the tendency toward *Innerlichkeit* that Thomas Mann in *Deutschland und die Deutschen* (1945) cites as one of the historically fundamental qualities of the Germans, capable of expressing itself dialectically in a tendency toward "Zartheit, der Tiefsinn des Herzens, unweltliche Versponnenheit, Naturfrömmigkeit, reinster Ernst des Gedankens und des Gewissens," as well as in a tendency toward violent reaction against the perceived threat of change, as in Mann's description of Martin Luther: "Aber der gewaltige innerliche Grobian von Wittenberg war kein Pazifist; er war voll deutscher Bejahung tragischen Schicksals und erklärte sich bereit, das Blut, das da fließen würde, 'auf seinen Hals zu nehmen'" (275). Precisely this wording reveals the potentially dangerous but broadly expressed pathos in question: Luther, although expressing his *Innerlichkeit* in religious contemplation and the relationship of the individual with God, was "full of German affirmation of tragic fate" when the political order came under threat, ready to let the spilled blood of peasants and soldiers run "up to his neck." This paradoxical orientation, spiritually revolutionary but politically reactionary, exerted a lasting influence over the religious and political

it stood in contrast to nationalist projects of racial purity and domination. Even so, it was ever driven by an affirmative fatalism, a view that the world, inherited by the living, asserted its tendencies with such force that the individual often became like the drop of water flung onto the sand by the rolling tide in Kafka's illustration: powerless to effect change in the prevailing order, but ever driven to attempt it; a willing sacrifice for a better world to come, yet a constitutive element of the world as it is.

What Lies Ahead

The centrality of the moment to the tragic modality through which affirmative fatalism presents itself in literature introduces a question of time that intersects with a question of the religious or "metaphysical" drive that underlies its differing manifestations, and it is in this respect that Hermann Hesse's work is the ultimate object of this study. The transformation of fate, from a cosmic or divine judgment into an existential-psychological concept, coupled with the reification of time, a primary method of the objectification of the human being in modernity, furnished Hesse with the opportunity to take up the writing of narrative as a meditative practice in itself that provides a space for the reflection lacking in an increasingly mechanized and dehumanized world. Specifically and eventually it is the form and content of Hesse's final

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philosophies that contributed to the development of German nationalism. This lonely *Innerlichkeit* made the Germans "das Volk der romantischen Gegenrevolution gegen den philosophischen Intellektualismus und Rationalismus der Aufklärung – eines Aufstandes der Musik gegen die Literatur, der Mystik gegen die Klarheit" (276). But without romanticizing Romanticism, that movement reveals its connection to the violent legacy of the German Empire, one of the dangerous consequences of *Innerlichkeit*: "[Die Romantik] ist die Tiefe, welche sich zugleich als Kraft, als Fülle empfindet, ein Pessimismus der Ehrlichkeit, der es mit dem Seienden, Wirklichen, Geschichtlichen gegen Kritik und Meliorismus, kurz mit der Macht gegen den Geist hält und äußerst gering denkt von aller rhetorischen Tugendhaftigkeit und idealistischen Weltbeschönigung" (276). The formation of the German Empire, Mann insists, "durch Krieg enstanden," was tainted from the outside by a violent politic born from the Romantic obsession with the past which, in a dangerous turn, charged the concept of national unity with the desire to reconstruct a fallen empire that never really existed (277).

novel, *Das Glasperlenspiel*, that most explicitly renders this process of contemplative reflection transparent in the act of writing itself. First rolling out Josef Knecht's biography in slow, painstakingly inward detail, and then assailing the reader with a series of poetic writings attributed that very inward figure, each of which centers on a character carefully modeled after Knecht, time is wound around itself. And with each iteration of Knecht's life, (as Knecht again, then Famulus, and finally Dasa), quiet contemplation seems to occupy ever more space, until at last in the *Indischer Lebenslauf* the bulk of the narrative is revealed to be a mere daydream. But even this, when considered within the structure of the dominant narrative, is one of many contemplations that inform the "real" Knecht's own confrontations with fate. Confrontations – plural – because in Hesse's text they assume both their modern form, as existential encounters with the self, and their ancient form, as a singular moment of tragic recognition in the face of death.

Moments indeed play the crucial role in this study. Whether explicitly discussed in the texts at hand or thematized through narration, the moment functions as the locus of reflection and the space in which the tragedy of subjectivity, as imagined by Nietzsche, plays itself out. That giant of German literature and curiously named tragedy, Goethe's *Faust*, provides in the protagonist's final *Augenblick* a sketch of this reformulation and an insight into how a lingering religious impulse – the shadow of God as an appeal to grace – still operates in Nietzsche's thought, though in a markedly different form than in Christianity. Faust's confrontation with the fateful moment, configured lyrically as a rebirth before and in death, combines the ancient and modern senses of fate in anticipation of Nietzsche's *amor fati*, but is undermined by Goethe's authorial insistence on literal redemption. With the salvation of Faust Goethe commits the faux pas of which

Steiner accuses all too many dramatists: the introduction of divine justice threatens to negate the force of the fateful moment. But that moment, juxtaposed with moments from Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and *Gay Science*, reveals a religiosity at work in affirmative fatalism that would later become the link between Nietzsche's philosophy and Hermann Hesse's "mystical Christianity."

The moment, as the locus of reflection and the existential confrontation with fate, gains a renewed religious significance for Hesse. In an address to the German youth titled *Zarathustras Wiederkehr* he resurrects, so to speak, Nietzsche's teacher and places him in a Germany tattered by the first world war and a failed revolution. Here he appeals to their individual humanity, urging them not to over-identify with the *Vaterland*, but to find in themselves their own fate. Echoing passages from *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Hesse presents a curious attempt at reconciling Nietzsche's thought with his own nebulous Christian sensibilities, which are also conspicuously inflected by Hesse's interest in Hinduism and Buddhism. Taken alongside a handful of his essays on religion, that text reveals not only Hesse's affirmative fatalist bent, but how this comportment emerges from the tragic insight occasioned by a moment of intimate reflection that is for him tantamount to a religious experience. The essence of Hesse's "mystical Christianity" lies in the contemplation of that fundamental religious question posed by Nishitani, but reveals itself to be, to some extent, inarticulable in descriptive language. Instead, it is the playful and formal space opened up by narrative that allows Hesse to explore and indirectly explain his affirmative fatalism in circumscriptive fashion.

This circumscription of his religious sensibilities is nowhere more palpable than in *Das Glasperlenspiel*, where the act of narrative writing reveals itself as Hesse's

preferred mode of meditation on revelatory moments and affirmative fatalism. The numerous poetic devices employed to these ends allow the story of Josef Knecht to unfold in such a way that invites repeated and reflective readings, opening up its critique of authoritarianism and the educational institution to the consideration of their relation to the more fundamental existential concerns facing the Germany of his day. The modern problem of freedom, which Fromm posited in *Escape from Freedom* only one year prior to the publication of Hesse's last novel, is of a kind with the deliberations that arise from this intersection. This study seeks to find in Hesse's writing a serious engagement with affirmative fatalism as a tendency in the German imagination as well as an existential orientation which, when turned upon itself, leads concretely away from ideologies of domination and toward an embrace of positive freedom.

CHAPTER III

NIETZSCHE'S TRAGIC RELIGIOSITY

Introduction

In his book *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, Steven Aschheim identifies the historically broad appeal of Nietzsche's works across disparate political and ideological camps as "a potent protean force precisely because it was diffuse and not organized" (14). Considering the history of nineteenth-century German literature, this configuration could not be more accurate, especially as regards *Also sprach Zarathustra*, that book "für alle und keinen," in which the titular teacher wishes to bestow his listeners with the wisdom needed to realize the *Übermensch*. This trope taken too seriously became infamously conflated under National Socialism with the mythic ideal of the Aryan master race, but beside and behind it lurked another aspect of Nietzsche's legacy perhaps more protean than any other precisely because of its immanence to centuries of German literature: affirmative fatalism.

Through its many iterations, transformations, and interpretations, this tragic worldview as a characteristic of German thought and literature has reasserted itself even where broader philosophical gestures sought to emancipate the spirit from the forces of fate and the gods. The study at hand concerns itself primarily with Goethe and Nietzsche, two of the most iconic German writers of the nineteenth century, whose representative tragic figures, Faust and Zarathustra, respectively, became likewise iconic for the German articulation of affirmative fatalism in the early 20th century. Nietzsche's work was especially edifying for writers, thinkers, politicians, and radicals from the 1890s through

to the 1940s, one of the core notions of his philosophy being *amor fati*, love of fate, which placed this typically mythical concept at the center of his otherwise anti-religious, life-affirming project. Drawing on Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* – one such articulation of the tragic and a response to Nietzsche's *Geburt der Tragödie*, among other theories of the tragic – an interpretation of *amor fati*, read through the fateful moments at the end of Goethe's *Faust*, reveals the lingering religious impulse underlying Nietzsche's dictum. Both Goethe and Nietzsche present an image of the tragic that stakes its power and import on the generative possibilities of the narratives themselves, their appeal to reinterpretation, which is itself an appeal to grace, insofar as the confrontation with fate produces an awareness of death that inspires a hope for a better world to come through posterity. Thus the sacrificial death of the tragic figure signifies a call for the continued articulation of such fateful moments in the good faith that this might bestow the chance nature and suffering of life with meaning. All of this is saturated with a religious sentiment which is hardly indistinguishable from mythical thinking.

It is the mythical element in Aschheim's comment that connects Nietzsche's work to Goethe: the invocation of Proteus, the shape-shifting god of the sea, calls to mind an episode from *Faust* concerning the homunculus, an artificially contrived human soul without a body. Nietzsche's sketch of the human as an incomplete being, "ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Tier und Übermensch," recalls this "artig Männlein" in a phial, who aids Mephistopheles in retrieving Faust's consciousness from a magically induced coma while also seeking a physical form to inhabit. In the second act of *Faust II*, at the end of the *klassische Walpurgisnacht*, the homunculus, accompanied by the Greek sage Thales,

consults Proteus in hopes that he might help the little soul in a glass find the form best suited for it. Proteus considers his quest and after some discussion declares:

"Dem Leben frommt die Welle besser;

Dich trägt ins ewige Gewässer

Proteus-Delphin. Er verwandelt sich

Schon ist's getan!

Da soll es dir zum schönsten glücken;

Ich nehme dich auf meinen Rücken,

Vermähle dich dem Ozean" (251-2).[2]

The infinite sea, a formless, changing mass, holds the promise of transformation while also serving as an intermediary body for the homunculus. The shapeless substance of the ocean appears as a primordial corporeality, but it also speaks to an ideal, transcendent existence: "wed to the ocean," the homunculus becomes a being of seemingly infinite possibility, able to adapt its mind to varying forms and to continue endlessly to expand and inform its experience of existence.

The protean quality of Nietzsche's work does not lie solely in its ideological adaptability, as suggested by Aschheim, but is also integral to its inner logic. One would do well to remember as well that Proteus is a soothsayer and a trickster who only gives up his knowledge to those who, like Menelaus in the *Odyssey*, can successfully wrestle

[2]"A better life the waves declare thee,
And now to endless seas shall bear thee
Proteus-Dolphin.
(*He transforms himself.*)
'Tis done! Behold!
Unto thy fairest fortune waken:
Upon my back shalt thou be taken,
And wedded to the Ocean old." Trans. Bayard Taylor.

the truth out of him while he changes forms. As a thinker fundamentally concerned with contradictions, Nietzsche's thought evolved almost violently, turning back on itself repeatedly, embodying in its movements Zarathustra's own description of the human psyche: "Was ist dieser Mensch? Ein Knäuel wilder Schlangen, welche selten beieinander Ruhe haben, – da gehen sie fort und suchen Beute in der Welt" (33). Snapping from time to time at nearby prey, the various conflicting drives and desires tangled together in the human mind are wild and seldom at peace with one another – an admission that perhaps only the most honest philosopher would make. But such honesty is also ever steeped in irony. For all of his emphasis on the realization of a higher humanity in the trope of the *Übermensch*, Zarathustra mocks and inverts the promise of grace at the end of Goethe's *Faust*, indicting himself (and his author) for their fables: "Alles Unvergängliche – das ist nur ein Gleichnis! Und die Dichter lügen zu viel" (70).[3]

The promise of grace as release from suffering is the promise of unity with God, the spiritual parallel to the promise of the ocean for the homunculus, whose corporeal union with the sea serves as an inversion of Faust's ascension to heaven. The juxtaposition of the two paths to fulfillment aptly sets the backdrop for Nietzsche's first book, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geist der Musik*, and the exploration of the Dionysian drive to dissolution vis-a-vis the Apollonian drive to individuation. Already both Faust and the homunculus illustrated the tension between these drives, as well as the impossibility of their pure fulfillment. Instead their respective fates lie in abyssal *Zwischenräume*, where the longing for either embodiment or transcendence is bound to a profound experience of its opposite. And thus does Zarathustra, teacher of the Eternal

[3] "All things intransitory – those are but an illusion! And the poets lie too much!" (My translation.)

Return and the *Übermensch*, declare that the human being is "ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Tier und Übermensch – ein Seil über einem Abgrunde" (13). The proverbial sea of possibility in which the human being swims is as liberating as it is limiting, thrust forward as one is toward death.

In this abyssal space where Nietzsche's work resounds, a concept of the tragic functions as a most formative ontological element. In this a certain protean quality is especially discernible, particularly insofar as the original subject of tragedy was always considered a different incarnation of Dionysus:

> "Es ist eine unanfechtbare Ueberlieferung, dass die griechische Tragödie in ihrer ältesten Gestalt nur die Leiden des Dionysus zum Gegenstand hatte und dass der längere Zeit hindurch einzig vorhandene Bühnenheld eben Dionysus war. Aber mit der gleichen Sicherheit darf behauptet werden, dass niemals bis auf Euripides Dionysus aufgehört hat, der tragische Held zu sein, sondern dass alle die berühmten Figuren der griechischen Bühne Prometheus, Oedipus u. s. w. nur Masken jenes ursprünglichen Helden Dionysus sind" (Nietzsche *GT* §10).

The tragic concerns itself not so much with particularities as with more general tendencies and movements, much as the homunculus, aided by Proteus, finds his search for a body fulfilled not in the discovery of a particular form, but in the multitude of possible forms. An analogy to this illustration presents itself in the form and style of Nietzsche's own writing, as well as those aspects of German literature and thought with which he takes issue. In her article on "Nietzsche as Tragic Poet," Mary Ann Frese Witt notes, "If tragedy is seen primarily as an aesthetic rendering of the sacrificial suffering of a god, then its essence is more lyrical, more rhapsodic, than what we conventionally call

dramatic: more pathos than praxis, more lyrical than mimetic" (13). The tragic is not merely a dramatic category, but an expression of suffering and its sublimation through poetic imagery that arouses the swelling, contradictory sensations of pleasure and pain, blissful oblivion and visceral terror.

The promise of grace thus appears as an affront to the tragic conception of life, a false promise offered by lying poets that fails to grasp the dialectical relationship of joy and suffering. And in contrast to the pure lyricism of tragedy as propounded by Nietzsche, Goethe's *Faust* offers a resolution to the eternal contradiction posed by Dionysus and Apollo in the logic of Gretchen's final intercession. But represented as an absolute religious grace, this promise conveniently avoids the absurdity of the eternal contradiction, perhaps with the intent to elide nihilism, but ultimately, in Nietzsche's view, dishonest. For whether physical or spiritual, neither total dissolution nor total individuation appear possible in his depictions of human experience. The self is an unstable collection of desires that find expression in the I, and these are driven by that mystery of mysteries, the Will to Power, which feeds the roots of life while also being capable of undermining them. In this way all phenomena find perspectival justification as well as condemnation, such that the personal dictum *amor fati* becomes the rallying cry for an existential standpoint which, interpreting and creating meaning from experience, might overcome the nihilism implicit in otherwise endless contradictions.

But even *amor fati* seems to operate on the promise of grace: the assurance that, despite the apparent meaninglessness of one's suffering, an affirmative confrontation with one's actions and their consequences and everything in between will yield a narrative that can edify and empower. It is in a sense the profane form of grace, insofar as grace offers

comfort while still operating on the assumption that the sinner, as a sinner, never quite deserves redemption, and, while perhaps half expecting it, also lives in fear of damnation. Nietzsche's thought issues from a preoccupation with the value of knowledge, a rejection of divinity, and demands that the act of grace come from within the subject, providing a similar sense of ambiguity as regards the efficacy of *amor fati*. Thus a certain kind of faith emerges which has little to do with God, but everything to do with the creation of meaning for the human being, the fundamental consideration of religion in the wake of God's death.

Nihilism and Necessary Fictions

On moral enlightenment. – One must talk the Germans out of their Mephistopheles, and their Faust, too. They are two moral prejudices against the value of knowledge.
–Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, §178

In the last sections of *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, Walter Benjamin discusses the significance of Satan for the development of German drama and the prominence of allegory as the mode of representation.

> "With the revival of paganism in the Renaissance, and Christianity in the Counter-Reformation, allegory, the form of their conflict, also had to be renewed. The importance of this for the *Trauerspiel* is that, in the figure of Satan, the middle ages had bound the material and the demonic inextricably together. Above all, the concentration of the numerous pagan powers into *one*, theologically rigorously defined, Antichrist meant that this supreme manifestation of darkness was

> imposed upon matter more unambiguously than in a number of demons. And not only did the middle ages come thus to impose strict limits on the scientific study of nature; even mathematicians were rendered suspect by the devilish essence of matter" (226-7).

That the devil and the speculator of the elements occupy the central roles in Goethe's masterwork speaks to a fundamental paradox with which German thought had come to contend. The condemnation of the physical realm as sin-soaked matter opposed to the absolute, spiritual goodness of God tainted human endeavors from the outset: "Es irrt der Mensch, solang' er strebt" (Goethe 18). Yet the drive to scientific discovery embodied in the Enlightenment had paradoxically become an admirable quality in the great figures of modernity. The conflict between these perspectives provided material for the new metamorphoses of tragedy as it passed from myth over into history, with Goethe providing his Faust as an allegorically charged dramatization of this conflict itself.

The attitude which recognizes the paradoxical, interdependent relationship of knowledge as sin and death as redemption was for Nietzsche characteristic of European nihilism and a sign of decadence. That despite the end of God's tyranny over truth, knowledge might still be suspect and a source of melancholia, that in the denial of life the human being might be redeemed by oblivion – such "moral prejudices against the value of knowledge" spelled suicide for so-called enlightened Europe. Benjamin's descriptions of the role of knowledge as evil in the *Trauerspiel*, the dramatic predecessor of Goethe's *Faust*, detail the offenses of that lingering Christianity which Nietzsche found so repellant for philosophy.

"Knowledge, not action, is the most characteristic mode of existence of evil. ... Its

> dominant mood is that of mourning, which is at once the mother of the allegories and their content. And from it three original satanic promises are born. ... What tempts is the illusion of freedom – in the exploration of what is forbidden; the illusion of independence – in the secession from the community of the pious; the illusion of infinity – in the empty abyss of evil. For it is characteristic of all virtue to have an end before it: namely its model, in God; just as all infamy opens up an infinite progression into the depths" (230).

This articulation simultaneously serves as a prescription and description of Faust. From Benjamin's standpoint, Goethe's tragedy might function as a culmination of that melancholia that characterized German drama as well as the sign of its dissolution before the widening gaze of Enlightenment. For as God lay dead and the phenomenal world became ever more intriguing and penetrable to science, knowledge would demand its redemption.

But it is Faust and not his knowledge that is redeemed; indeed, Faust is redeemed in spite of his devilish search for knowledge. That his redemption lies merely in death, that his damnation comes at the moment when he adores and clings to life, that his striving for knowledge is a symptom of his spiritual impurity, that this impurity is inherent in his physical existence – these moral judgments all stake themselves on the promise of bliss in death and an implicit denial of life. For Faust (and Goethe) still walked in that world where the infinite possibility opened up by knowledge was an eternal, insufferable abyss, and faith in the absolute wisdom of God offered an escape rope from the confusion of the depths. Should that rope vanish, however, and should the abyss swallow us whole – would not the whole of our existence demand a new

interpretation, a new orientation?

This new orientation is effectively the redemption of knowledge that Nietzsche's antipathy toward the end of *Faust* represents. The promise of Christianity – heavenly bliss in death – had lost its viability by way of knowledge, removing the escape rope from the abyss and thus radically changing the face of knowledge. Not an abyss – that is the world – but a light to illuminate and draw meaning out of the abyss – that should be knowledge's proverbial face. This is the sentiment of Nietzsche's madman in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* who carries a lantern in daylight. "Where is God?" he cries, "I'll tell you! *We have killed him* – you and I! We are all his murderers. But how did we do this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained the earth from its sun?" (119-20). The Enlightenment did not hesitate to unchain the earth from its sun, so to speak, but it was not prepared for the monstrous task that this would necessitate. "Where are we moving to? Away from all suns? Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sidewards, forwards, in all directions? Aren't we straying as though through an infinite nothing? Isn't empty space breathing at us?" (120). The answer to these is a resounding "jaein": without the foundation supplied by God, we are straying, falling, wandering aimlessly, except that the ground is still beneath us, the sun rises and sets as ever, and death remains a great mystery. But that the reassurances of the phenomenal world be rooted in our own human experience – here the shadow of God looms, the fear of knowledge and transience overshadows the liberating possibilities of this new horizon.

The indeterminacy of this position represents the ambivalent danger inherent in nihilism. Thrilling, promising, daunting, suffocating, the loss of a metaphysical and moral

ground upon which even European epistemology had established itself is as liberating as it is debilitating. It is not unlike the sea presented to the homunculus of Goethe's *Faust*: a contained infinity, an opening to new possibilities, the sheer number of which are intimidating. The image of the sea appears repeatedly in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* as the representation of the new task facing humanity:

> "*In the horizon of the infinite.* – We have forsaken the land and gone to sea! We have destroyed the bridge behind us – more so, we have demolished the land behind us! Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean; it is true, it does not always roar, and at times it lies there like silk and gold and dreams of goodness. But there will be hours when you realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that has felt free and now strikes against the walls of this cage! Woe, when homesickness for the land overcomes you, as if there had been more *freedom* there – and there is no more 'land'!" (119)

We cannot return to the demolished land, the foundation provided by Christian metaphysics and morality. That old nihilism, built on a life-denying and self-defeating logic, has been wiped away, and a new nihilism lies before and beneath us: not a foundation, but a vast sea stretching on toward infinity in which only the little boat, the shaky, fragile self, provides any sense of stability.

But what of this self, this ball of snakes, this word that ascribes to the manifold desires and drives competing for dominance the semblance of unity? Its unifying power is illusory at best, but through its primary mode of operation – the I, *das Ich* – it shapes the whole of grammar and linguistic expression, the means by which the very questions at hand are posed. Posturing in the first person, it provides the central point from which

the world, conceived here as an ocean of seemingly infinite possibility, may be thought. It is also telling that both the German and English expressions for this process – *verstehen*, understand, *begreifen*, grasp – illustrate it simultaneously as a subjugation to and possession of the idea. The world– as the subject perceives it from without and builds it from within, as the source and object of a subjectivity which is the only mode of its expression, especially in speaking the word "world" – is but a thought of the human being, who is likewise a thought of the world's.

Such a contradiction illustrates the operative logic underlying Nietzsche's considerations and reveals the necessity of certain fictions for the possibility of thought. Railing against the "despisers of the body," Zarathustra declares "sense," "spirit," and the "I" to be mere tools of a "greater reason," the source and expression of which is sheer corporeality.

> "'Ich' sagst du und bist stolz auf dieses Wort. Aber das Größere ist, woran du nicht glauben willst – dein Leib und seine große Vernunft: die sagt nicht Ich, aber tut Ich.
>
> Was der Sinn fühlt, was der Geist erkennt, das hat niemals in sich sein Ende. Aber Sinn und Geist möchten dich überreden, sie seien aller Dinge Ende: so eitel sind sie.
>
> Werk- und Spielzeuge sind Sinn und Geist: hinter ihnen liegt noch das Selbst. Das Selbst sucht auch mit den Augen der Sinne, es horcht auch mit den Ohren des Geistes.
>
> Immer horcht das Selbst und sucht: es vergleicht, bezwingt, erobert, zerstört. Es herrscht und ist auch des Ichs Beherrscher.

> Hinter deinen Gedanken und Gefühlen, mein Bruder, steht ein mächtiger Gebieter, ein unbekannter Weiser – der heißt Selbst. In deinem Leibe wohnt er, dein Leib ist er." (28-9)

The manifold drives and desires that make up the human being are deeply rooted in bodily existence; the body is one with the self, which performs the I and expresses through it the knowledge garnered through the senses and the mind. Yet the reduction of all of these concepts to mere tools of the self also reveals the self as another objectification of those tools. The body qua self is the necessary prerequisite for the development of language, but language is the prerequisite for the idea of the body. Again paradox rears its head.

If such impassable contradictions form the foundation for Nietzsche's thought, then the only tool against them is to accept the necessity of certain fictions implied therein. And although these formulations cast doubt on the possibility of knowledge, this remains in the last analysis all that the human being has to cling to, at least from its isolated position as an existential subject. But knowledge should not be understood only in the sense of positivistic or physical science (*Wissenschaft*); rather, knowledge (*Wissen*) lends itself to elucidations of life beyond mechanistic descriptions, namely in the sense of that gay science (*fröhliche Wissenschaft*) called poetry. When the physical sciences, which killed but could not replace God, become too nihilistic to bear, we have recourse to aesthetic expression, which is able, if not to explain the meaning of our suffering, at least to make it interesting and manageable.

> "*Our ultimate gratitude to art*. – Had we not approved of the arts and invented this type of cult of the untrue, the insight into general untruth and mendacity that

> is now given to us by science – this insight into delusion and error as a condition of cognitive and sensate existence – would be utterly unbearable. *Honesty* would lead to nausea and suicide. But now our honesty has a counterforce that helps us avoid such consequences: art, as the *good* will to appearance. ... As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* to us, and art furnishes us with the eye and hand and above all the good conscience to be *able* to make such a phenomenon of ourselves. At times we need to have a rest from ourselves by looking at and down at ourselves and, from an artistic distance, laughing *at* ourselves or crying *at* ourselves; we have to discover the *hero* no less than the *fool* in our passion for knowledge; we must now and then be pleased about our folly in order to be able to stay pleased about our wisdom." (*GS* 104)

Science is liable to give way to hopelessness; its mechanistic explanations serve to answer questions of "How?" but it cannot respond to the "Why?" lost with the death of God. Especially where this concerns human psychology and biology, one is wont to find in the reduction of life and experience to meaningless mechanical processes a crushingly nihilistic worldview. Art, however, concerns itself not with mechanisms, but with appearance, aesthetics, and sensuous interpretation: the subjective, the untrue – insofar as it provides no demonstrable, replicable results from sterile experimentation – but the most human truth – insofar as every lived moment is an experiment, the results of which are the lingering thoughts and feelings that constitute the interior life of the subject.

Thus meaning emerges not from explanation, but from expression. Its essence is the dialectic of pleasure and pain, and it reveals itself where one or the other is able by virtue of abundance to justify its existence in the face of the other. This kind of

knowledge – the gay science, the knowledge contained in and afforded by art – rescues the subject from the abyss while often approximating it. If utter nihilism dwells in sustained contemplation of meaninglessness, even this suffering is afforded to subjectivity by means of knowledge which allows for the good will to untruth: to beauty, to appreciation of the whole terrible mess of consciousness.

"Alles Vergängliche / Ist nur ein Gleichnis,"[4] declares the choir of angels at the close of Goethe's *Faust*, after Gretchen implores Mary, Mater Gloriosa, to save the titular sorceror from the jaws of hell, citing the fallen nature of all humanity and the impossible expectation of perfection. Faust is drawn upward by Gretchen's spirit as the choir sings of the triumph of the world beyond and condemns the world of appearances to mere illusion. Despite Zarathustra's apparently outright rejection of these lines – "Alles Unvergängliche – das ist nur ein Gleichnis! Und die Dichter lügen zu viel!" – this is a protean moment for the wild philologist. At first glance it is a condemnation of Faust's salvation as a conciliatory gesture and an indictment of poets who would make claims beyond the reach of their ken. Simultaneously it is merely an explosive reiteration of the sentiment expressed in the aforementioned aphorism regarding "our ultimate gratitude to art." Like the shape-shifting god who will not give up his wisdom until exhausted by combat, Nietzsche writes in half-riddles, making declarations that implicate him in the class of poets who "lie too much" while extolling this as their greatest virtue. The rejection of the phenomenal world as expressed in the final lines of *Faust* may well offend Nietzsche's sensibilities, but the grace extended to the titular sinner is just that extended to every subject by the fictions that make the world bearable: knowledge,

[4]"All things transitory / Are but an illusion." My translation.

subjectivity, and beauty.

Naturally, poets lie – their gift is that for untruth, the will to beauty – and their task is to give meaning to our suffering, but beware those who would make impossible promises, who would overstep the bounds of their role. Knowledge as speculation leads into the abyss of tragic insight. The boon afforded by art is a promise that reflects that of grace, but rests upon a different foundation: it does not efface the value of knowledge by negating its substantiality, but rather highlights the transient and ecstatic joy offered by both wisdom and folly alike. "The discovery that all empirical reality is illusory is called a tragic discovery; no man, it seems, would be able to withstand its destructive power. ... We are rescued by the essential theatricality of art" (de Man 93). By means of artistic expression this awful knowledge gains meaning within the theater of human existence.

And yet this insistence on the primacy of aesthetics is not without its opponents. In response to Nietzsche's statement in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* that "nur als ästhetisches Phänomen ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig gerechtfertigt," Benjamin contends: "Where art so firmly occupies the center of existence as to make man one of its manifestations instead of recognizing him above all as its basis, to see man's existence as the eternal subject of its own creations instead of recognizing him as its own creator, then all sane reflection is at an end" (*OGTD* 103). Yet it is also the very notion of sanity that becomes suspect in the consideration of tragedy. For is it not the essence of tragedy that one is struck so deeply in a moment of recognition – as de Man puts it, "the discovery that all empirical knowledge is illusory" – that any stable sense of self and world implodes?

For the tragedian as well as the philosopher (and the novelist, for that matter), this moment signifies an encounter with fate, seeming to render all knowledge impotent and

meaningless in the face of the tragic discovery. But as seen in Goethe's *Faust* and through to Nietzsche's work, even this force is a fiction as necessary and indispensable to the self-preservation of the subject as its conception of its own subjectivity. Indeed, it is part and parcel of the formation of this conception. If we can understand how Nietzsche's irony might inflect his condemnation of Faust and Mephistopheles as "moral prejudices against the value of knowledge," then they may also be its savior. For while Faust is apparently saved by God's grace, the moment (*Augenblick*) in which he confronts fate smacks of Nietzsche's *amor fati*, a saving grace delivered not from on high, but from within subjectivity itself.

Der Augenblick: On Time and the Modern Concept of Fate

The question of Faust's fate remains throughout Goethe's work something of an ambiguous mystery. Even in the initial conversation between God and Mephistopheles, it is unclear whether the devil's game could actually result in Faust's damnation, as God admits that, "Es irrt der Mensch, solang' er strebt," but maintains confidence in his faith (Goethe 18). When Faust expresses his rage at Mephistopheles for withholding news of Gretchen's infanticide and condemnation, the demon mocks his weakness and reminds him of the infernal nature of their pact. "Warum machst du Gemeinschaft mit uns, wenn du sie nicht durchführen kannst? Willst fliegen und bist vorm Schwindel nicht sicher? Drangen wir uns dir auf, oder du dich uns?" (138).[5] Faust is incensed, but Mephistopheles reminds him of his dire responsibility – for Gretchen's fate as well as his own. The latter does not perturb him. As far as he is concerned, no moment could ever offer him the

[5]"Why didst thou enter fellowship with us, if thou canst not carry it out? Wilt fly, and art not secure against dizziness? Did we thrust ourselves upon you, or thou thyself upon us?" Trans. Bayard Taylor.

satisfaction required for him to lose his soul. And yet, while time seems then inwardly suspended for him, Gretchen's fate strikes him with horror. The privilege that he enjoys – his relative freedom from consequence – does not extend to other mortals with whom he becomes entangled. This concerns him, but only, as we learn, momentarily. Ultimately neither his own damnation nor the suffering that he causes come to bear much upon his conscience.

There is another dimension to this problem. Not only is Faust's impending damnation unclear, but determining the form that fate takes also presents an ambiguity. Is fate to be understood only as the moment in which death strikes, or can it be seen and interpreted prior to death? Benjamin asserts in *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* that "fate is the entelechy of events within the field of guilt. ... Fate leads to death. Death is not judgment, but atonement, an expression of the subjection of guilty life to the law of natural life" (129-31). If it is also the hallmark of the *Trauerspiel*, as Benjamin theorizes throughout the book, that its tragic figures are not merely judged or struck down but in fact redeemed by grace, often through an apotheosis, then this theory of fate developed out of these dramas might apply equally well to *Faust*. By this definition, fate is the force that propels events, that highlights intersections and coincidences, that "unleashes causality" as one of its weapons, but which is above all something to be seen only in flashes and interpreted as death approaches. It is the very phenomenon that it describes: the recognition of events as they unfold and the possibility of meaning in the face of blind necessity.

It is not until finally confronted and struck blind by the spirit of care (*Sorge*) that Faust once again considers his mortality and the meaning which he might ascribe to it.

Now an old man, Faust has established a vast dominion, extending his reach with levees and reclaiming land from the sea. Having accomplished so much and provided so much new space for his subjects, he contemplates in a final monologue the trajectory of his life, suddenly offering an interpretation and experiencing for the first and last time the sense of fulfillment that would damn him.

The description that Faust offers of his realm, painted with swelling pathos and sentimentality, compares it not so subtly to Eden, presenting it as a paradisiacal bastion surrounded by a dangerous and decadent world. Indeed, it will function as the locus of Faust's death and redemption, and thus serves as an image of what Benjamin refers to as "the light of grace" seen "mirrored in the swamp of Adam's guilt" (129).

"Ein Sumpf zieht am Gebirge hin,
Verpestet alles schon Errungene;
Den faulen Pfuhl auch abzuziehn,
Das Letzte wär' das Höchsterrungene.
Eröffn' ich Räume vielen Millionen,
Nicht sicher zwar, doch tätig-frei zu wohnen.
Grün das Gefilde, fruchtbar; Mensch und Herde
Sogleich behaglich auf der neusten Erde,
Gleich angesiedelt an des Hügels Kraft,
Den aufgewälzt kühn-emsige Völkerschaft.
Im Innern hier ein paradiesisch Land,
Da rase draußen Flut bis auf zum Rand,
und wie sie nascht, gewaltsam einzuschließen,

Gemeindrang eilt, die Lücke zu verschließen" (Goethe 348).[6]

What differentiates it, however, from a God-given paradise is the requirement that it continually be fought for, repaired and reinforced against threats from outside. As a representation of human achievement, the realm promises safety and nourishment as rewards for combined efforts and cooperation. Here millions are “tätig-frei” to live – not free *from* activity, but free *to* act, acting and free, and the continuation of this state is contingent upon their shared and constant work against the foul swamp that tries to seep into and spoil their haven. This hyphenated relationship between the citizens' activity and freedom is similarly echoed in "kühn-emsig": bold in their business, diligent in their daring, their survival depends upon continuous labor without express promise; every attempt to secure their position is a gamble, but is paradoxically tied to effort. Redemption is reconfigured as a negotiation, a back-and-forth movement between duty and freedom, daring and industriousness.

In these moments before being granted entrance to literal paradise, Faust's monologue itself functions like these hyphens. Caught between the glorification of his human striving and the uncertainty of success, a proto-Nietzschean standpoint is born in which striving and success become equivalent, simultaneous phenomena; like desire, its

[6]"Below the hills a marshy plain
Infects what I so long have been retrieving;
This stagnant pool likewise to drain
Were now my latest and my best achieving.
To many millions let me furnish soil,
Though not secure, yet free to active toil;
Green, fertile fields, where men and herds go forth
At once, with comfort, on the newest Earth,
And swiftly settled on the hill's firm base,
Created by the bold, industrious race.
A land like Paradise here, round about:
Up to the brink the tide may roar without,
And though it gnaw, to burst forth the limit,
By common impulse all unite to hem it." Trans. Bayard Taylor.

satisfaction delayed indefinitely, longing and striving contain their fulfillment in their fervor. This Faust expresses in his last mortal utterances:

"Ja, diesem Sinne bin ich ganz ergeben,
Das ist der Weisheit letzter Schluß:
Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben,
Der täglich sie erobern muß.
Und so verbringt, umrungen von Gefahr,
Hier Kindheit, Mann und Greis sein tüchtig Jahr.
Solch ein Gewimmel möcht' ich sehn,
Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn.
Zum Augenblicke dürft' ich sagen:
Verweile doch, du bist so schön!
Es kann die Spur von meinen Erdetagen
Nicht in Äonen untergehn. –
Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück
Genieß' ich jetzt den höchsten Augenblick." (348)[7]

The moment (*Augenblick*) that spells doom for Faust is the one to which he would like to

[7]"Yes! to this thought I hold with firm persistence;
The last result of wisdom stamps it true:
He only earns his freedom and existence,
Who daily conquers them anew.
Thus here, by dangers girt, shall glide away
Of childhood, manhood, age, the vigorous day:
And such a throng I fain would see, –
Stand on free soil among a people free!
Then dared I hail the Moment fleeing:
"*Ah, still delay – thou art so fair!*"
The traces cannot, of mine earthly being,
In aeons perish, – they are there! –
In proud fore-feeling of such lofty bliss,
I now enjoy the highest Moment, – this!" Trans. Bayard Taylor.

cling; it is an instance of gratification in which he wants to dwell, a desire (*Lust*) for and joy (*Lust*) in eternity that ultimately functions as a transition from life into death. Yet this moment differs from those before it only in Faust's own recognition of its transient nature. That life and freedom must be daily earned by those who conquer them: this is the constant activity that constitutes the human experience, the hyphen separating birth and death, the endless, eternal moment through which life flows. Faust's most beloved moment is thus merely that in which he recognizes simultaneously that the moment is endless and that it is constantly ending. He longs to rest in the restless progression of time, to be eternally present in the hyphen connecting the future to the past.

Faust's embrace of the moment per se – his affirmation of activity in the inevitable passage of time – as the highest moment of his life prefigures an understanding of time not merely as a linear progression or succession of moments, but as a singular, eternal moment in which potentiality fulfilled passes through actuality into actuality. In so doing the folly of his wager with Mephistopheles becomes glaringly clear: not only is the possibility of clinging to a beautiful moment untenable, but the recognition of that moment always comes too late, once the potential has transformed in its passage through the gateway of the moment.

This paradoxical moment is the instance of death in Goethe's masterpiece, but in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* the titular prophet seeks out the paradox of the moment in the midst of life, as the life-affirming moment par excellence. In the section titled "Vom Gesicht und Räthsel," after carrying the Spirit of Gravity up the mountain on his shoulder, Zarathustra illustrates linguistically the temporal-existential phenomenon of the moment.

"'Siehe diesen Torweg! Zwerg!' sprach ich weiter: 'der hat zwei Gesichter. Zwei Wege kommen hier zusammen: die ging noch niemand zu Ende.

Diese lange Gasse zurück: die währt eine Ewigkeit. Und jene lange Gasse hinaus – das ist eine andre Ewigkeit.

Sie widersprechen sich, diese Wege: sie stoßen sich gerade vor den Kopf – und hier, an diesem Torwege, ist es, wo sie zusammenkommen. Der Name des Torwegs steht oben geschrieben: "Augenblick."

Aber wer einen von ihnen weiter ginge –und immer weiter und immer ferner: glaubst du, Zwerg, daß diese Wege sich ewig widersprechen?'" (Nietzsche 128)

The gateway called Moment presents him with two paths extending eternally in opposite directions – the future and the past. The two paths, as two faces of the gateway, contradict one another, but the moment is also of a two-faced, deceptive character: it appears in every instance as something unique and fleeting, yet it persists eternally as the singular locus of temporal experience. As the hyphen between future and past, the moment is both the point of their divergence and the point of their intersection. But the paths are neither parallel nor perpendicular; rather, they pursue the selfsame trajectory and only assume different identities as they pass through the gateway of the moment.

The ambivalence of the word *Gesicht* lends its own complexity to the question of the moment. Rendered rather literally as "something that is seen," it signifies both the "vision" that appears to Zarathustra as well as the "face" of the gateway. One might thus behold the moment, with its own reference to sight (*Augenblick*), as the face of the past or the future, gazing back or leering ahead. That which is seen can also see, repeating the ambivalence of understanding, in which the subject, in grasping its object, is also

subjugated by it. The moment is then not merely the blink of a subjective eye, but the apprehension of that subjectivity by the eye of time itself. Time folds back upon itself, not merely in terms of its linearity vis-a-vis its circularity, but insofar as its presence is purely present, neither linear nor circular, but incessantly revolving in an infinite, tightly wound spiral, like a thread endlessly looped through the eye of a needle.

But memory persists, and insofar as the living subject might recall moments from the past, the linear shape of time is preserved, most especially in the linguistic forms given to memory in narrative expression. Michael Stern takes up this issue of the shape of time in Nietzsche's thought, especially as regards his view of tragedy, and determines that Nietzsche "posited two species of time" (51). One is "a linear historical time" that is dominated by the past, "marked by ressentiment," while the other is "the circular time of the eternal return," which is "not a metaphysical time," but instead "a psychological time marked by differentiated repetition and *Selbstüberwindung*" (51-2). That "these two species of time coexist and are in constant opposition" (52) speaks to the ambivalence of the *Augenblick*, which signifies literally the act of the apprehending eye, but figuratively the spatial-temporal moment that it apprehends. It is at once an active "gaze of the eye," spinning its wheels in the present, and the passive "view" taken in by the eye, an image recalled from the past. Within Nietzsche's conception of tragedy as a condition of human experience, "the collision of inherited narratives...and the construction of a narrative self," (43) Stern then deduces:

> "Linear time is the time of passive 'nihilism' or 'decadence.' Circular time is valorized as the time of health. And as the time of *Selbstüberwindung*, it is the time when elements of the past are addressed in the moment in order to create the

> metaphor of self. It is this copresencing of temporal regimes in collision that activates the Nietzschean idea of tragedy as the collision between competing narratives" (52).

The moment – not only psychologically or philosophically, but poetically – contains the potential to render a doubled image, the passive "view" and active "sight," of the subjective confrontation with time and, by proxy, subjectivity itself.

Faust's fate is conceived as this moment in which the moment itself is seen by the subject and thereby subjects the subject to its own gaze. It is the fervor, the rapture, the sense of simultaneous mastery over and subjugation to the force of time that finally allows him to declare, "Zum Augenblicke dürft' ich sagen: / Verweile doch, du bist so schön!" For here the whole of history and all the potential for the future swell within his "view"; the narratives of his life and deeds – as sinful deviation and great works – confronted with the possibilities of the future – as the tasks of generations and the legacy of his own existence – are distilled in the image of his dominion. The edenic landscape, yet tainted by the Fall, suspended between the carefree aesthetic of the idyll and the crushing reality of the historical world, threatening in biblical fashion to seep in and flood it, is a veritable modern paradise, which only momentarily and by way of arduous labor might maintain the semblance of its perfection. "Verweile doch, du bist so schön!" This exclamation contains the tragic insight that his absolute fulfillment is only subjectively possible, insofar as it is also impossible: in the ardent desire to arrest the moment, Faust surrenders himself to its transient and annihilating power.

While by no means a *Trauerspiel* in any pure sense, Goethe's *Faust* still shares with that tradition a role in the transformation of aesthetic and philosophical

configurations of fate for modernity. It is one of the grand ironies of modernity that tragedy was resurrected to illustrate and give meaning to events, staked as it was on the terrible and inscrutable machinations of mythic fate. But the specter of fate looms so perfectly over every pronouncement of doom; like the necessary fiction of the subject, there must, even in the absence of God, be some vague order to events, some logic, however loose, however convoluted. In his assessment of Nietzsche's tragic philosophy, Stern takes up the paradox of fate in a world determined to be random and meaningless. He contends that "tragedy for the mature Nietzsche is the collision between inherited narratives...and the construction of a narrative self," that "Nietzschean tragedy, in the end, is the story of the ironic subject of modernity" (Stern 43). That is to say: tragedy consists of the terror entailed by the realization that subjectivity – and therefore all knowledge – is a contrivance, a fiction. "Subjectivity is intimately tied to poiesis or making, and subjectivity is a retrospective activity poeticized into experience" (46). And fate strikes in the moment that this becomes clear to the tragic subject: when the artifice of subjectivity reveals itself as the creator and creation of an eternal contradiction, but is ever forced to make a decision that will offend one of its valences.

That such an understanding of fate be shared between Goethe and Nietzsche is neither mere coincidence nor a question of influence; rather, it is a direct consequence of Enlightenment thought and its dialectical character. With the death of God the concept of fate faced a necessary but gradual reorientation. Fundamental as it was to drama, its metaphysical composition could no longer stake its foundation upon divinity or providence. Instead, before being accurately identified as such, it blazed a path for the coming social sciences, drawing attention not to simple linear causality, but to the whole

tangled web of interpersonal relations whose image emerged ever more clearly as the content of drama shifted from myth to history. This transformation was fundamental to Benjamin's study of *Trauerspiel* insofar as the dramas of the Baroque which called themselves tragedies in fact wrestled with a very different fate than the ancient plays from which they drew their inspiration.

For Benjamin in his study of German drama, fate is "itself the true order of the eternal recurrence," and it "is not a purely natural occurrence – any more than it is purely historical" (129). Not purely natural, because social interactions and their consequences are intimately involved in its composition, and not purely historical, because creaturely mortality is at stake. As historical phenomenon, fate involves the "copresencing of temporal regimes in collision" that Stern describes, where the image of the past flashes and confronts the march of time, demanding reconciliation and narrative justification. As natural phenomenon, it is the force of nature's violence and indifference, a reminder of mortal frailty as terrifying as it is simply annihilating. Spelled out by Benjamin in this way, fate's transition from mythic power into the realm of history is clear, but not complete; it maintains a divine quality. "It is the elemental force of nature in historical events, which are not themselves entirely nature, because the light of grace is still reflected from the state of creation. But it is mirrored in the swamp of Adam's guilt" (129). The "light of grace," the reminder of a state of innocence, the promise of unity with God, is reflected in the swamp, not only in the form of death (which is the nihilism that Nietzsche contradicts), but in the contemplation of that fate.

This phenomenal ambiguity, the lingering mythic power of fate in the face of what appears to be a chance coalescence of interrelated courses of activity, highlights that its

modern conception is one of interpretation. It obtains meaning only in concentration, where virtues and events are distilled into poetic language and charged with a resonant pathos so that, where the countless threads of schemes and intentions intersect, unfortunate coincidences or sudden consequences strike with the force of a supernatural power.

> "The core of the notion of fate is, rather the conviction that guilt (which in this context always means creaturely guilt – in Christian terms, original sin – not moral transgression on the part of the agent), however fleeting its appearance, unleashes causality as the instrument of the irresistibly unfolding fatalities. Fate is the entelechy of events within the field of guilt. The isolation of the field in which the latter exerts its power is what distinguishes fate; for here everything intentional or accidental is so intensified that the complexities – of honour, for instance – betray, by their paradoxical vehemence, that the action of this play has been inspired by fate" (129-130).

The incidental appearance of fate within the "field of guilt" – the realm of relationships and responsibility where conflict and consequences unfold – is at once proof and denial of its power. As the culmination of so many interrelated plots, it feigns the appearance of random and historical events, but as it unleashes the forces of nature – most notably death – so viciously, it still retains a mystical and divine quality. And it is the residue of this divine judgment persisting in the existential conception of fate that keeps it alive and endows it with an uncanny significance. It is because the drama reaches a terrible climax, in spite of all dead gods, and the unforeseen consequences of all of the intriguers' and heroes' deeds coalesce into a decisive event, that the drama exists in the first place. The

same can be said of history, which is punctuated by similar moments that, although juxtaposed in order to reveal their causal relations, gain an almost divine significance in their monumental and transformative character.[8]

As the coalescence of causalities, fate appears in flashes and makes the gravity of one's participation in the field of guilt palpably undeniable. Benjamin says as much, albeit in a typically cryptic fashion, when in an essay titled *Schicksal und Charakter* he writes, "Schicksal ist der Schuldzusammenhang des Lebendigen" (46). In Christian terms this is divine judgment for the unavoidable original sin of knowledge, but according to the budding existential concept of fate seen in Goethe and Nietzsche alike, this is a moment of radical recognition wherein the subject comes face to face with itself in view of its many relationships and spheres of shared responsibility – as well as the impossibility of its stable subjectivity.

The reconceptualization of fate as the force through which social entanglements and natural laws express their violent power over the subject reveals a modern strain of thought brought fully to bear upon Nietzsche's treatment of history, as well as (or in conjunction with that) his treatment of fate for the modern subject, that tightrope walker suspended between animal and *Übermensch*. In the face of nihilism (in both its Christian and atheistic forms), history, as the space in which the collision of narratives constitutes the fateful moment of tragic insight, becomes the canvas upon which the subject might paint an interpretation of that revelation and redeem its own subjugation to fate. And this

[8] This is the central idea of aphorism 34 in *The Gay Science*: "*Historia abscondita*. – Every great huma being exerts a retroactive force: for his sake all of history is put on the scale sgain, and a thousand secrets of the past crawl out of their hiding places – into *his* sunshine. There is no telling what may yet become a part of history. Maybe the past is still essentially undiscovered! So many retroactive forces are still needed" (*GS* 53-4)!

redemption, for Nietzsche as well as in the Christian promise of grace, remains within the purview of love.

Amor fati and Grace as "History's Antidote"

Ich will immer mehr lernen, das Nothwendige an den Dingen als das Schöne sehen: – so werde ich Einer von Denen sein, welche die Dinge schön machen. Amor fati: das sei von nun an meine Liebe!

–Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, §276

I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them – thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on!

–Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, §276

The *deus ex machina* of Gretchen's intercession that implies Faust's salvation is of a kind with Faust's final monologue, but the latter is the fateful moment, the confrontation with time, the past, which is also a confrontation with the self, and is thus the point on which the work stakes its claim to tragedy. Yet the redemption offered to Faust shares with the moment of tragic insight the promise of suffering's sublimation. The former deigns from without – it echoes the Lutheran emphasis on the helplessness of the sinner at the mercy of God's grace – while the latter erupts from within, prefiguring in turn Nietzsche's declaration of *amor fati*.

The moment of fate produces an excess of knowledge, terrible insight that bares

the cruel, indifferent, but seemingly ordered and wickedly hostile face of time, the tangled web of social and natural events that have delivered the subject to this confrontation with its very notion of self. Faust anticipates Nietzsche's dictum in the embrace of his fate. The third book of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* ends with a series of short quips, the last of which reads: "*What is the seal of having become free?* – No longer to be ashamed before oneself" (153). Read together with the first aphorism of the fourth book, this sense of freedom appears to be the goal of his New Year's resolution.

> *For the new year*. – I'm still alive; I still think: I must still be alive because I still have to think. *Sum, ergo cogito: cogito, ergo sum*. Today everyone allows himself to express his dearest wish and thoughts: so I, too, want to say what I wish from myself today and what thought first crossed my heart – what thought shall be the reason, warrant, and sweetness of the rest of my life! I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them – thus will I be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now! I do not want to wage war against ugliness. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers. Let *looking away* be my only negation! And, all in all and on the whole: some day I want only to be a Yes-sayer! (156)

To gaze back at the mass of material furnished by memory and guilt, to see each deed and event as a necessity in light of time's unyielding forward march, and to formulate a narrative that gives it coherence as well as aesthetic appeal – to see it all as beautiful – this is Nietzsche's fervent desire: to be free of shame before himself, to love his fate. And to see all necessity as beauty, to transform even ugliness into a beautiful aspect of his fate – does this not require certain leaps in thought, or a very open willingness to adjust one's

taste?

Especially in the European context, replete with all manner of spirits, the social animal knows that many tastes are indeed acquired. The development of taste into desire and pleasure entails the gradual transformation of a tolerance into a love. But this, Nietzsche maintains in the fourth book of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, is a conscious process, itself a labor, the fruits of which are an aesthetic appreciation the likes of which could redeem even the ugliest fate and justify an enthusiastic affirmation.

> *One must learn to love.* – This happens to us in music: first one must *learn to hear* a figure and melody at all, to detect and distinguish it, to isolate and delimit it as a life in itself; then one needs effort and good will to *stand* it despite its strangeness; patience with its appearance and expression, and kindheartedness about its oddity. Finally comes a moment when we are *used* to it; when we expect it; when we sense that we'd miss it if it were missing; and now it continues relentlessly to compel and enchant us until we have become its humble and enraptured lovers, who no longer want anything better from the world than it and it again. But this happens to us not only in music: it is in just this way that we have *learned to love* everything we now love. We are always rewarded in the end for our good will, our patience, our fair-mindedness and gentleness with what is strange, as it gradually casts off its veil and presents itself as a new and indescribable beauty. That is *its thanks* for our hospitality. Even he who loves himself will have learned it this way – there is no other way. Love, too, must be learned (*GS* §334).

One might consider here the music of Richard Wagner, long beloved by Nietzsche, when imagining not only the strange sounds to which one becomes slowly accustomed, but also

in its relationship to history. With the moment figured as a point of reflection where the paths of the past and future intersect, where various narratives overlap and collide like motifs, this process of learning to love describes equally well by which process one might come to love one's fate. The moment of insight, with its excess of knowledge, the overwhelming coalescence of motifs into a monstrous sound, is tragic in that it shatters any sense of stability and demands a critical reorientation toward lived history, itself the form and content of a subjectivity that stakes its identity on a coherent narrative.

To be free of shame before oneself, to love one's fate: this must be expressed through the language of desire – "I want to learn more and more..." – and thereby contain the admission that it is by no means a simple and instantaneous judgment, but rather a gradual process. Fate, after all, is not perfectly analogous to music; whereas the latter becomes a fixed work that can be revisited and may indeed elicit different responses upon each occasion, the former is bound up within the endless process of becoming, constantly changing and posing new challenges not only to understanding, but to taste itself. To be free of shame one day does not preclude the possibility of disgusting oneself the next. That which one loves, one must learn to love, and when that which one loves is ever-changing, one must continually relearn to love with all of its new content, odd qualities, and painful contradictions.

One hears in Nietzsche's various exhortations of fate an echo of Faust's tragic, fate-affirming monologue: "Ja, diesem Sinne bin ich ganz ergeben, / Das ist der Weisheit letzter Schluß: / Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben, / Der täglich sie erobern muß."[9] Implicit in Faust's words is a recognition of his subjugation to history in the

[9]"Yes! to this thought I hold with firm persistence;
The last result of wisdom stamps it true:

moment (*Augenblick*), beholding and beheld; having conquered freedom by graciously accepting his fate, he thereby wins his freedom, sparing himself shame. Neither Faust nor Nietzsche express a particular interest in death, and far less any care about the hereafter. Their primary concern when confronted with history in the moment of tragic insight is their own ability to bear it, their own (dis)taste for themselves in light of all that they have been and done.

In *Affecting Grace*, a study of theatricality and subjectivity, Kenneth Calhoon develops an understanding of the modern subject that, by means of feigned effortlessness (affected grace), bears the weight of history and the scrutinizing gaze of the public without betraying the fear and doubt within that issue from an inescapable sense of guilt. "Grace separates out from the scenario involving, in the extreme, tyrant and supplicant. Distinct from 'mercy,' it becomes the trait of an individual outwardly unencumbered by the ancient breach that left the body an impediment to the soul" (4). In his analysis this manifests both linguistically – in the diegetic speech and pleas of the dramatic figures – and aesthetically – in the dissimulated obliviousness of the living actors before their audience. This theatricality is a symptom and model of modern subjectivity; it reveals "the structural paranoia of the subject, bedevilled by the sense of being secretly observed," which issues from intensified introspection, as "the modern person bears the source of judgment within himself. The performer's crafted innocence of his audience is an *affected grace* – a means of counteracting the visual exposure that is both the state of man and the condition of the theater" (5).

Faust and Zarathustra share a common lineage with the dramatic personages and

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He only earns his freedom and existence,
Who daily conquers them anew." Trans. Bayard Taylor.

gestures at the center of Calhoon's work. Original sin gains a renewed tragic significance for both of them as forbidden knowledge, but not of any specific object; rather, the terror erupting from their tragic insight is what Benjamin pinpoints as the very subjective nature of evil, or, inversely, the evil nature of subjectivity.

> "The Bible introduces evil in the concept of knowledge. The serpent's promise to the first men was to make them 'knowing both good and evil.' But it is said of God after the creation: 'And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.' Knowledge of evil therefore has no object. There is no evil in the world. It arises in man himself, with the desire for knowledge, or rather for judgment" (Benjamin *OGTD* 233).

That "the modern person bears the source of judgment within himself" is the mark of a shift in subjectivity that perceives its own perceptibility. A subjectivity which conceives of its world and self historically, perceiving time and perceived by that time in the ambivalent gateway of the *Augenblick*, both subject and object of the critical gaze, is one in which fate has shed its mythical character and become a narrative – but thereby also psychological – phenomenon, a locus of insight and interpretation. This modern subject, by virtue of its contemplative and self-critical tendencies, confronted by fate with the nebulous web of guilt in which it is always already implicated, longs for grace, "which refers to acts of clemency as well as a state of divine forgiveness" (Calhoon 5). And like the actor who musters up a "crafted innocence" in order to escape the scrutiny of others, the subject seeks to affirm – to justify aesthetically, in Nietzsche's terms – the course of its history, the coalescence of forces that have led to the moment of insight, and endure fate, if not with the semblance of effortlessness, then in the hope that it might find

forgiveness and sublimation of suffering from within.

Emblematic of Nietzsche's embrace of fate and rejection of divine grace is a poem in the rather literally playful *Vorspiel* to *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, "Bei der dritten Häutung," which takes up the lyrical subjectivity of the serpent cursed forever to eat dust upon its expulsion from Eden. Rather than lament his lot, Nietzsche's serpent revels in his judgment and craves the earth that should be his punishment, casting off his sin like old skin, and slithers toward his fate with a "crafted innocence."

Schon krümmt und bricht sich mir die Haut,
Schon giert mit neuem Drange,
So viel sie Erde schon verdaut,
Nach Erd' in mir die Schlange.
Schon kriech' ich zwischen Stein und Gras
Hungrig auf krummer Fährte,
Zu essen Das, was stets ich ass,
Dich, Schlangenkost, dich, Erde! (§8)

Treating his condemnation to the earth as inevitable and necessary, the serpentine poet orients his desire and pleasure toward that fate. Made from dust, he hungers for the loam, seeking in the consumption of his own constitutive elements an absolution akin to the ingestion of Christ's body and blood. But it is an expressly unholy communion, aspiring not to spiritual purification but to the thoroughgoing exaltation of creaturely existence. If forbidden knowledge is the hallmark of the serpent's sinful suggestion, Nietzsche's poetic subject desires nothing more fervently than to stare down the abyss of fate again and again, "to redeem those who are the past and to recreate all 'it was' into 'thus I willed it!"

as Zarathustra declares, "only that would I call redemption" (*TSZ* 110)!

The resolution "to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them" expresses in existential-psychological terms what Calhoon sees in the "crafted innocence" of theatricality and the untainted perfection of the classical object as aesthetic attempts to defend against the otherwise terrible knowledge furnished by fate, the confrontation with history. "Grace, of which the immaculate aspect of porcelain is one expression, is history's antidote" (Calhoon 16). To see history itself, however, as something immaculate, something necessary and therefore beautiful, renders the fateful moment itself vulnerable. Indeed, it reveals the afterlife of God – the "tremendous, gruesome shadow" (*GS* §108) that lingers in the wake of his death – not only in the longing of the human subject to interpret and seek meaning from history and suffering, but in the good faith that this literary or poetic task will produce the desired effects of grace.

This good faith is reminiscent of the "good will to untruth" for which Nietzsche praises artists, but we must remember his admonishment that "poets lie too much" – a reminder that *amor fati* shares with so many other necessary fictions a protean quality that allows for adaptation in the face of new revelations. Recall the inversion of Faust's heavenly ascension in the image of the homunculus who commits himself to Proteus's sea: in his longing for knowledge the titular doctor continually aspires, however devilishly, to pure spirituality, while the homunculus, the disembodied spirit, as if spared the original sin of naturally born man, longs to know voluptuous corporeality. In his formlessness he resembles the affirmative adaptability that Nietzsche wishes to champion with his New Year's resolution: to summon up the strength not only to bear, but to *love* the past, to bring it into himself and maintain the beautiful semblance of a stable

subjectivity that does not shy away from tragic insight, but seizes it as a source of redemptive grace. If the mass of history's material, unleashed as an excess of knowledge in the fateful moment, threatens to poison the subject's spirit, then *amor fati*, as an all-forgiving, all-affirming love of fate, is indeed its antidote.

But if Faust is also a prefiguration of this attitude, then he illustrates just as well the ultimate subjugation of the human being to the march of time – and to tragedy. Against the impossible promises of lying poets ("Alles Vergängliche / Ist nur ein Gleichnis"), the conviction of *amor fati* provides suffering with meaning and a beauty that resist not time, but the fear of what time will bring. Faust's affirmation of fate is most definitive: it is the affirmation itself which overcomes the fear of damnation, but fully aware that it also signifies the fulfillment of his infernal contract with Mephistopheles. Indeed, the whole drama is distilled into a single proposition for Nietzsche:

> *The heaviest weight*. – What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider ad this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!' Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.' If

> this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, 'Do you want this again and innumerable times again?' would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal? (*GS* §341)

With damnation reconfigured as the infinite repetition of life, could one bear to affirm that life as fate, to embrace it and "long for nothing more fervently" than for its endless repetition? This, it would seem, is the conviction of the strongest consitutions, but it also poses an interesting challenge to tragedians and other authors alike. Barring Faust's conciliatory and contrived salvation, Goethe's drama constructs itself around a wager which can only be lost, but can only be lost in a feeling of triumph. This irony – the paradox of the wager meant to stave off damnation, but which, in embracing the inevitability of damnation overcomes and succumbs to it – is not simply a device of the tragedy, but its most centrally formative element. Departing from a realm where fate intervenes mysteriously, it most directly places the responsibility for the drama in ephemeral human hands.

Conclusion

The infinite possibilities for transformation represented by the homunculus mirror the "potent protean force" contained in Nietzsche's thought, most specifically in his modern reconfiguration of tragedy not as the drama itself, but as the repetitive process by which the subject attempts to reconcile the conflicting narratives that constitute its

selfhood. The encounter with fate – as the reckoning of one's experiences in response to the eternal return of memory in the moment – is an expression of affirmative fatalism that transposes tragedy from the realm of drama into the existential-psychological processes of subjectivity and its attempt to find beauty in necessity. Seeking symmetry between the interior and exterior world, the subject is obliterated and reconstructed in the negotiation of opposing or incongruous narratives about itself, hoping to find a unifying narrative that can allow it to bear its continued existence. Whether understood as *Geschichte* or *historia*, both of which imply more or less generally a story of events past, history presents itself to the subject as a force that threatens to destabilize its constitution through the inconvenient confrontation with narratives that do not align with its internal account of itself. The good faith that a stabilizing compromise can be reached – the appeal to grace represented in *amor fati* – is the antidote to its destructive power.

The previous chapter sought to give examples from texts before and after Goethe's *Faust* that similarly illustrated this process and representations of affirmative fatalism. In Faust's final monologue the schema is clear: in recognition of his deeds, Faust gathers before himself the evidence of his wickedness and nobility, embracing the finality of the moment in which he can affirm the content of his life in recognition of his looming fate. The import of this moment for the subsequent course of German literature is of the utmost significance. It highlights in its focus on the subject's inner turmoil, in the reckoning with ambivalence, the central role of narrative itself in the development of affirmative fatalism as an existential comportment extending beyond the fantastical realm of classical tragedy. Because Faust may effectively choose the hour of his damnation, as per his agreement with Mephistopheles, his fate is not thrust upon him as upon the demi-

gods of old, but rather comes when he acknowledges that his love of life necessitates his death, at the moment in which he is ready to be obliterated by asserting his subjectivity. By this token Faust's death prefigures the modern form of fate as a process through which the subject continually reforms its sense of self in the dissolution of a former narrative in favor of a new one that attempts to reconcile the inner and outer conditions of its self-understanding.

While the moment remains the crucial locus for this process, in modernity it is narrative through which these tragic moments might be elucidated and affirmative fatalism expressed. The general movement of the tragic modality from drama to prose discussed by George Steiner in *The Death of Tragedy* and referenced in the prior chapter provides the literary-historical framework for the next chapter's considerations, but the focus now will come to bear upon the aforementioned religious impulse and how its appeal to grace resonated with Hermann Hesse. As an author whose work spoke to a generation disabused by world war and the economic crises of global capitalism, Hesse's writing – especially those pieces concerned more concretely with religion and the fog of nihilism looming over Germany – attempted to reconcile Nietzsche's freshly popular thought with traditional Christian philosophy in order to restore a sense of meaning to the widespread suffering of the early twentieth century. Hesse, who so adored the work of Goethe, was also unapologetically enamored of Nietzsche, as many others of his generation, but felt the need, which here only whispered itself in *amor fati*, to ground that thought in the contemplation of a larger context and its ethos.

CHAPTER IV

HERMANN HESSE'S MYSTICAL CHRISTIANITY

Introduction

In various essays, articles, letters, and stories penned toward and after the end of the First World War, Hermann Hesse, who had already achieved considerable acclaim for his earlier attempts at the *Bildungsroman*, began writing more explicitly and publicly on religion. It was not only Christianity and its interpretations that drew his attention, but also a growing fascination with eastern religions, as well as the changing social and political climate in Germany. One of the most prominent influences upon Hesse and these contemporary discourses was Friedrich Nietzsche, whose seminal work *Also sprach Zarathustra* inspired political groups as disparate as socialists and fascists, and whose declaration of the death of God was met with equal enthusiasm and rancor. One finds throughout Hesse's work, and especially in the period after 1917, many overt references to Nietzsche's thought alongside more or less subtle allusions. The desire to restore a sense of spiritual order and meaning, which took its most horrible form in the rise of German National Socialism, appeared to Hesse during the Weimar Republic as a reaction to a deeply penetrating nihilism which he, perhaps naïvely, saw as an opportunity to reinvent the German spirit through one of its newest, most beloved thinkers. In an essay titled "Die Sehnsucht unserer Zeit nach einer Weltanschauung," published in 1926 in the magazine *Uhu*, Hesse discusses the impulses of Europeans (and especially Germans) to seek out new and seemingly exotic religions and philosophies to combat nihilism. In the final passage, Hesse points to Nietzsche as the key to overcoming this emptiness, and

tellingly connects it to the forbidden knowledge represented by Faust as the quintessentially modern figure representing the embrace of *amor fati*:

> "Mir persönlich, so muß ich bekennen, ist sogar die Geistigkeit der heute führenden Strömungen, von Steiner bis zu Keyserling, noch um einige Grade zu rationell, zu wenig kühn, zu wenig bereit, ins Chaos, in die Unterwelt einzutreten und dort bei Fausts 'Müttern' die ersehnte Geheimlehre vom neuen Menschentum zu erlauschen. Keiner der heutigen Führer, so klug oder so begeistert sie seien, hat den Umfang und die Bedeutsamkeit Nietzsches, dessen wahre Erben zu werden wir noch nicht verstanden haben. Die tausend einander durchkreuzenden Stimmen und Wege unserer Zeit aber zeigen ein wertvolles Gemeinsames: eine gespannte Sehnsucht, einen aus Not geborenen Willen zur Hingabe. Und die sind Vorbedingungen alles Großen" (*MG* 29).[10]

Though the various movements to which Hesse alludes are "too rational" and lacking boldness, they do show "an eager longing, a will to devotion born from necessity." To embark ardently to understand this necessity anew is the beginning to a great project, echoing the New Year's resolution from Nietzsche's *Gay Science* "to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them" (*GS* §276).

These sentiments are indicative of a longer project of Hesse's, namely to bring an engaging but more self-critical reading of Nietzsche into public discourse, primarily

[10] "For my own part, I must confess, the spirituality of the leading movements of today, from Steiner to Keyserling, is still a few degrees too rational, too lacking in daring, too unwilling to descend into chaos, into the wunderworld, and there give ear to Faust's "Mothers" and learnfrom them the longed-for secret doctrine of a new humanity. None of today's leaders, however clever and enthusiastic they may be, has the scope and profundity of Nietzsche, whose true heirs we have not yet shown ourselves capable of being. The thousand conflicting voices and paths of our time have, however, something valuable in common: an eager longing, a will to devotion, born of misery. And these are the prerequisites of everything great." Trans. Denver Lindley.

through his creative writing. Two texts illustrate the earlier, most explicit attempts at this: the short novel of 1919, *Demian*, and a less well-known essay from earlier that year, *Zarathustras Wiederkehr: Ein Wort an die deutsche Jugend von einem Deutschen*, which will serve as the point of departure for the present discussion. In this open letter Hesse takes up the voice of Nietzsche's prophet and addresses the German youth in the wake of the First World War and the failed revolution of 1918, demanding that they reinterpret their fate (*Schicksal*) as Germans and human beings from a Nietzschean standpoint that not insignificantly bears certain marks of Christianity. These marks, however, resemble the sense of grace implicit in *amor fati*, a lingering faith that even Nietzsche's philosophy cannot shake, recognized by Hesse as that "will to devotion born from necessity." This religious impulse underpins the aimless spiritual search of the Weimar era as much as it did Nietzsche's own need to find meaning in fate and suffering, and it functions for Hesse to justify his strange wedding of Nietzschean thought and religious ideas into what he would later term his "mystical Christianity."

While it may seem paradoxical (yet perhaps even therefore fitting) to comingle Nietzsche's thought with religious considerations, Hesse drew much inspiration for his work from the eastern traditions to which he was exposed through his parents' missionary work. One finds little differentiation between the philosophical and religious in Taoism or Buddhism, to name two pertinent examples, where ontological and epistemological concerns are central to questions of divinity, faith, or redemption. Thus it is noteworthy in a study of Hesse's literary engagement with Nietzsche to heed the import of his Japanese contemporary Keiji Nishitani, whose own work on Buddhism was deeply influenced by Nietzsche and a period of study under Martin Heidegger in the 1930s. Although his work

and lectures were not published outside of Japan for many decades thereafter, his insights into the relationship between religion and German philosophy after Nietzsche provide a perspective and vocabulary productive for the examination of Hesse's work.

For Nishitani as well as Hesse, Nietzsche's thought complicated but also enriched the consideration of religious questions in the twentieth century, whether from a Christian or Buddhist standpoint. Indeed, eventually for Hesse there ceased to be any necessity to speak in terms of specific religions as his personal faith became a more philosophical amalgamation of different religious ideas. And although Nishitani utilizes Buddhist and Heideggerian vocabulary, his work deals much more broadly with the question of religion *per se* in the twentieth century, proceeding from the nihilism that provoked Nietzsche to probe at the nature of human subjectivity.

> "Religion poses as a starting point the question: 'For what purpose do I exist?' We become aware of religion as a need, as a must for life, only at the level of life at which everything else loses its necessity and its utility. Why do we exist at all? Is not our very existence and human life ultimately meaningless? Or, if there is a meaning or significance to it all, where do we find it? When we come to doubt the meaning of our existence in this way, when we have become a question to ourselves, the religious quest awakens within us" (Nishitani *RN* 3).

The religious impulse gnaws at the subject when the possibility of its existence comes into question. For Nietzsche, the world could only justify itself as an aesthetic phenomenon, and ultimately all necessity had to become beautiful in order for fate to be bearable. Nishitani eventually articulates this in terms of *karma* and *samsara* – inherited guilt and the wheel of suffering, respectively – to explore the possibility of their beauty.

In a style that would later be developed into the narrative form of *Siddhartha* and which was no doubt inspired by the speeches of the Buddha, Hesse took up the mantle of Zarathustra and wrote his 1919 *Wort an die deutsche Jugend*. In the meditative, undulating tones of this text, the focus on a vacillation between opposite poles laid out in sprawling parataxis, the formal elements reflect the fundamental contradiction at the heart of religious thought during the age of nihilism. Some years later, in the essay *Ein Stückchen Theologie*, he revisited these religious concerns, sketching again his dialectical understanding of joy and suffering as the apparent contradiction which, when reconciled through a gesture like *amor fati*, paves the way for a faith in the subject's ability, by way of affirmative fatalism, to create not only an individual narrative that can stave off nihilism, but also to contribute to the world creatively. Whether or not this gesture be properly tragic is a matter of unique socio-historical conditions, but the pathos of the tragic gesture remains, and for Hesse this lies in the production of texts that provide narrative representations of affirmative fatalism. That is: affirmative fatalism – as the apotheosis of beauty, understood dialectically in the interplay of limitation and possibility, as the unity of self and world in these terms – finds expression in Hesse as the creation of texts that attempt to illustrate the existential and religious task of affirming fate.

Zarathustras Wiederkehr: Risky Reincarnations

"But courage is the best slayer, courage that attacks; it slays even death, for it says: "Was *that* life? Well then! One more time!"

–Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

It was indisputably bold for Hermann Hesse to take up the voice of Zarathustra in the wake of the First World War, but also potentially effective, considering the popularity and renown of Nieztsche's book among civilians and soldiers alike. Between the loss of the war and the collective trauma of failed revolutions, a moment of tragic insight availed itself. Drawing Zarathustra into world history, Hesse acknowledged his specifically German identity while also making the explicit claim that Nietzsche, as a figure who ultimately became an "anti-patriot" and "anti-German," was the "last great" example of the "German spirit."

> "Es gab einmal einen deutschen Geist, einen deutschen Mut, eine deutsche Mannhaftigkeit, welche sich nicht nur in Herdenlärm und Massenbegeisterung äußerte. Der letzte große Geist dieser Art ist Nietzsche gewesen, und er ist, inmitten des damaligen Gründertums und der damaligen Herdengesinnung in Deutschland, zum Anti-Patrioten und Anti-Deutschen geworden. An ihn will mein Ruf erinnern, an seinen Mut, an seine Einsamkeit" (*ZW* 7).[11]

Against the nationalism and "herd mentality" that had come to characterize German culture for Nietzsche and Hesse alike, the Zarathustra resurrected here will speak to a courage not wrapped up in the noise and fervor of the masses, but rather will recall that formerly championed, solitary tragic spirit that confronts fate alone in its darkest hour.

The political intention and impact of this text is obvious enough and well documented, but, like so many of Hesse's works, its treatment by scholarship has been

[11] "There was once a German spirit, a German courage, a German manliness, that did not merely express themselves in the noise of the herd or the rapture of the masses. The last great spirit of this kind was Nietzsche, and it was he, amidst the founding and herd mentality of Germany at that time, who became an anti-patriot and anti-German. I want to recall him, his courage, and his loneliness." My translation.

largely superficial and biographical. It is the general tendency either to deem Hesse's writing unworthy of close reading and literary analysis, or to try to offer broad readings of his entire corpus, as if each text were merely exemplary of a singular, central idea. And although it might be rightly argued that there is indeed such a guiding principle at the heart of Hesse's literary project, it is irresponsible to gloss over entire works without taking their finer composition more seriously. Joseph Mileck, as one example, while a formidable biographer of Hesse, tends on the whole to write literary history around his works rather than more pointed literary criticism of their form and content. In his book *Hermann Hesse: Between the Perils of Politics and the Allure of the Orient*, he once again builds his study around Hesse the man and his feelings, eschewing any detailed engagement with the living works of the poet and artist. About one paragraph is dedicated to *Zarathustras Wiederkehr*, and while the general message of the open letter is succinctly extracted, the analysis is more political and biographical, situating the text in the context of Hesse's life more than in literary history or in Nietzsche's legacy. Mileck writes: "Germans were admonished to put aside all their self-righteous indignation, their hatred and thoughts of revenge, to cease their theatrical worship of heroism, and to counter their adversity with love and a religious acceptance of fate" (24-5).

This brief summation completely overlooks the stylistic developments exemplified in this postwar text, as well as its importance within the history of antinationalist, antifascist interpretations of Nietzsche in the early twentieth century. And while it is obvious that Mileck prefers the broader historical study to the more nuanced literary critique, he is far from alone among Hesse scholars. For the twentieth century and the postmodern hell of our twenty-first century, ever permeated by cynical nihilism and

the lazy irony of a drunk's morning-after haze, the most serious investigation of Hesse's writing must do away with the man and ask about the concepts so flippantly tossed about here: heroism, love, the "religious acceptance of fate."

Hesse's Zarathustra appears in the streets of a German city ravaged by social unrest and the sounds of gunshots, all of which, taken together with the text's explicit reference to the Spartacists, signifies the very specific historical situation of Germany languishing after defeat in the First World War. The deliberate identification of Zarathustra with the German spirit has, of course, its political implications, but in connection with these also illuminates the centrality of the affirmatively tragic worldview for German thought in the early twentieth century. Yet what makes this text especially intriguing is its rhetorical delivery: fashioned into a series of speeches, it mimics the overall form of Zarathustra's addresses in Nietzsche's "book for all and none," but the speeches themselves are less pointedly sardonic or ironic, and rather more meditative and repetitive in the style of the speeches of the Buddha.[12]

Like Nietzsche's teacher of the Eternal Return, Hesse's Zarathustra playfully nettles his audience while also offering up his wisdom in cryptic metaphors and analogies. But infused with the rhetorical tendencies of Buddha's speeches, employing imagery in a rhythmic fashion at once somewhat alien but, in accordance with the "longing of [his] time for a worldview" that inspired so many Germans to look east, also enticing. This Zarathustra attempts to lull his audience into a contemplative trance wherein Hesse's affirmatively fatalistic interpretation of Nietzsche might resonate with the dreams and fears of the Germans, guiding them toward a more self-critical standpoint.

[12]See: *Die Reden Gotamo Buddhos aus der mittleren Sammlung Majjhimanikayo des Pali-Kanons*. Trans. Karl Eugen Neuman. Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1956.

Regardless of the text's political impact in the hindsight of history, the reincarnation of Zarathustra with a decidedly eastern flair reveals an uncanny similarity between Hesse's interpretation of Nietzsche and Nishitani's reading in *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, which would merely be a happy accident if it were not afforded by our view of intellectual history through a Nietzschean lens as one such beautiful necessity that forms the fateful position in which we find ourselves. In both of these writers – one a poet, the other a philosopher – the friendly confrontation of Nietzsche's thought with eastern philosophy produces a new examination of just how long the shadow of the dead God yet looms. Both recognize that the unsolved question for modern nihilism remains a fundamentally religious interrogation of the meaning of existence; that an answer to nihilism, which issued in part from the denial of religion, lies in religious thinking itself.

Whether as resurrection or reincarnation, the return of Zarathustra in Hesse's text plays both rhetorically and historically on the *Gedankenexperiment* of the Eternal Return. Rhetorically in its title and return to certain moments from Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, but historically in the literal return of Zarathustra to Germany for a fresh confrontation with his fate, both as a literary figure and as a German. His rebirth also signifies that of Germany: not like a phoenix from the ashes, but as a worn and weary soldier from the trenches. And like Germany facing its political and military failure, Zarathustra returns to face his failure as a teacher.

> "Was war es doch, das ihr einst, in jenen trunkenen Stunden, von eurem Zarathustra gelernt habt? Was war es doch? War es etwa Weisheit für den Kaufladen, oder für die Gasse, oder für das Schlachtfeld? Gab ich euch Ratschläge für Könige, habe ich königlich, oder bürgerlich, oder politisch, oder

händlerisch zu euch gesprochen? Nein, ihr erinnert euch, ich sprach Zarathustrisch, ich sprach meine Sprache, ich tat mich vor euch auf wie ein Spiegel, damit ihr in ihm euch selbst zu sehen bekämet" (*ZW* 13).[13]

Hesse's Zarathustra rejects any practical dimension of his teaching; he should appear before the Germans "like a mirror" so that they might glimpse their reflection in him. But he is himself the reflection. His melancholic introspection insists on that historically defined German quality *par excellence*, the mode of *Trauerspiel*, the aesthetic appeal of which Walter Benjamin treated as a mandate of its public.[14] As a mirror, this Zarathustra reveals nothing new, but rather takes on a temporally relevant and identifiable form in order to fulfill the role played previously by tragic drama. In him a quintessentially German trait is discernible: the propensity for a profound, potentially self-destructive inwardness.

This moment in Hesse's text reenacts the beginning of the second book of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, "The Child with the Mirror." After wandering the land and giving speeches, Zarathustra has again retired to his mountain hermitage, where for years he seems to hibernate, until he shoots up from a dream that fills him with foreboding.

"What frightened me so in my dream that it waked me? Did not a child approach me carrying a mirror?

'Oh, Zarathustra' – spoke the child to me – 'look at yourself in the mirror!'

But when I looking into the mirror I cried out, and my heart was shaken; for I did

[13] "What was it then, in those drunken hours then, that you learned from your Zarathustra? What was it? Was it some kind of wisdom for the shop, for the alley, for the battlefield? Did I give you advice for kings, did I speak in a regal, bourgeois, political, or mercantile manner? No, you remember, I spoke Zarathustrian, I spoke my language, I placed myself before you like a mirror, that you might come to see yourselves." My translation.

[14] "For [*Trauerspiele*] are not so much plays which cause mourning, as plays through which mournfulness finds satisfaction: plays for the mournful" (Benjamin *OGTD* 119).

not see myself there, but a devil's grimace and scornful laughter.

Indeed, all too well I understand the dream's sign and warning: my *teaching* is in danger, weeds want to be wheat!

My enemies have become powerful and have distorted the image of my teaching, so that those dearest to me must be ashamed of the gifts I gave them" (*TSZ* 63).

Similarly possessed of a fear that his teaching has been mangled and mistreated, Hesse's Zararthustra is compelled to return to Germany and save his teaching from those who might misrepresent it and abuse its influence. But it is also that protean quality of Nietzsche's writing in general, its parabolic nature, that affords it such interpretive elasticity. Should Zarathustra thus be surprised by the hideous grimace in the mirror?

As both mirror and reflection, Hesse's Zarathustra seeks to show the Germans what has become of them, but he also contains and represents their potential. For it is part and parcel of his dictum *amor fati* that the ugliness of the past be embraced as necessity and transformed into beauty. In this historical moment not only Zarathustra returns, but the past deeds and beliefs of his German public, returning eternally as is their wont in the psychological time of memory, re-presence themselves for thorough scrutiny. This fresh view of themselves, augmented by the influence of eastern religions, might allow for a simultaneous rebirth and redemption; seen through the lens of *amor fati*, the burden of the folly and trauma of the past may be taken up gracefully in the creation of a new narrative.

"Vom Steine stäuben Stücke": God, Fate, and the Self

"Now my hammer rages cruelly against its prison. Shards shower from the stone: what do I care?"

–Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

"Vom Stein könnet ihr lernen, was Härte ist, und vom Vogel, was Singen ist. Von mir aber könnet ihr lernen, was Mensch und Schicksal ist" (*ZW* 14).[15] Thus Hesse's Zarathustra closes his introduction and moves into the first of his speeches, "Vom Schicksal." The centrality of *amor fati* for Hesse's text is immediately recognizable, although he does not employ the Latin dictum; instead, the specifically religious bent of Hesse's thought is fundamentally tied to the concept of fate from the outset: "Eines ist dem Menschen gegeben, das ihn zum Gotte macht, das ihn erinnert, daß er Gott ist: das Schicksal zu erkennen" (15).[16] The suggested equivalence of the human being and God smacks of a Nietzschean blasphemy – specifically, it recalls the section of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* following "The Child with the Mirror": "On the Blessed Isles." Here Zarathustra reasserts his dedication to teaching the *Übermensch* and challenges the very notion of God, most notably in that polemical allusion to the end of Goethe's *Faust* with which the previous chapter occupied itself.

In Nietzsche's text Zarathustra has returned after his terrible dream to continue his teaching, and he declares:

[15] "From the stone you can learn what hardness is, and from the bird, what singing is. From me, however, you can learn what the human is and fate." My translation.
[16] "One thing is given to the human that makes him God, that reminds him that he is God: to recognize fate." My translation.

"Once people said God when they gazed upon distant seas; now I have taught you to say: overman.

God is a conjecture, but I want that your conjecturing not reach further than your creating will.

Could you *create* a god? – Then be silent about any gods! But you could well create the overman.

Not you yourselves perhaps, my brothers! But you could recreate yourselves into fathers and forefathers of the overman: and this shall be your best creating" (*TSZ* 65)!

The disavowal of any gods is paired with a hope for the future; the human being is still "a rope fastened between animal and overman" (7), but therein is contained the possibility for a future being that might overcome the human. But the probability of the realization of this superior human is not important. Rather, the charged conviction that the human being might strive to perfect itself is the crux of Nietzsche's argument. Rather than conjecture about gods over and beyond the world, Zarathustra "gaze[s] upon distant seas" and imagines the manifold possibilities for the human being, like the homunculus in Goethe's *Faust* who ventures into the ocean to explore its corporeal possibilities. And this desire has lost no traction in Hesse's time: it is the same "will to devotion born from necessity" that Hesse senses in his contemporaries in "the longing of [his] time for a worldview."

"Could you *think* a God? – But let this mean will to truth to you; that everything be transformed into what is humanly thinkable, humanly visible, humanly feelable! You should think your own senses to their conclusion" (Nietzsche *TSZ* 65). While Nietzsche's

Zarathustra rejects the thought of God with these sentiments, Hesse's Zarathustra collapses the notion of God into the schema for a more refined and self-possessed humanity. After all, with God's shadow looming, is it possible *not* to think a God? Does the monstrous idea not haunt all human striving? "Es irrt der Mensch, solang' er strebt," says God in the opening of Goethe's *Faust* (18) – and among these follies is God himself, woven into the very fabric of thought in the nebulous form of abstract ideas, which take on a superhuman existence of their own.

> Hesse unifies this conjecture, abstraction, and imaginative thinking in his text: "Lernet, daß Schicksal nicht von Götzen kommt, so werdet ihr auch endlich lernen, daß es keine Götzen und Götter gibt! Wie im Leibe eines Weibes das Kind, so wächst Schicksal in eines jeden Menschen Leib, oder wenn ihr wollt, könnt ihr auch sagen: in seinem Geist oder in seiner Seele. Es ist dasselbe.
>
> Und wie das Weib eins ist mit seinem Kinde und sein Kind liebt und nichts Besseres in der Welt kennt als sein Kind – so solltet ihr euer Schicksal lieben lernen und nichts Besseres auf der Welt kennen als euer Schicksal. Es soll euer Gott sein, denn ihr selbst sollt eure Götter sein" (*ZW* 15).[17]

To recognize fate allows the human being to become its own god, and the body or spirit or soul, which are here quickly reduced to a singular entity, is the incubator of fate. As something "humanly thinkable, humanly visible, humanly feelable," fate, the coalescence of narratives within the subject, has its home in lived experience, drawing its

[17] "Learn that fate does not come from idols, thus will you learn that idols or gods do not exist! Like the child in the woman's body, so does fate grow in every human body, or if you like, you can just as well say: in his spirit or in his soul. It is the same. And as the woman is one with the child and loves and knows nothing better than her child – so shall you learn to love your fate and know nothing better in the world than your fate. It shall be your god, for you shall be your own gods." My translation.

identification with God into the development of a human being possessed of its own creativity. It recalls the sentiment against which Benjamin lashes out, the idea that "man's existence" is "the eternal subject of its own creations instead of recognizing him as its own creator," where "all sane reflection is at an end" (*OGTD* 103). But only as creator and creation can the human subject possibly take hold of its fate and not succumb to passive fatalism. And what sanity is to be expected of the author of *Der Steppenwolf*? The aesthetic justification of existence that pulses through Nietzsche's thought is a central concern for Hesse elsewhere, but especially here, where he demands of the Germans an honest confrontation with their fate and all that they have wrought. If their political and military endeavors proved fruitless, could their own sense of self and people not perhaps be somehow redeemed in a new, at least aesthetically satisfying narrative?

It is therefore not a question of sanity, but rather a question of meaning, and the self, configured as God and fate, then becomes the locus and focus of the problem. In the moment of its confrontation with itself, the past must be assessed and, in Nietzschean fashion, affirmed, some narrative or part of the self sacrificed in tragic fashion, so that a future might be possible, either for this active subject or thereafter. This is the decidedly affirmative fatalist quality of such a vein of German thought: it resists the beckon call of the abyss, though it longs to sing its song. Thus Hesse's Zarathustra teaches that fate cannot be changed, but must be recognized and embraced as part of the self.

> "Wer das Schicksal erkannt hat, der will niemals Schicksal ändern. Schicksal ändern wollen, das ist so recht ein Kinderbemühen, wobei man einander in die Haare gerät und einander totschlägt. Schicksal ändern *wollen*, das war das Tun und Bemühen eurer Kaiser und Feldherren, es war euer eigenes Bemühen. Nun

ihr das Schicksal nicht habt ändern können, schmeckt es bitter, und ihr meint, es sei Gift. Hättet ihr es nicht ändern wollen, hättet ihr es zu eurem Kind und Herzen, hättet ihr es ganz und gar zu euch selbst gemacht – wie süß würde es alsdann schmecken! Erlittenes, fremd gebliebenes Schicksal ist jeder Schmerz, ist jedes Gift, ist der Tod. Jede Tat aber und jedes Gute und Frohe und Zeugende auf Erden ist erlebtes Schicksal, ist zu Ich gewordenes Schicksal" (Hesse *ZW* 16).[18]

The desire to change one's fate is a childish endeavor; it fails to recognize that the self is constituted of its successes and failures alike, that time rolls forward without pause or care for disappointment. Two faces (*Gesichter*) of fate appear here: one that attacks the subject from without and the other that is experienced from within. The potential contained in the moment of recognition hinges on an ambivalence reminiscent of Zarathustra's encounter with time in Nietzsche's book. The possibility of the eternal return, as proposed in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* in "The Heaviest Weight," makes one the subject of fate, replete with its own ambiguities, capable at once of passive subjugation to the wheel of time but also of active agency, taking up the past as beautiful necessity and the formative substance of subjectivity.

Hesse's own emphasis on becoming and the recognition of the ever-changing shape of fate follows from Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, where the rejection of God goes hand in hand with his allusion to and criticism of Faust's redemption at the end of Goethe's tragedy.

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[18] "Whosoever has recognized fate never wants to change fate. To want to change fate, that is a childish endeavor, like grabbing another by the hair and beating him. To *want* to change fate, that was the endeavor of your Kaiser and commanders, it was your own endeavor. Now that you could not change fate, it tastes bitter, and you think it is poison. Had you not wanted to change it, had you made it your child and heart, made it fully and completely part of yourself – how sweet would taste now! Fate that is suffered and remains alien is every pain, every poison, every death. But every deed and every good and every joy and generative thing on earth is lived (experienced) fate, is fate that has become I (ego)." My translation.

> "All that is everlasting – that is merely a parable! And the poets lie too much. But the best parables should speak about time and becoming: they should be praise and justification of all that is not everlasting!
>
> Creating – that is the great redemption from suffering, and life's becoming light. But in order for the creator to be, suffering is needed and much transformation. Indeed, much bitter dying must be in your life, you creators! Therefore you are advocates and justifiers of all that is not everlasting" (*TSZ* 66).

Poetry and parables serve "the good will to untruth" that Nietzsche praises in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (*GS* 104), the desire to make the world beautiful and palatable in spite of the meaningless pain suffered in life. In the absence of divine providence, the human subject must become the creator of a narrative into which the events of the past may be incorporated and bestowed with a meaning that justifies lived experience, if only aesthetically. Faust's knowledge and creative spirit, the focus of his entire existence and striving – the content of his life and becoming – are effectively nullified in his conciliatory redemption. But for Nietzsche the work of art (or literature) ought to redeem that knowledge and creativity. In creating a new narrative, one consecrates pain, failure, and loss.

Similarly, when Hesse's Zarathustra speaks "vom Leiden und vom Tun," he insists on the necessity of suffering and its embrace as part of the complete experience interpreted as fate. It is here that the more specifically Buddhist aspects of Hesse's worldview emerge. His Zarathustra outlines the nature of life as suffering, but a productive suffering, a series of processes into which the human subject is born and over which it has no control. This suffering is at one with all activity, and its inevitably

negative aspects should be considered from the standpoint of fate where all that has come to pass presents itself as beautiful, edifying necessity.

> "Tun und Leiden, welche zusammen unser Leben ausmachen, sind ein Ganzes, sind eines. Das Kind leidet, daß es erzeugt wird, es leidet seine Geburt, es leidet seine Entwöhnung, es leidet hier und leidet dort, bis es zuletzt den Tod erleidet. Alles Gute aber, was an ihm ist und wofür es gelobt oder geliebt wird, ist nur das gute Leiden, das richtige, volle, lebendige Leiden. Gut zu leiden wissen, ist mehr als halb gelebt. Gut zu leiden wissen, ist ganz gelebt! Geborenwerden ist Leiden, Wachstum ist Leiden, Same leidet Erde, Wurzel leidet Regen, Knospe leidet Sprengung.
>
> So, meine Freunde, leidet der Mensch Schicksal. Schicksal ist Erde, ist Regen, ist Wachstum. Schicksal tut weh" (*ZW* 21).[19]

The rhythmic, repetitive composition of passages like this provide a taste of the style later employed in *Siddhartha*, possessed of a cadence that rolls like the wheel of time (or *samsara*), rising and falling as they illustrate the stages of life: "Same leidet Erde, Wurzel leidet Regen, Knospe leidet Sprengung." No wonder that this representation, which is so reminiscent of the Buddha's speeches, resonates with Keiji Nishitani's interpretation of Nietzsche's *amor fati*. The unfolding of fate seen from the perspective of the becoming subject charges all suffering and activity with the possibility of meaning; where the creative subject has this affirmative view of the past, which asserts itself unremittingly in

[19] "Doing and suffering, which together make up our lives, are a whole, are one. The child suffers in that it is begotten, it suffers its birth, it suffers weaning, it suffers here and there until it finally suffers death. But everything good about it and for which it is praised or loved, that is the good suffering, the proper, full, living suffering. To know how to suffer well is better than half-living. To know how to suffer well is living completely! Birth is suffering, growth is suffering, seed suffers earth, root suffers rain, bud suffers blooming.
"So, my friends, does the human suffer fate. Fate is earth, is rain, is growth. Fate hurts." My translation.

memory with the potential of its eternal return, it may transform the historical material furnished by experience into part of an active narrative process that endows blind chance with significance.

> "In the absence of both divine Providence and fatalism in the ordinary sense, occurrences assume the character of utter chance. Every action of the self in this context is influenced by all things and in turn influences all things. All things become the fate of the self, and the self becomes the fate of all things. At such a fundamental level the world moves at one with the self, and the self moves at one with the world. This idea is close to the Buddhist idea of *karma*, although in Nietzsche the standpoint of self as fate is a fundamentally creative one. ... In the midst of the world of becoming the self turns the world and its 'necessity' into its own will and affirms it; it affirms the world and its chance nature as necessity from out of creative will to power. Nietzsche characterizes the standpoint of *amor fati* as 'attaining height by a bird's eye view in observation' [*WP* 1004]. He explains this by saying that there 'one understands how everything actually goes *as it should go*: how every kind of "imperfection" and the suffering due to it belong together in the *highest* desirability.' To say 'yes' in this sense (*Ja-sagen*) is precisely *amor fati*; and this means that 'self = *fate*'" (Nishitani *SN* 50).

The "chance nature" of the world is the infinite and unpredictable possibility for pleasure as well as suffering, the necessity of the past from the standpoint of the present, the singular temporal position to which the subject has access. But to take hold of this vision from "a bird's eye view," like Faust gazing out upon his dominion from the heights, gathering knowledge of the past into a massive image or narrative – from here every

singular chance event plays out on the stage of history and fulfills its role by virtue of simply being as it is.

The description resounds as well with Benjamin's characterization of fate discussed in the previous chapter as "the entelechy of events within the field of guilt," where a certain view perceives the convergence of coincidences as the charged forces of fate, which "unleashes causality as the instrument of the irresistibly unfolding fatalities" (*OGTD* 129). History, be it personal or communal, constitutes the "field of guilt" in which each subject must craft an edifying narrative out of the terrible knowledge afforded by fate. This knowledge sees beyond the appearance of individual causes and effects into the impossible and meaningless expanse of universal contingency, where causality has no purpose save to assert its own infinite potential. To conceive of oneself as part of this world is to recognize, on the one hand, one's absolute impotence in the face of nature's indifference and, on the other hand, that the incidental and random character of the world affords it justification only insofar as it accords with the subject, involuntarily born into and subjugated to its cruelty.

That the world might accord with the subject, that the past, filled perhaps with pain and ugliness, might become beautiful as necessity, requires a comportment toward time and events in which these collapse into subjectivity itself and no longer maintain the semblance of external forces, but rather become the raw material from which the subject crafts itself. Nietzsche's Zarathustra extolls the joy and sense of liberty made possible by the embrace of fate:

> "Indeed, through a hundred souls I went my way and through a hundred cradles and pangs of birth. Many a farewell have I taken already; I know the

heartbreaking final hours.

But thus my creating will wills it, my destiny. Or, to tell it more honestly to you: just such a destiny – my will wills.

Everything that feels, suffers in me and is in prison; but my will always comes to me as my liberator and bringer of joy.

Willing liberates: that is the true teaching of will and liberty – thus Zarathustra teaches it" (*TSZ* 66).

The prominent metaphor of continuous rebirth, as though anticipating *Zarathustras Wiederkehr*, alludes to the recurring need to reinterpret one's fate, to be reborn again and again in life as the shape of fate changes within the view of the subject. And here fate is again transfigured from a force outside the subject into the ardent desire of the will, the goal and result of willing itself. This active, creative desire to reshape oneself and the narrative provided by fate Nishitani describes when he says that the self "affirms the world and its chance nature as necessity from out of creative will to power" (*SN* 50).

But it is on this point that Hesse's and Nietzsche's Zarathustras shall diverge: for Nietzsche the creative will displaces God and removes him from the realm of possibility, while for Hesse the creative will is precisely what makes God a possibility, but as an intrinsic aspect of the human being.

"Away from God and gods this will lured me; what would there be to create, after all, if there were gods?

But I am always driven anew to human beings by my ardent will to create; thus the hammer is driven toward the stone.

Oh you human beings, in the stone sleeps an image, the image of my images! A

shame it must sleep in the hardest, ugliest stone!

Now my hammer rages cruelly against its prison. Shards shower from the stone: what do I care?

I want to perfect it, for a shadow came to me – the stillest and lightest of all things once came to me!

The overman's beauty came to me as a shadow. Oh, my brothers! Of what concern to me anymore – are gods! –" (*TSZ* 67).

The gods of which Zarathustra speaks may be quite literal, metaphysical beings whose existence he denies by virtue of his own creative power. To overcome nihilism requires a thorough rejection of all that offends becoming, existence, and life, which included the various promises of religion and otherworldly conjectures. Gods are relegated to the realm of fantasy, but lacking the empowering force of the beautiful lies provided by art, and the human being itself becomes the object of the creative will and transformation. Nietzsche evokes the suffering likewise required for a meaningful confrontation with and interpretation of fate in his alliterative language: "vom Steine stäuben Stücke: was schiert mich das?" As "shards shower from the stone," an old ugliness is slowly carved away to reveal an ever more beautiful image sleeping within; the sedimented past, formless and full of distortions, is shaped into a coherent narrative. And what is the self, that "ball of wild snakes," but a momentarily articulable narrative?

Yet there is an important irony in these lines that speaks to Nietzsche's tragic religiosity and its seemingly uncharacteristic relevance for Hesse's religious thinking. While chiseling away at the stone and sending shards flying off, Zarathustra shrugs, "Was schiert mich das?" The indeterminate referent of this "das" doubles the ambivalence

already implicit in the expression's more immediate rhetorical gesture. "Was schiert micht das?" "What do I care?" But more literally: "How does that cut me?" The nonchalance with which Zarathustra carves away at the stone suggests a degree of comfort with a practice of affirmation, but the rhetorical denial of the possible dangers of the process reveals a lurking, nameless uncertainty that threatens the subject in such a tightly wound, circular relation. That one might carve oneself out of oneself – one cuts and is cut, chisels and is chiseled – admits that a certain amount of suffering is produced by the affirmation of fate itself and not only in the historical material confronted in the fateful moment.

Likewise, there is an ambivalence opened up by this creative power, which nullifies the influence or existence of the gods. "The overman's beauty came to me as a shadow," Zarathustra says, recalling the image of God's lingering shadow in the wake of his death, then scoffing ironically once again, "Of what concern to me anymore – are gods!–" For here a rhetorically trivialized uncertainty asserts itself in the problematic similarity of the *Übermensch* to God: each looms, abstract, a conjecture tainted by impossibility. But this is precisely where the faith and appeal to grace implicit in Nietzsche's various formulations come to the fore in Hesse's interpretation. While Nietzsche draws a distinction between the metaphysical absurdity of God and the material possibility of a future humanity or superhumanity, Hesse insists from the outset on the metaphoricity of God, which is also the mark of his reality. The line of thought passed down from Nietzsche that acknowledges the illusory nature of all knowledge provides even linguistic perception with the possibility of truth, should even its absolute intention be toward untruth. God as metaphor – as linguistic and ideal expression, an extension of subjectivity, a product of the only means of discerning impossible truth –

thereby enters into truth. It is in the creative power, the possibility of imagining such a God or gods, where the divine dwells, as both the imagination which dreams up divinity and the thought of divinity itself. In this way, God is also delivered into insanity: recalling Benjamin's comment that "to see man's existence as the eternal subject of its own creations instead of recognizing him as its own creator, then all sane reflection is at an end," one finds God in this same paradox.

Hesse's Zarathustra formulates the ultimate task for the young Germans thus: "Eure Zukunft ist nicht dies oder das, ist nicht Geld oder Macht, ist nicht Weisheit oder Gewerbeglück – eure Zukunft und euer schwerer, gefährlicher Weg ist dieser: reif zu werden und Gott in euch selbst zu finden" (Hesse *ZW* 40).[20] The maturity and ripeness to which the young, sorrowful Germans should aspire echoes Zarathustra's "On the Blessed Isles" when he says, "The figs fall from the trees, they are good and sweet; and as they fall, their red skin ruptures. I am a north wind to ripe figs" (Nietzsche *TSZ* 65). The wind has returned to Germany, but the figs are not ready to fall. First a narrative reformulation is required, which must issue from a confrontation with and affirmation of fate. To this end Hesse's Zarathustra encourages the Germans to disregard the inflammatory and unproductive rhetoric of political extremism, and especially the calls for revenge against the foes of the fatherland. Rather than listen to these resentful and misguided voices, he implores the Germans: "Höret auf die Stimme, die aus euch selber kommt! Wenn sie schweigt, diese Stimme, so wisset, daß etwas schief steht, daß etwas nicht in Ordnung ist, daß ihr auf dem falschen Wege seid. Singt und spricht er aber, euer Vogel – oh, dann folget ihm, folget ihm in jede Lockung und noch in die fernste und kälteste Einsamkeit

[20] "Your future is not this or that, not money or power, not wisdom or business success – your future and your difficult, dangerous path is this: to become ripe in to find God in yourselves." My translation.

und in das dunkelste Schicksal hinein" (*ZW* 41)![21]

The tragic pathos of affirmative fatalism pulses through Hesse's text through to the final call to follow the voice within "into the farthest, coldest solitude and the darkest fate." It is the orientation that is "bereit, ins Chaos, in die Unterwelt einzutreten und dort bei Fausts 'Müttern' die ersehnte Geheimlehre vom neuen Menschentum zu erlauschen," which Hesse explicitly ascribed to Nietzsche (Hesse *MG* 29). Yet it is also Faust's descent into that "underworld," aided by Mephistopheles, that separates him so thoroughly from God, which for Nietzsche was the sign of Faust's strength in the face of a nihilistic religious sensibility that effectively worshipped death, but which for Hesse – and here the true core of his religious thought emerges – reveals in dialectical fashion the manifold possible paths to God and the overcoming of nihilism.

Unity and Devotion

"Denn einzig darin besteht für mich das Leben, im Fluktuieren zwischen zwei Polen, im Hin und Her zwischen den beiden Grundpfeilern der Welt."[22]

–Hermann Hesse, "Über die Einheit"

Hesse's characterizations of God and divinity appear across his corpus in variegated form, but the unifying quality among them is precisely unity. In *Zarathustras Wiederkehr* the idea of God is at one with an affirmed fate as a potentiality within the

[21] "Heed the voice that comes from within you! When it is silent, this voice, know then that something is not right, that something it out of place, that you are on the wrong path. But if your bird sings and speaks – oh, then follow him, follow his every call and into the farthest and deepest solitude and into the darkest fate!" My translation.

[22] "For me life consists only of this: the fluctuating between two poles, the to and fro between the basic pillars of the world." My translation.

subject: it is to be found where necessity is recast as beauty, where conflicting narratives of the self are aligned through an articulation that owns the past and chisels from it a fresh image. Thus the subject might draw the exterior forces that make up certain aspects of its fate into itself, as they are spatially and temporally, sociologically and psychologically, inseparable from its development. The affirmation signifies a unity of subject and world, paving the way to a recognition of creative power as the divine in the human being.

Hesse begins his notes "Über die Einheit" (1923-6) with a profession of faith that recalls the schema put forward years prior in *Zarathustras Wiederkehr*: “Ich glaube an nichts in der Welt so tief, keine andere Vorstellung ist mir so heilig wie die der Einheit, die Vorstellung, daß das Ganze der Welt eine göttliche Einheit ist und daß alles Leiden, alles Böse nur darin besteht, daß wir einzelne uns nicht mehr als unlösbare Teile des Ganzen empfinden, daß das Ich sich zu wichtig nimmt" (*MG* 20).[23] Unity is itself divine, and suffering issues forth when individuals place undue emphasis on themselves. The formulation is not unlike Benjamin's characterization of original sin as knowledge itself, in that this introduced negativity and differentiation into the world, the prerequisites for the individuation of the subject.[24]

But Hesse's formulation differs from Benjamin's in that it does not assume a fall: instead, the original sin of knowledge and individuation is inseparable from humanity's innermost nature, at one with a dialectical view of the world. Indeed, the divine unity of

[23] "I believe in nothing in the world so deeply, no other idea is as holy to me as that of unity, the idea that the entire world is a divine unity, and that all suffering, all evil exists only because we individuals no longer feel ourselves to be insoluble parts of the whole, because the I (ego) takes itself too seriously." My translation.

[24] See chapter two, "Nietzsche's Tragic Religiosity," and Benjamin's discussion of the devil and original sin in *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*.

which Hesse sings the praises is a synthesis of individuation and its total erasure. It is that "the I takes itself too seriously," not that it exists at all, to which he attributes suffering and wickedness.

> "Denn einzig darin besteht für mich das Leben, im Fluktuieren zwischen zwei Polen, im Hin und Her zwischen den beiden Grundpfeilern der Welt. Beständig möchte ich mit Entzücken auf die selige Buntheit der Welt hinweisen und ebenso beständig daran erinnern, daß dieser Buntheit eine Einheit zugrunde liegt; beständig möchte ich zeigen, daß Schön und Häßlich, Hell und Dunkel, Sünde und Heiligkeit immer nur für einen Moment Gegensätze sind, daß sie immerzu ineinander übergehen" (Hesse *MG* 21).[25]

It is Mephistopheles who calls himself "ein Teil von jener Kraft, / Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft" (Goethe 47), and although the intention of the utterance may have more direct or literal Christian implications – that whatever evil the Devil seeks to do must always work out as part of God's plan – the sentiment, especially in light of the appeal to grace which lingers in Nieztsche's thought,[26] may extend to Hesse's understanding of divine unity here: that whatever one might suffer, it is part and parcel of a fate that, sincerely affirmed, can become meaningful and productive, even if only within the subject's imagination. It is not that ugliness or obstacles impede life's happiness, but that they are indispensable elements of its greater scheme, necessary to the development of the subject and its sense of integrity. Like a tree that grows weak without

[25] "For me life consists only of this: the fluctuating between two poles, the to and fro between the basic pillars of the world. With pleasure I like constantly to point to the colorfulness of the world and recall that a unity underlies this colorfulness; constantly I would like to show that beautiful and ugly, light an dark, sin and holiness are only opposites for a moment, that they always flow into one another." My translation.
[26] See chapter two, "Nietzsche's Tragic Religiosity."

the rustling wind to teach it strength, the subject gains sight of its potentialities and limits through pain and joy, thus coming to terms with itself as fate.

Awareness of this process, it seemed to Hesse, was lacking in his time, and he struggled himself with the exploration or further public discussion of religious questions. He continues to explain later in the notes "Über die Einheit" that he maintains a great respect for the teachings of Jesus as detailed in the Bible, but that this text full of wisdom is prostituted ("daß diese höchste Weisheit auf allen Gassen feilgeboten wird") beside national vanity and a militaristic obsession with authority, even in churches (*MG* 21). On the one hand, he ponders whether such holy texts should be so readily available for all to read and (mis)interpret, whether one ought to devote years of study and contemplation to them before one can speak to their wisdom (22). "Wenn dem so ist (und ich glaube an manchen Tagen, daß es so ist), dann tut der letzte Unterhaltungsschriftsteller Besseres und Richtigeres als der, der sich um den Ausdruck für das Ewige bemüht" (22).[27] Despite this essentially anti-Lutheran, anti-democratic sentiment, he maintains on the other hand that his task remains to provide a reading public with narratives and observations that inspire such contemplation:

> "Dies ist mein Dilemma und Problem. Es läßt sich viel darüber sagen, lösen aber läßt es sich nicht. Die beiden Pole des Lebens zueinander zu biegen, die Zweistimmigkeit der Lebensmelodie niederzuschreiben, wird mir nie gelingen. Dennoch werde ich dem dunklen Befehl in meinem Innern folgen und werde wieder und wieder den Versuch unternehmen müssen. Dies ist die Feder, die mein

[27] "If this is the case (and some days I believe that it is), then the last entertainment writer accomplishes something better and more just than one who strives to find an expression for the eternal." My translation.

Ührlein treibt" (22).[28]

Hesse's words are indicative of his own affirmative fatalism, and one that orients itself toward the expression of affirmative fatalism itself at that. They express on the one hand a quiet hopelessness in the face of the seeming futility of writing about spirituality, but they illustrate on the other hand an affirmative orientation toward his fate as one who will keep trying despite all apparent futility, as one for whom fate is neither fixed nor far off, but rather the active process of living in which he is engaged. It is out of the continued confrontation and reckoning with one's fate, after all, that a reinvigorated sense of self and creative possibilities emerge, and thereby one comes into contact with the divinity that dwells in the human being. For Hesse, the most apt engagement with this creative, redemptive force is in writing itself.

"Die Einheit, die ich hier hinter der Vielheit verehre, ist keine langweilige, keine graue, gedankliche, theoretische Einheit. Sie ist ja das Leben selbst, voll Spiel, voll Scherz, voll Gelächter" (Hesse *MG* 21).[29] The image of "fluctuating between two poles" with which Hesse characterizes life is indicative of the dynamism discussed above, and that dynamism implies for Hesse as well as Nishitani a sense of play that recalls Nietzsche's repeated emphasis on the symbolic image of the child. The innocence of the child, the earnestness with which it plays, is an ideal, final stage of psychological development in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, as one overcomes both the mindless affirmation and mindless negation of exterior forces and comes to a place of free, creative

[28] "This is then my dilemma and problem. There is plenty more to say about it, but no way to solve it. I will never succeed at bending the two poles of life toward one another, writing down both voices of the melody of life. Even so, I will follow the dark command from within me and will have to take up the attempt again and again. This is the mainspring that drives my little clock." My translation.

[29] "The unity behind multiplicity that I honor is not a boring, ray, conceptual, theoretical unity. It is indeed life itself, full of play, full of jest, full of laughter." My translation.

affirmation, where the will and the necessity of the world are unified in a dynamic sense of fate. Nishitani interprets Nietzsche similarly:

> "The world of flux, of impermanence, comes to be seen as the activity of bottomless will, an activity without any transcendent meaning or purpose; it becomes the play (*Spiel*) of bottomless will in the joy (*Lust*) of life which is absolute affirmation. That all things are ceaselessly changing and passing away is a source of suffering and grief; yet this suffering and its source can, just as they are, be transformed into joy" (Nishitani *SN* 54).

Bearing in mind that *Lust* means both joy and desire, the absolute affirmation of life takes place where a subject is able to declare, as though to the demon that poses the *Gedankenexperiment* of the Eternal Return, that the necessity of the world is at one with its most fervent desire. These formulations are also of a kind with the ultimate scenes in Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, published just a few years after these notes on religion, wherein Harry Haller is sentenced to be laughed at by the immortal spirits that he reveres. Humiliated but alive, Harry is forced to consider the possibility that perhaps he takes himself far too seriously, that much of his suffering might be sublimated if only he could learn to laugh at himself: "Einmal würde ich das Figurenspiel besser spielen. Einmal würde ich das Lachen lernen" (Hesse *Steppenwolf* 237).[30] In Harry's final assessment reverberate those words from Hesse's earlier notes, "that the I takes itself too seriously."

And yet the I is something quite serious indeed, else it would not merit so much discussion. But that the discussion centers itself on the repeated conviction that it is not so serious points to an irony which is not only performative, but inextricably wrapped up

[30] "One day I would learn to play the figure game better. One day I would learn to laugh." My translation.

in the fundamental questions of religion. Nishitani poses as religion's first question: "For what purpose do I exist?" The goal of religious inquiry thus presents itself simultaneously as the creation of meaning for this despairing I while also teaching it not to take itself too seriously; that where the world and the subject can unify their narratives in an affirmed fate, the I will at once be the source of all meaning, as this is determined only perspectivally, and recognize its relative (in)significance in the *Schuldzusammenhang* in which it tarries. The seriousness then dwells in the I itself, in the subject for whom the question of meaning dictates and directs action: to determine what is meaningful and fulfilling in life is to chart a path toward the further creation of meaning and discovery of fulfillment in activity.

Two essays penned by Hesse about a decade later, "Mein Glaube" (1931) and "Ein Stückchen Theologie" (1932), reflect well on the earlier notes and narratives work, also providing insight into his final novel, *Das Glasperlenspiel*. In the first Hesse outlines his "mystical Christianity" as the confluence of different philosophical and religious ideas that remain rooted in his Christian upbringing and idea of God but which seem to reject the broader tendency toward literalism. The dominant idea remains that of unity:

> "In meinem religiösen Leben spielt also das Christentum zwar nicht die einzige, aber doch eine beherrschende Rolle, mehr ein mystisches Christentum als ein kirchliches, und es lebt nicht ohne Konflikte, aber doch ohne Krieg neben einer mehr indisch-asiatisch gefärbten Gläubigkeit, deren einziges Dogma der Gedanke der Einheit ist. Ich habe nie ohne Religion gelebt, und könnte keinen Tag ohne sie leben, aber ich bin mein Leben lang ohne Kirche ausgekommen" (*MG* 61-2).[31]

[31] "And so in my religious life Christianity plays by no means the only role, but nevertheless a commanding one, more a mystic Christianity than an ecclesiastical one, and it lives not without conflict but nevertheless

That Hesse "could not live a day without [religion]" gestures back to Nishitani's fundamental question, namely, that Hesse, especially as a thoughtful writer and cultural commentator, could not imagine going a day without asking himself, "For what purpose do I exist?" The answer to this question directs action, and for Hesse it is not directed toward or by a singular religion or religious dogma aside from the principle of unity. In "Ein Stückchen Theologie" Hesse describes in greater detail his vision of spiritual development and action, admitting that his view is "europäisch und beinahe christlich ausgedrückt," though this is to a great extent unavoidable and also not a deficiency (*MG* 63). Being that Hesse's readership was largely German and Christian, his formulations are thus ripe for digestion by that public and also for an interpretation alongside the other spiritual colossus of his time: fascist authoritarianism.

The spiritual development laid out "Ein Stückchen Theologie" is organized as a movement through "Stufen der Menschwerdung," and here the language of Hesse's essay must be taken very carefully in the context of its production. There is a wry irony to the use of certain vocabulary which is not without its own danger.

> "Der Weg der Menschwerdung beginnt mit der Unschuld (Paradies, Kindheit, verantwortungsloses Vorstadium). Von da führt er in die Schuld, in das Wissen um Gut und Böse, in die Forderungen der Kultur, der Moral, der Religionen, der Menschheitsideale. Bei jedem, der diese Stufe ernstlich und als differenziertes Individuum durchlebt, endet sie unweigerlich mit der Verzweiflung … Diese Verzweiflung führt nun entweder zum Untergang oder aber zu einem dritten Reich

without warfare beside a more Hindu-Asiatic-colored faith whose single dogma is the concept of unity. I have never lived without religion and could not live for a single day without it, but all my life long I have don without a church." Trans. Denver Lindley.

des Geistes, zum Erleben eines Zustandes jenseits von Moral und Gesetz, ein Vordringen zu Gnade und Erlöstsein, zu einer neuen, höheren Art von Verantwortungslosigkeit, oder kurz gesagt: zum Glauben. Einerlei welche Formen und Ausdrücke der Glaube annehme, sein Inhalt ist jedesmal derselbe: daß wir wohl nach dem Guten streben sollen, soweit wir vermögen, daß wir aber für die Unvollkommenheit der Welt und für unsere eigene nicht verantwortlich sind, daß wir uns selbst nicht regieren, sondern regiert werden, daß es über unsrem Erkennen einen Gott oder sonst ein 'Es' gibt, dessen Diener wir sind, dem wir uns überlassen dürfen" (*MG* 63).[32]

The "European and nearly Christian" mode of expression admitted to by Hesse is apparent in the movement from innocence into guilt and then to belief, and certainly in the struggle against despair, but in the "higher kind of irresponsibility" smacks of a Buddhist worldview in which karma, "the imperfection of the world" that the living inherit, need not be interpreted as an innate, individual, moral shortcoming for which one must atone (or against which one must be baptized and blessed), but rather accepted as a condition of existence. Nishitani devotes much space to this discussion in *Religion and Nothingness*, comparing the European idea of fate to the concept of karma:

"The karma of 'time past without beginning' is the true form of our life. It implies

[32] "The path of human development begins with innocence (paradise, childhood, the irresponsible first stage). From there it leads to guilt, to the knowledge of good and evil, to the demand for culture, for morality, for religions, for human ideals. For everyone who passes through this stage seriously and as a differentiated individual it ends unfailingly in disillusionment [despair] ... Now this despair leads either to defeat or to a third realm of the spirit, to the experience of a condition beyond morality and law, an advance into grace and release to a new, higher kind of irresponsibility, or to put it briefly: to faith. No matter which forms and expressions the faith assumes, its content is always the same: that we should certainly strive for the good insofar as we are able, but that we are not responsible for the imperfections of the world or for our own, that we do not govern ourselves but are governed, that, above our understanding, is God or 'It' whose servants we are and to which we may surrender ourselves." Trans. Denver Lindley.

> a sesne of essential 'despair.' Karma is what Kierkegaard calls the 'sickness unto death.' ... Karma here comes to bear the marks of guilt and sin. In a certain sense, it takes on the character of original sin, namely, sin that is as equally elemental as the free work and existence of man. Karma is freedom determined by causal necessity within the whole infinite nexus, a freedom of spontaneity in 'attachment' and, therefore, a freedom totally *bound* by fate" (248-9).

While there are distinctions to be made, the focus here is on the similarities of these transcultural conceptions of guilt and freedom in human existence. Hesse eventually arrives at the conclusion that the subject must acknowledge its relative powerlessness in order to gain a sense of its humanity, but the language used here is indeed troublesome. In order not to succumb to despair and destroy oneself, one must move into a "third realm of the spirit" ("zu einem dritten Reich des Geistes"), a phrase so obviously loaded with political connotations that it forces one to reread very carefully what exactly he means. However this belief presents itself, it shares in the idea that "we should strive for the good" and "that we do not rule ourselves," but rather that "beyond our recognition there is a God or some kind of 'It'" that we serve, "to which we may entrust ourselves." It does not sound much like the freedom of the will in the playful creation of values that Nishitani describes, but rather bears hints of the worship of authority for which Hesse a decade earlier criticized the church. But Hesse's conception of God as a unity is not necessarily a metaphysical or spiritual unity of many subjects, as explored above, but rather an awakening to a sense of unity between subject and world in which the fate (or karma) to which the subject is subjected may be understood as the elemental material from which it arises, to which it owes its existence, and which its activity then serves. In

this way, the "God or some kind of 'It'" becomes the union of self and fate in its life as a dynamic and constitutive participant in a greater world process. And the characterization of this process is markedly Nieztschean, albeit somewhat utopian: "the experience of a state beyond morality and law."

Even so, this devotion should be differentiated from the dictatorial authoritarianism so rampant in Germany during this period, for which purposes Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* may provide better insight. Fromm takes a materialist and psychoanalytic approach to the question of authoritarianism, describing its mechanisms in terms of sado-masochism – as "an inability to stand alone and to fully express [one's] own individual potentialities" (174) – and that, like all neurotic phenomena, "it assuages an unbearable anxiety and makes life possible by avoiding panic: yet it does not *solve* the underlying problem and is paid for by a kind of life that often consists only of automatic or compulsive activities" (140). It is also characteristic of German society in its fascination with Luther and Calvin, the growth of Protestantism alongside capitalism, and a peculiar fixation on fate. "The authoritarian character loves those conditions that limit human freedom, he loves being submitted to fate. ... [He] worships the past. What has been, will eternally be. To wish or work for something that has not yet been before is crime or madness. The miracle of creation – and creation is always a miracle – is outside his range of emotional experience" (169).

There appears to be a sharp distinction in the definition of "fate" between Fromm and Hesse (and Nietzsche and Nishitani). The fatalism that Fromm recognizes is one that does not interpret or love fate, but worships it, loves submitting to it, and does not grasp it as a standpoint from which to create, but rather recognizes in it the only creative force:

one is born into a world, the order of which is assumed to be rational and right, and one works not as part of a creative, expressive world process, but enslaved to a preestablished order. "Not to change fate, but to submit to it, is the heroism of the authoritarian character" (Fromm 171). In short, the fatalism of authoritarianism is not affirmative, but passive. It is an attitude taken, in Fromm's analysis, out of fear of the responsibilities entailed in freedom, as the recognition thereof produces a sense of existential loneliness. "In our effort to escape from aloneness and powerlessness, we are ready to get rid of our individual self either by submission to new forms of authority or by a compulsive conforming to accepted patterns" (134).

Fromm puts forward two types of freedom, the first of which – negative freedom, the freedom *from* – can produce a sense of isolation and fear of possibility, and the second of which – positive freedom, the freedom *to* – can lead to a more enlightened, meaningful, and mutually beneficial society by providing the individual with a unique sense of purpose and fulfillment in activity (34). The formulation shares with Hesse the responsibility of the individual in this process: both to recognize freedom and to embrace it rather than flee into authoritarianism or conformism. While Fromm focuses rather idealistically on freedom as such, however, and rejects all fatalism, Hesse still writes in the tradition of an affirmative fatalism, albeit oriented toward an ideal freedom. Thus while Fromm more or less rejects all religious thinking as a manifestation of passive fatalism and submission to authority, Hesse shares with thinkers like Nietzsche and Nishitani the view that the material limits upon one's pure freedom are not merely shackles – as though one was supposed to be born into other conditions – but rather the precondition of freedom, the antithesis against which one might strive toward freedom

and dialectically reach a point of thought and action that synthesizes limitation and freedom in possibility and actuality.

Returning to Hesse's *Ein Stückchen Theologie* with the question of devotion in mind – for it was a longing for devotion that he saw in the Germans, and it is devotion to the "God" or "It" that characterizes the step into faith from despair – one passage stands out which takes these remarks into consideration when reading his greater corpus. It comes rather ironically placed in the middle of the essay: "Meine eigentliche, im Christentum beginnende Seelensgeschichte zu erzählen, aus ihr meine persönliche Art von Glauben systematisch zu entwickeln, wäre ein unmögliches Unternehmen; Ansätze dazu sind alle meine Bücher" (*MG* 67).[33] Bearing the strict implication that he could never sketch out a system of faith of from his own religious experiences, Hesse, (who is about to fill the rest of the essay with remarks on "pious" and "rational" personality types and their particular means of seeking truth), freely admits that his entire writing career is more or less a prolonged attempt to give narrative form to his existential-religious search for meaning.

The very reflexive nature of this task is also made apparent a few sentences later, where he writes:

> "Es mag tausend Arten geben, auf welche sich Individuation und Seelengeschichte des Meschen vollziehen kann. Der Weg dieser Geschichte aber und seine Stufenfolge ist stets derselbe. – Zu beobachten, wie dieser unweigerlich starre Weg auf so verschiedene Arten, von so verchiedenen Menschenarten erlebt,

[33] "To describe my own, originally Christian, spiritual history and systematically to derive from it my personal form of faith would be an impossible task; all my books are an attempt to do that." Trans. Denver Lindley.

erkämpft, erlitten wird, ist wohl die beglückendste Leidenschaft des Historikers, des Psychologen, und des Dichters" (67).[34]

This sentiment is expressed before Hesse launches into his own cursory and perhaps amateurish attempt to sketch out two types of personality that both by different orientations attempt to reach the point of faith, which might unite self and world in an affirmative fatalism. Hesse's own bias and preference for the "pious" type over the "rational" is obvious and not very interesting. What fascinates here is the comparison between the historian, psychologist, and poet in their shared task of observing and illustrating the thousand types of people and thousand ways that lead along the same general path toward faith and recognition of "God." It identifies three roles which each represent a specialization that provides insight into the elements of tragedy as Nietzsche identified its modern form: the historian, who recalls the past to form an image of fate as the nexus of guilt and responsibility in which the subject tarries; the psychologist, who takes seriously the eternal return of the past in memory and the ambivalent nature of time in the subject's interior; and the poet, who can take the exterior and interior material together with a sense of time's fluidity and craft a narrative that attempts to provide the subject with a stable sense of self. Taken together, these constitute the modern form of tragedy as an existential-psychological phenomenon whereby the self, as individuation, faces its destruction in the moment of its emergence as the exploration of certain possibilities also closes off other possibilities. "Vom Stein stäuben Stücke," but another

[34] "There may be a thousand fashions in which individuation and the spiritual history of a human being can be achieved. The path of this history, however, and the sequence of its steps are always the same. – To observe how this invariably rigid path is encountered in so many different way by different types of men, struggled and suffered over, is probably the more rewarding passion of the historian, the psychologist, and the poet." Trans. Denver Lindley.

image sleeps within the stone. And as poet, Hesse sees it as his task not only to write narratives that give voice to these human experiences, but to use this platform to explore the phenomenon of affirmative fatalism.

Put another way: Hesse's writing, as an expression of his affirmative fatalism – his desire to create meaning(fully) within acknowledged conditions and limitations – focuses throughout his career ever more on representing this very process itself. From *Peter Camenzind* to *Das Glasperlenspiel* Hesse crafts narratives around figures who are not only reflections of himself or his own life (if, sometimes, at all), but whose searches for meaning more reflect the affirmative fatalist tendency in German literature and Hesse's anti-authoritarian approach. In this way Hesse's own service and devotion to the divine manifests as a devotion to writing itself, to the power of writing as a creative and didactic force capable of nonviolently combatting the belligerent movements of his day.

Conclusion

Although Hesse's religious ideas have long been considered indispensable to any reading of his novels, they are often treated as idiosyncratic or as an intuitive contribution to a movement of "magical thinking" – as discussed, for example, by Theodore Ziolkowski[35] – rather than as part of the logical development of nineteenth-century thought and the modern continuation of a tragic tradition fixated on fate. Affirmative fatalism as identified here is not a matter of magical thinking, but rather an existential standpoint rooted in the tragic sacrifice, and whether the object of said sacrifice be one's corporeal self or some portion of it (as in Nietzsche's modern reformulation), the

[35] See: Ziolkowski, Theodore. *The Novels of Hermann Hesse*. Princeton: University Press, 1965.

operative gesture is one that orients itself toward the future as the locus of possible redemption. In this way Hesse's writing and his devotion to it as a practice functions similarly as a gesture to future generations that they may learn about and contribute to the development of their society through the products of his labors. But the sacrifice is not only for others; as past and future meet eternally in the present moment, the creation of a stabilizing narrative for the self grasps them together and recognizes subjectivity as an ongoing project in which sacrifices – the *cutting-off* of certain narrative elements in the *de-cision* to craft the narrative *this* way and not *that* – also gestures toward the subject's redemption by itself.

This is the form of Hesse's mystical Christianity: God and all gods are but representative figures, metaphors bound up in the endless process of metaphoricization which constitutes language and symbolic communication in general, and the faith to which one consigns oneself is the good faith of Nietzsche's *amor fati*, the hope that a sense of spiritual relief, comfort, or strength may be gained from the affirmation of fate and play with the possibilities that avail themselves despite perceived and material limitations. And that his books function as *Ansätze* for an explicit or systematic explanation of his *Seelengeschichte* provides the most fruitful insight into his narrative work, particularly his final novel. In *Das Glasperlenspiel* the task of writing itself becomes the central figure: its function, its unfolding, and its interpretation. Through the story of Josef Knecht's life and the appended stories attributed to him Hesse crafts narratives that not only exemplify his particular affirmative fatalism – that "mystical Christianity" – but also perform, individually as texts and collectively as a single volume, the tasks of the historian, psychologist, and poet that explore the tragedy of subjectivity.

CHAPTER V

DAS GLASPERLENSPIEL AND THE POETICS OF AFFIRMATIVE FATALISM

Introduction

In Hermann Hesse's bizarre and wildly popular *Steppenwolf*, Harry Haller's journey of self-discovery culminates in the surreal experience of the Magic Theater, a sort of thought experiment and opium dream in which he imagines his self as the object of a game in which he can recombine qualities, experiences, and conditions as game pieces on a board in order to explore alternate possible lives. Such a formulation of subjectivity proposes that the individual possesses certain traits that exist in relation to a material context in which the subject's identity develops through the dynamic negotiation between its interiority – as perception of the exterior world – and the exterior world itself – as a collection of social and material conditions – thrust forward in time toward death. In short, the imagery depicts the subject as Walter Benjamin's definition of fate: "der Schuldzusammenhang des Lebendigen" (Benjamin *Illuminationen* 46). The Magic Theater draws on the long tradition of affirmative fatalism – the notion of a dialectically determined freedom that often confronts its limitations with a sacrificial gesture for the sake of a future expansion of its horizon – but also insists in Nietzschean fashion upon a kind of playfulness with regard to the subject's relationship to itself. But this playfulness is not lacking in seriousness; laughter here performs the didactic function of allowing knowledge to grow out of failure. Reflecting on the Magic Theater, Harry Haller says: "Einmal würde ich das Figurenspiel besser spielen. Einmal würde ich das Lachen lernen" (Hesse *Steppenwolf* 237).

The need for a knowledge gleaned from failure becomes a pressing concern in Hesse's last novel and indeed, this chapter shall contend, is the core idea of *Das Glasperlenspiel* in its organization and execution as an extension of the Magic Theater. It is carried over in large part even from the entreaties of *Zarathustras Wiederkehr*, where Hesse's iteration of Nietzsche's teacher encourages the Germans to think critically about their loss in the war and not to resort to resentment, but rather to turn away from belligerence and to strive for self-improvement. The goal for Hesse in that case was to avoid the descent into further (or civil) war after the Revolution of 1918; by the time of his composing *Das Glasperlenspiel*, when war appeared and proved once again to be inevitable, his fight was for the spiritual and intellectual integrity of educational and religious institutions.

To this end Hesse set his last novel in a future Europe and created Castalia, an educational province separate from the national-political world, where war has not reared its head for some time and scholars live completely immersed in their studies. While an apolitical and seemingly utopian state (easily interpreted as a futuristic and sovereign ivory tower), Castalia may also be understood as a representation of Germany's poetic soul, so to speak: the *Innerlichkeit* to which Thomas Mann attributed both Germany's invaluable contributions to culture and its descent into barbarism. Both Hesse and Mann, lifelong friends, completed novels near the end of the Second World War in which they reflected extensively on Germany's terrible fate, which already in 1933, around when work on the books began, appeared grim and confronted the authors with a crisis. In her comparative study of *Das Glasperlenspiel* and *Doktor Faustus*, Eva Knöferl writes:

"Wenn Hermann Hesse also bereits Anfang 1933 im Gespräch mit Thomas Mann

> bemerkt, dass die aktuellen Ereignisse nicht nur eine endgültige Abkehr vom politischen Deutschland notwendig machen, sondern auch eine 'Revision [s]einer Auffassung von der Funktion des Geistes und der Dichtung überhaupt,' so ist diese Aussage als ein gemeinsamer Ausgangspunkt für die in den nachfolgenden Jahren entstehenden Alterswerke zu verstehen" (11).

As a "revision of [his] conception of the function of the spirit and poetry," *Das Glasperlenspiel* thematizes the erosion of Germany's intellectual integrity, namely in its warning against the dangers of allowing educational institutions to serve the interests of political and military powers rather than the pure pursuit of knowledge. But this pure pursuit is, like Castalia, a utopian fantasy based upon the idea that withdrawal into oneself – spiritual, political, and intellectual isolation – is not representative of a spiritual, political, or intellectual position; that *Innerlichkeit* is not or does not produce a skewed relationship to the "outside" world.

In his speech *Deutschland und die Deutschen* Thomas Mann described German *Innerlichkeit* as "Zartheit, der Tiefsinn des Herzens, unweltliche Versponnenheit, Naturfrömmigkeit, reinster Ernst des Gedankens und des Gewissens" (275). This dreamy description Mann also applies to Romanticism as an expression of *Innerlichkeit*, but with the consequence of becoming dangerously disconnected from reality: "Romantik ist wesentlich Versenkung, besonders Versenkung in die Vergangenheit; sie ist die Sehnsucht nach dieser, und zugleich der realistisch anerkennende Sinn für alles wirklich Gewesene in seinem Eigenrecht – mit seiner Lokalfarbe und Atmosphäre" (277). These characterizations Mann links to Germany's spiritual tradition, the anti-revolutionary spirit of Luther's politics, and the eventual development of political realism culminating in the

world wars. And although Castalia is painted as a classical institution by Hesse's narrator, who extols the virtues of Baroque music over the "cult of dynamics" represented by Romantic music, it certainly smacks of this Romantic sensibility in its focus on introspection, contemplation, and an obsession with the past. Indeed, the instances of meditation throughout the novel are too numerous to cite, but their prevalence speaks to a reading of Castalia as an embodiment of *Innerlichkeit* that is both alluring and dangerous, a way toward peace and contemplation as well as a separation from larger political contexts.

While *Das Glasperlenspiel* is the story of Josef Knecht's life, it is also the story of his imagination, his *Innerlichkeit*, and the influence that this has upon his decisions and ultimate fate. The three appended stories that close the novel (*die drei Lebensläufe*) are attributed to Knecht, supposedly written during his late adolescence, but they are offered as the clearest insight that the reader has into his psychology. If the Magic Theater of *Der Steppenwolf* represents an exploration of Harry Haller's speculative thinking about possibility and the spiritual-social context in which his fate arises, the appended lives represent Josef Knecht's own play with the same ideas, effectively providing the act of storytelling itself as a thought experiment that wrestles with the different approaches to and trajectories of affirmative fatalism. In order thus to understand Josef Knecht's confrontation with fate and death, this reading of *Das Glasperlenspiel* will first address the three *Lebensläufe* and employ the conclusions drawn from their interpretation to a reading of Knecht's "actual" death.

In each of the three appended stories Knecht imagines himself in a different time and culture bearing the same name – Knecht, Famulus, Dasa – each of which signifies in

German, Latin, and Sanskrit, respectively, that he is a servant to a different tradition or institution. Knecht likewise grapples in each story with the responsibility of his position and the nature of his fate, reconciling his personal will with the various obligations, constraints, and compulsions placed upon him, as well as the greater cultural context in which he lives and in which his death may have a special significance. This investigation will meditate on these iterations of affirmative fatalism, specifically detailing how within these different contexts Hesse crafts the psychological and temporal space in which fate is confronted and the relationship between aesthetics and how the affirmative orientation is ethically determined.

Der Regenmacher

Knecht's first imagined incarnation is the most similar to the Magister Ludi, bearing his exact name and sharing much of his personality – quiet, clever, curious, attentive. He is an orphan in a stone-age village where all power is held by matriarchs save for one position, that to which the gifted Knecht hopes someday to strive: Turu the Rainmaker. This man, whose duty it is to study the seasons and phases of the moon, to serve as a conduit between the tribe and the natural world, Knecht follows and watches, eventually taken under his wing as his apprentice to marry his daughter and succeed him. As he grows into an adept Rainmaker, Knecht comes to earn the respect of the tribe and finds a comforting sense of belonging in his role, fully socially integrated and at one with the natural world.

The prose of *Der Regenmacher* is highly reminiscent of *Siddhartha*, with long series of parallel and paratactical clauses that mimic the Rainmaker's repetitive

observations and slow, contemplative life. This technique is pointed out by Gerhart Mayer in his article on Hesse's "Mystische Religiosität und dichterische Form" (1960), specifically in reference to moments of enlightenment in *Siddhartha*, where he observes: "Die objektiv-physikalische Zeitvorstellung wird durch das subjektive Zeiterlebnis durchbrochen, das selbst wiederum im Stadium der Einheitsschau in dem Gefühl einer Allgegenwart aufgehoben ist" (446). The vision of unity (*Einheitsschau*) that Mayer references is the narrative representation of the psychological phenomenon that Hesse draws from Nietzsche's *amor fati*: the affirmation of necessity as beauty, reconciliation with the past, determination of the self in its union with the world. The apparent suspension of time that so often occurs in Hesse's prose speaks to the vastness of such moments in their psychological depth. The Rainmaker, with his knowledge of the natural world, appears to Knecht as a personification of this thought:

> "Es mußte nun, so schien es Knecht in jenem Augenblick, im riesigen Netz der Zusammenhänge einen Mittelpunkt geben, von dem aus alles gewußt, alles Vergangene und alles Kommende gesehen und abgelesen werden konnte. Dem, der an diesem Mittelpunkt stünde, müßte das Wissen zulaufen wie dem Tal das Wasser und dem Kohl der Hase, sein Wort müßte scharf und unfehlbar treffen wie der Stein aus der Hand des Scharfschützen, er müßte kraft des Geistes alle diese einzelnen wunderbaren Gaben und Fähigkeiten in sich vereinen und spielen lassen: dies wäre der vollkommene, weise, unübertreffliche Mensch! So wie er zu werden, sich ihm anzuhähern, zu ihm unterwegs zu sein: das war der Weg der Wege, das war das Ziel, das gab einem Leben Weihe und Sinn" (498-9).

This middle point embodied by the Rainmaker is the moment of fate, the standpoint of a

subject that finds itself at once the center of the world and dissolved into it, where the past and future meet in the eternal present of action. Open to the world in such a way, knowledge flows into the Rainmaker "like water into the valley," and thus is Knecht's experience as Rainmaker described after he assumes the role later on. In affirmative fatalist fashion he comes more and more to recognize the world around him as a part of his own subjectivity; he and his world are at one with his fate. This he sees first through his relationship to the natural world, as in his ability to feel and foretell weather patterns, but later also through the recognition that his role as Rainmaker places strict demands on him for things beyond his control and for which he must eventually be held responsible.

The parallel syntactical patterns appear in many descriptions throughout the text and their orientation is often the same: their rambling, repetitive formulations detail the links between Knecht's interior and the external world, painting an image of his life that performs the unity of self, world, and fate that imbues the subject with a sense of its divinity.

> "Es gab Lagen des Wetters, Spannungen der Luft und der Wärme, es gab Bewölkungen und Winde, gab Arten von Wasser- und von Erd- und Staubgeruch, gab Drohungen oder Versprechungen, gab Stimmungen und Launen der Wetterdämonen, welche Knecht in seiner Haut, seinem Haar, seinen sämtlichen Sinnen voraus- und mitempfand, so daß er von nichts überrascht, von nichts enttäuscht werden konnte, daß er mitschwingend das Wetter in sich konzentrierte und es in einer Weise in sich trug, die ihn befähigte, Wolken und Winden zu gebieten: nicht freilich aus einer Willkür und nach freiem Belieben, sondern eben aus dieser Verbundenheit und Gebundenheit heraus, welche den Unterschied

zwischen ihm und der Welt, zwischen Innen und Außen vollkommen aufhob. Dann konnte er verzückt stehen und lauschen, verzückt kauern und alle Poren offen haben und das Leben der Lüfte und Wolken in seinem Innern nicht mehr nur mitfühlen, sondern dirigieren und erzeugen, etwa so, wie wir einen Satz Musik, den wir genau kennen, in uns innen wecken und reproduzieren können" (509-10).

Knecht anticipates and co-experiences various natural phenomena and the "moods of the weather demons" to the point that their whims seem at one with his own, "eliminating the distinction between interior and exterior." The description bears the mark of suspended time like so many instances of enlightenment among Hesse's characters, but here is idealized in the utmost as the constant state of mind of the Rainmaker. But there is a warning embedded in the tale, for as much as Knecht comes to feel himself so united with the weather patterns that he can conduct them like a piece of music, he is confronted eventually with the harsh reality that his knowledge of the natural world is not in fact tantamount to control over it.

Knecht's gradual awareness of his fate, bound to the indifference of nature and the social responsibilities entailed in his role as Rainmaker, comes first as he realizes that his embrace of his position means the embrace of a specific path that cuts him off from other possibilities. Reminiscent of Zarathustra's declaration about carving the self out from the stone –"Vom Steine stäuben Stücke –was schiert mich das?" – a sacrifice is demanded with every choice made as one continually becomes oneself. Something must be cut off, and this Knecht recognizes with clarity when he sees that his fate is tied to the education of his son and successor:

"Mehr und mehr mußte er Abschied nehmen vom Traum, von dem Gefühl und

> Genuß der unendlichen Möglichkeiten, der tausendfältigen Zukunft. Statt des Traumes vom unendlichen Fortschritt, von der Summe aller Weisheit, stand nun der Schüler da, eine kleine, nahe, fordernde Wirklichkeit, ein Eindringling und Störenfried, aber unabweisbar und unabwendbar, der einzige Weg in die wirkliche Zukunft, die einzige, wichtigste Pflicht, der einzige schmale Weg, auf welchem des Regenmachers Leben und Taten, Gesinnungen, Gedanken und Ahnungen vor dem Tode bewahrt bleiben und in einer kleinen neuen Knospe fortleben konnten. Seufzend, knirschend und lächelnd nahm er es auf sich" (513-4).

The rhythm of the prose mimics the "dream" of "endless possibilities" and the "thousandfold future" that Knecht imagines from his position in the center of the "net of contexts," which here appears with all of its contingencies like the *Schuldzusammenhang des Lebendigen* that Walter Benjamin calls fate. "The only way into the real future" is differentiated from "the dream of endless progress" by its materiality and linearity: as opposed to the abstract idea of the future in thought experiments that allow for infinite possibility, the young Turu represents a clearly cut and defined trajectory rife with responsibilities. Not only this, but it is in care for him and his education that the Rainmaker – not just Knecht, but his sacred position – will live on into the future, such that in recognition of his fate he performs the sacrificial gesture which defines the tragedy of subjectivity. His fate he "[takes] upon himself" with an admixture of conflicting but not unrelated feelings, "sighing, grinding [his teeth], and smiling."

Knecht is likewise reminded of the necessity of sacrifice and its terrible power when confronted by the other realities of his responsibility, namely in the case of famine, when it may be demanded of him as Rainmaker to give his life in order to appease the

demons. This aspect of his fate begins to become clear one night when a "catastrophe" strikes: a meteor shower fills the sky with falling stars, inspiring terror and madness throughout the tribe. The rambling description of the event does not build tension as much as it encapsulates it, suspending time as in those moments of enlightenment described previously by Mayer, painting the external world with the brush of immense and timeless interiority.

> "Es fielen, wie Steine geworfen, aufglühend und rasch wieder erlöschend, einzelne Sterne schräg durch den Raum, hier einer, dort zwei, hier ein paar, und noch hatte das Auge den ersten entschwundenen Fallstern nicht losgelassen, noch hatte das Herz, vom Anblick versteinert, nicht wieder zu schlagen begonnen, da jagten sich die schräg und in leicht gekrümmter Linie durch den Himmel fallenden oder geschleuderten Lichter schon in Schwärmen von Dutzenden, von Hunderten, in unzählbaren Scharen trieben sie wie von einem stummen Riesensturm getragen quer durch die schweigende Nacht als habe ein Weltenherbst alle Sterne wie welke Blätter vom Himmelsbaum gerissen und jage sie lautlos dahin, ins Nichts. Wie welke Blätter, wie wehende Schneeflocken flohen sie, Tausende und Tausende, in schauerliche Stille dahin und hinab, hinter den südöstlichen Waldbergen verschwinden, wo noch niemals seit Menschengedenken ein Stern untergegangen war, irgendwohin ins Bodenlose hinab" (519-20).

The cataclysmic vision is possessed of the vastness and mystery of fate, a sudden storm of streaking lights that disrupts all sense of order but the horrifying reality of which cannot be denied. This culminates in the image of the "tree of heaven," the metaphorical

fusion of the vegetal and celestial realms which are the Rainmaker's purview and over which he feels to exert some control. But as the stars appear cast off from the tree of heaven "like withered leaves," the very illusory nature of his power confronts him, precisely in that they vanish "into the nothingness" and "abysmal." The disintegration of Knecht's understanding is the revelation of nihilism, and its overcoming, he quickly recognizes, lies in recasting the narrative, incorporating this terrible knowledge into the necessary fiction that may restore both his and the tribe's sense of self and order.

Affirming his fate once more, Knecht "takes it upon himself with a heavy sigh" that his failure to predict or understand the immediate significance of the meteor shower will make him most conveniently responsible for whatever consequences that should follow. "Tief aufseufzend nahm es Knecht auf sich. Ihn vor allen andern traf es, dies Unglück, ihn, den Regenmacher; ihn, der gewissermaßen verantwortlich war für die Ordnung am Himmel und in den Lüften" (520-1). He is likewise empowered by the resolve and fearlessness of the his chieftess: "Die uralte Ahnmutter war ruhig; sie glaubte das Ende aller Dinge gekommen, wehrte sich aber nicht dagegen und zeigte dem Schicksal ein festes, hartes, in seiner herben Gekniffenheit beinah spöttisch aussehendes Gesicht" (522). With her help, Knecht draws the attention of the gathered and horrified tribe into a great ritual of ecstatic prayer, which slowly, then overwhelmingly distracts them from their fear, channeling their energy into a single action which, by some miracle, coincides temporally with the gradual end of the meteor shower.

The same tragic insight that his power may indeed be illusory also makes Knecht keenly aware of the conciliatory power of the communal ritual and its strong psychological component. It is an awareness that his responsibility as Rainmaker has

perhaps never been mystical, but rather as a keeper of knowledge whose true duty it is to maintain and shape the myths that endow the other villagers' lives with meaning. Uniting the tribe in a half-improvised ceremony under the celestial calamity above, Knecht protects the throng from the possible insight that nature is indifferent to the point of apparent cruelty.

> "Statt einer verzweifelten Horde von Verrückten stand da ein Volk von opfer- und bußgewillten Andächtigen, deren jedem es wohltat und das Herz stärkte, seine Todesfurcht und sein Entsetzen nicht in sich zu verschließen oder für sich allein hinauszubrüllen, sondern im geordneten Chor der vielen, taktmäßig, sich einer beschwörenden Zeremonie einzuordnen. Viele geheime Mächte sind in einer solchen Übung wirksam, ihr stärkster Trost ist die Gleichförmigkeit, das Gemeinschaftsgefühl verdoppelnd, und ihre unfehlbare Arznei ist Maß und Ordnung, ist Rhythmus und Musik" (524).

The Rainmaker's power lies not in his control of the elements – that is an illusion – but rather in the illusion of meaning itself and his ability to create and proliferate the necessary fictions that render the otherwise indifferent violence of nature significant and bearable. The ritual does not in itself mean anything, but it provides consolation, comfort in "uniformity, doubling the feeling of community." Here the narrator speaks personally for the first time, though not explicitly. For it is the Castalian Knecht to whom the reader is supposed to attribute the narrative, and little is more transparently Castalian than these last phrases: "its fail-safe remedy is measure and order, rhythm and music."

Just as it cannot be said of music *what* it means, there is nevertheless the sense *that* it means, that it speaks, though not in words. Indeed, music gains its significance in

its movement and organization, but unlike language, its individual sounds do not bear any meaning in their isolation. "The language of music is quite different from the language of intentionality," writes Adorno in his essay "Music and Language," continuing: "It contains a theological dimension. What it has to say is simultaneously revealed and concealed. Its Idea is the divine Name which has been given shape. It is demythologized prayer, rid of efficacious magic. It is the human attempt, doomed as ever, to name the Name, not to communicate meanings" (Adorno *QUF* 2). This "theological dimension" of music is the "meaning" of aesthetic organization: it dissolves the atomic elements of sound – singular tones – into a greater whole, where they gain significance in relation to one another and their totality. Each note, like each human subject, affirms its place within a larger context through its participation in and alignment with the encompassing composition. Thus Knecht approaches the mad situation: "Es war hier, wie so oft, mit der Vernunft und den klugen Worten gar nichts zu erreichen" (Hesse *GPS* 523). The villagers, in their panic and terror, are scattered and meaningless tones, reverberating off into the abyss like the falling stars above, and Knecht is the musician, the great improvisationalist, who brings them into order, any kind of order, just so that their cries of anguish might be directed and imbued with fleeting, incidental, and indeterminate meaning.

Despite having quelled their fears, Knecht's are confirmed as the seasons roll in: the weather is mild and extreme in unpredictable turns, and the ritual of planting is disrupted by the death of the chieftess, whose sister, having assumed her role, distrusts Knecht and, at the behest of his former student-turned-charlatan, begins to insinuate that the time may be nigh for the Rainmaker to offer himself as a sacrifice. He attempts to

delay: "Einen halben Mond lang bemühte er sich auf seine Weise, eine Witterung zu schaffen, welche die Aussaat erlaubt hätte. Aber das Wetter, oft so gleichgerichtet mit den Strömungen seines Innern, verhielt sich hartknäckig höhnisch und feindselig, nicht Zauber noch Opfer schlug an" (529). But in spite of his prayers, sacrifices, and a seemingly promising sowing and planting season, a winter frost returns without warning and famine strikes the tribe.

It becomes clear to Knecht that the true purpose of his role lies in its ritual aspect. He can find no explanation for the sudden disconnect between his interior and exterior, but nature's violent indifference must be made meaningful for the sake of the tribe's sense of self and world. That the catastrophe of the falling stars and the famine be justified – at least aesthetically –, he resolves to offer himself as a sacrifice.

> "'Turu', sagte Knecht eines Tages zu seinem Sohn, 'diese Sache wird nicht gut ausgehen, wir haben alle Dämonen gegen uns. Mit dem Sternenfall hat es angefangen. Es wird mir, so denke ich, das Leben kosten. Merke dir: wenn ich geopfert werden muß, dann trittst du in der gleichen Stunde mein Amt an, und als erstes verlangst du, daß mein Leib verbrannt und die Asche auf die Felder gestreut wird. Ihr werdet einen Winter mit großem Hunger haben. Aber das Unheil wird dann gebrochen sein. Du mußt sorgen, daß niemand das Saatgut der Gemeinde angreift, er muß Todesstrafe darauf stehen. Das kommende Jahr wird besser werden, und man wird sagen: gut, daß wir den neuen, jungen Wettermacher haben'" (530-1).

Knecht promises a better year to come, but since the meteor shower he has become acutely aware of the limits of his power. And while there is no guarantee that the sacrifice

of his life will actually bring a more bountiful harvest, this is not the primary concern. The power of ceremony, Knecht has already learned, is in its ability to unify and make suffering palatable. Turu's first task as Rainmaker will be to satisfy the demands of tradition, to carry out the ritual burning and scattering of his father's remains, to learn the palliative power of practice. Knecht cannot prepare him for the possibility that he, too, might face the abyss in a moment of tragic insight, but can instill in him that appreciation of necessity so that, should a catastrophe befall him, he may fend off the bottomless terror of nihilism by veiling the incomprehensible in rhythm and music, endowing it with the semblance of signification by virtue of its part in the greater whole.

When the time comes for his sacrifice, Knecht nominates Maro, his former apprentice who has become his most vicious critic and agitator, to bear the ax. In their final exchange Knecht stares stonily and mockingly at Maro just as the late chieftess did on the night of the meteor shower, and Maro cannot bring himself to smite the old Rainmaker.

> "Maro, die Axt in Händen, stellte sich vor seinem einstigen Lehrmeister auf, er haßte ihn noch mehr als sonst, der Zug von Spott auf diesem schwiegsamen alten Mund tat ihm bitter weh. Er hob die Axt und schwang sie über sich, zielend hielt er sie oben schwebend, starrte dem Opfer ins Gesicht und wartete, daß es die Augen schlösse. Allein dies tat Knecht nicht, er hielt die Augen unentwegt offen und blickte den Mann mit der Axt an, beinah ohne Ausdruck, aber was an Ausdruck zu sehen war, schwebte zwischen Mitleid und Spott" (532).

Maro's overwerought performance betrays what Knecht has always known of him: his posture is mere posture, his talent is squandered on pretension. His hatred for Knecht

sprouts from an envy which will only be intensified by the Rainmaker's fearless death as a sacrificial animal. Knecht's devotion to the spirit as well as the tribe manifests in his fixed expression toward Maro's disingenuousness, somewhere "between compassion and mockery." Maro's resentment is something akin to the despair (*Verzweiflung*) of which Hesse writes in "Ein Stückchen Theologie," when an individual cannot accept the necessary burden of guilt as a condition of finding peace and meaning in life through faith in "the God or 'It'" that represents the unity of subject and world. But Knecht, having affirmed necessity and incorporated it into the narrative of his self – having made beautiful for himself the inevitability of sacrifice – may in part pity Maro, but his mockery also comes from the satisfaction of knowing that, by virtue of this one's cowardice, his death will not be a mere device in a revenge story.

Knecht's sacrificial death is possessed of the spirit of affirmative fatalism and its moral and political ambiguity, but in the spirit of tragic sacrifice it is not for glory that he confronts his fate head-on, but rather for the sake of coming generations. While his actions do not subvert the prevailing order – far rather, they reinforce its logic and power – they serve as a gesture that rings out into the future. In Knecht's case, this gesture is his devotion to his sacred position, and while his own terrible knowledge of his actual powerlessness before the indifference of nature may not be share by the rest of the tribe, he recognizes that the rituals themselves, including his own death, serve a preservative force for the community.

After Maro throws the ax aside in despair, an elder moves quickly and silently to take his place, and Knecht easily closes his eyes and bows his head, ready to die. Having made an example of Maro's insincere pretensions, he makes an example of himself for his

son, whose first acts as Rainmaker close the story: "Der Alte schlug ihn mit der Axt, er sank zusammen. Turu, der neue Regenmacher, konnte kein Wort sprechen, nur mit Gebärden ordnete er das Notwendige an, und bald war ein Holzstoß geschichtet und der Tote darauf niedergelegt. Das feierliche Ritual des Feuerbohrens mit den beiden geweihten Hölzern war Turus erste Amtshandlung" (533). That Turu cannot bring himself to speak, but merely acts "in gestures," already reveals the secret of his duty as Rainmaker: to maintain the cohesion and sanity of the tribe, to give the semblance of order to blind chance, to justify existence as an aesthetic phenomenon and thereby make it not only bearable, but meaningful.

The tragedy of subjectivity, as it were, consists not only of the subject's internal and personal narrative – in decisions (cutting away) and an orientation that entail an affirmation which necessitates a sacrifice – but also, because the subject does not exist in a vacuum, of the subject's integration into its context. In this way the narrative that provides the subject with a sense of stability plays a significant social role, and it is in this respect that the rainmaker Knecht is most legible as a modern subject, for although a figure in an imagined stone-age society, his insight confronts and also cannot escape nihilism. The recognition that his knowledge is not actually a power, that blind chance and nature's indifference cannot be swayed, rips away the metaphysical foundation of his and the tribe's thinking. Yet in gathering the village for prayers and offering himself as a sacrifice – in propagating what seem to be mere falsehoods – he recognizes the necessity of fictions, just as much as his own subjectivity is one such fiction that must be edited from time to time. While the rites and practices of the tribe may appear empty gestures devoid of efficacy, they provide nevertheless a sense of order and meaning which in turn

may stave off the more terrifying insight for the community: that its fundamental understanding of the world in which it precariously exists is untrue, or at least dangerously insufficient.

Truth is not a matter of facts, but rather of longevity and popular credibility. The insight that knowledge is illusory is as terrifying as it is liberating, and Knecht, not only a spiritual figure in his tribe, but as the man responsible for the village's access to food and hence its survival, sees fit, taking account of his social and ceremonial role, to sacrifice himself. In the good faith that his sacrifice will at least carry symbolic meaning and that nature perhaps will appear less cruel in the coming year, he affirms this particular fate. The tribe's potential longevity is here paradoxically correlated to the longevity of the lie. It is the necessary fiction that maintains order and sustains the religious-existential life of the community.

The moment of Knecht's terrible insight paints an image of the confrontation with fate, the narrativization of the self. As he watches the meteor shower in horror, Knecht notices that "the familiar stars" are not the same as the falling stars:

> "Nacht einer Weile freilich erkannte er, was andere zu erkennen nicht fähig waren, daß die wohlbekannten Sterne hier und dort und überall noch vorhanden waren, daß das Sterngestiebe nicht unter den alten, vertrauten Sternen ein schreckliches Wesen trieb, sondern im Zwischenraum zwischen Erdboden und Himmel, und daß diese fallenden oder geworfenen, neuen, so schnell erscheinenden und so schnell schwindenden Lichter in einem etwas anders gefärbten Feuer glühten als die alten, die richtigen Sterne. Dies war ihm tröstlich und half ihm sich wiederfinden, aber mochten das nun auch neue, vergängliche, andre Sterne sein, deren Gestöber

die Luft erfüllte: grausig und böse, Unheil und Unordnung war es doch, tiefe Seufzer aus Knechts vertrockneter Kehle" (520).

The old order remains in place, but there is a calamity between heaven and earth that distorts their relationship. Fate appears in a flash as a disruption of the view – the vision, *das Gesicht* – of the world as previously understood. The converging forces of fate appear "in a somewhat differently colored fire," but fate still appears "ghastly and wicked," like "misery and disorder." This is the blunt realization of transience, the privation of eternity, but also the revelation of the power of aesthetic interpretation – the gay science. These lights, "appearing so quickly and fading so quickly" like human life, traverse a seemingly eternal and organized space, they flare up and vanish, but their brief existence does not appear to leave any lasting mark upon "the proper stars." Any connection between the meteor shower and the ensuing drought are as coincidental as the shower is to the night sky; each phenomenon lends itself to interpretation and interpretation is all that remains in the wake.

If knowledge reveals itself as an interpretation subject to random and incidental annihilation, then its purpose might be rediscovered not in any access to absolute truth, but to the production of truths. The moment of terror must be incorporated, brought into the subject's body through its inclusion in a narrative that sustains and stabilizes. An identity, individual as well as communal, is thereby stabilized and provided with a sense of direction and autonomy, illusory as it may be, that fends off despair and, as becomes clear in *Der Beichtvater*, suicide.

Der Beichtvater

The second of the three *Lebensläufe* is not nearly as dramatic as the first, but it deals more specifically with existential and religious despair, less explicitly concerned with the subject's integration and role in society. The father confessor Josephus Famulus lives in relative isolation in the wilderness near other ascetics, "Adepten einer sehnsüchtigen Ars moriendi, einer Kunst des Sterbens, des Absterbens von der Welt und vom eigenen Ich und des Hinübersterbens zu ihm, dem Erlöser, ins Lichte und Unverwelkliche" (534). He awaits traveling pilgrims seeking to rid themselves of the burden of their sin, and Joesphus soon finds that he possesses a particular propensity for listening to these confessions: "Auch in Josephus schlummerte eine Gabe, und mit den Jahren, als sein Haar fahl zu werden begann, kam sie langsam zu ihrer Blüte. Es war die Gabe des Zuhörens" (535).

He is gentle with his penitents, letting them speak and air their sins until they have no more to say, comforting them such that through their confession alone they feel relief from their guilt. Indeed, in his listening he acknowledges the *Schuldzusammenhang*, as Benjamin put it, in which the living find themselves, and the solace that comes with the shared recognition of guilt, individual as well as universal. "Bußen und Strafen zu verhängen, war nicht seines Amtes, auch zum Aussprechen einer priesterlichen Absolution fühlte er sich nicht ermächtigt, es war weder das Richten noch das Vergeben der Schuld seine Sache. Indem er zuhörte und verstand, schien er Mitschuld auf sich zu nehmen, schien tragen zu helfen" (537). Josephus is not compelled to admonish or absolve his penitents, but rather to share in their burden, which, the reader learns throughout the story, he believes is neither their own nor escapable, but rather a general

condition of life.

There is however a sort of curse that comes along with his position, in that Josephus struggles continually against his own sin, becoming increasingly and overwhelmingly critical of his own thoughts and feelings. Among these at first is a sense of pride and vanity when wanderers seek him out, not so much in his duty as in himself, that strikes fear in him, and he begs God not to send any more penitents to him. This is followed after some time by a sense of resentment, "Kälte und Lieblosigkeit," even "Verachtung gegen den Beichtenden," but this he combats with his own confessions to God, "Demütigungs- und Bußübungen" (539).

Thus he lives for quite some time, but slowly a feeling of existential boredom creeps over him, which is expressed through language and images that suspend him between all other affects. And although it seems to be the goal of his asceticism – like most monks, arguably – to remove himself from the cycle of joy and suffering, this boredom becomes something unbearable; indeed, his self-imposed distance from the cycle of pleasure and pain paradoxically brings with it its own kind of terrible suffering.

> "So wie es Tage gibt, an welchen weder die Sonne strahlt noch der Regen strömt, sondern der Himmel still in sich selber versinkt und sich einspinnt, grau, doch nicht schwarz, schwül, doch nicht bis zur Gewitterspannung, so wurden allmählich die Tage des alternden Josef; es waren die Morgen von den Abenden, die Festtage von den gewöhnlichen, die Stunden des Aufschwungs von denen des Darniederliegens immer weniger zu unterscheiden, es lief alles träg in einer lahmen Müdigkeit und Unlust dahin" (540).

The comparison of his "flauer, lauer, langweiliger Seelenzustand" with gray, stagnant

weather does not have the ring of a blessed state beyond desire and suffering, but rather smacks of an arrest in movement or development (540). Parallel to this, times and days and events all lose their particularity, they become "ever less distinguishable" from one another, and the world seems not to flow beautifully around Josephus as, say, for Siddhartha by the river, but there is rather a sense of sinking, like the gray sky that "sinks silently into itself."

> "Es sei das Alter, dachte er traurig. Traurig war er, weil er vom Altwerden und vom allmählichen Erlöschen der Triebe und Leidenschaften sich eine Aufhellung und Erleichterung seines Lebens, einen Schritt weiter zur ersehnten Harmonie und reifen Seelenruhe versprochen hatte, und weil nun das Alter ihn zu enttäuschen und betrügen schien, indem es nichts brachte als diese müde, graue, freudlose Öde, dies Gefühl unheilbarer Übersättigung" (540).

Age and experience have not brightened and brought relief to his life as "he had promised himself," but rather seem to have delivered him into a "tired, gray, joyless wasteland." His expectations of harmony and peace are instead tempered into an uninspired boredom; there is no blue sky or shining sun to signify "a brightening," but rather continuous mentions of "tired" and "gray" images that reflect his dissatisfaction.

And yet, although dissatisfied, there is a "feeling of irremediable oversaturation," an indictment against the quantitative measures of age and experience. What lacks is a quality which, despite his efforts to extinguish desire, Josephus longs for beyond or apart from his duties.

> "Es schien ihm zuweilen: wie in der Oase die kleine Wasserquelle sich im Steinbecken sammelte, durch Gras floß und einen kleinen Bach bildete, dann in

die Öde des Sandes hinausfloß und dort nach kurzem Lauf versiegte und starb, ebenso kämen diese Beichten, diese Sündenregister, diese Lebensläufe, diese Gewissensplagen, große wie kleine, ersten wie eitle, ebenso kämen sie in sein Ohr geflossen, Dutzende, Hunderte, immderdar neue. Aber das Ohr war nicht tot wie der Wüstensand, das Ohr war lebendig und vermochte nicht ewig zu trinken und zu schlucken und einzusaugen, er fühlte sich ermüdet, mißbraucht, überfüllt" (541).

"Weary, abused," and "overfilled," Josephus is contrasted against the dead desert sand and its endless thirst. Indeed, his living ear is not the bottomless earth; with every confession comes that sense of *Mitschuld* which alleviates the spiritual suffering of the penitent but slowly saturates the soul of the father confessor. He, far more than the travelers with their "lists of sins" and "plagues of conscience," feels the *Schuldzusammenhang* that is fate – and its weight becomes too much to bear:

"[Er] sehnte sich danach, daß das Fließen und Geplätscher der Worte, der Gegenständnisse, der Sorgen, der Anklagen, der Selbstbezichtigung einmal aufhöre, daß einmal Ruhe Tod und Stille an die Stelle dieses endlosen Fließens trete. Ja, er wünschte ein Ende, er war müde, er hatte genug und übergenug, schal und wertlos war sein Leben geworden, und es kam so weit mit ihm, daß er zuweilen sich versucht fühlte, seinem Dasein ein Ende zu machen, sich zu bestrafen und auszulöschen, so wie es Judas der Verräter getan hatte, als er sich erhängte" (541).

Josephus does not feel himself to "flow" with the words and lamentations of his penitents, but rather to swallow them and become further burdened by them. Like the

Rainmaker he finds himself at a central point where the web of universal, reciprocal, and shared guilt collapses, but this drives him to despair. The despair in turn seems to produce its own guilt; "like Judas the traitor" "he feels at times tempted" to take his own life, as though in this act of self-punishment he might atone for the sin of despairing.

He resists the temptation to end his life, "aber er lebte Tag und Nach in einem Brand von Selbsthaß und Todesgier, das Leben war unerträglich und hassenswert geworden" (541). But he can neither bear to accept this as the determined course and condition of his becoming. He asserts his desire against the passive fatalism that would otherwise languish in this state. It appears his fate to be painfully aware of universal guilt, but this need not entail a lifelong battle against the will to die; rather, he flees his hermitage and begins to contemplate for the first time his own particular fate, his life as fate.

Josephus begins to conceive of his fate as something dynamic as he walks, a most suitable image. Like Zarathustra standing at the gateway called *Augenblick* where the past and future eternally converge, Josephus evaluates his actions in light of the past and in consideration of future possibility. He now moves with the present, the only locus of thought and action, and evaluates his experiences and decisions not only in accordance with his religious devotion, but also as aesthetic phenomena. Not repressing this drive to flee, he allows himself to reflect honestly on his feelings.

> "Scham und Bekümmerung wuchsen in ihm an, je deutlicher er die Hölle erkannte, der er entlaufen war, und am Ende drängte das Elend sich wie ein würgender Bissen in seiner Kehle, wuchs zu unerträglichem Drang und fand plötzlich Abschluß und Erlösung in einem Ausbruch von Tränen, der ihm

wunderbar wohltat. O wie lange hatte er nicht mehr weinen können! Die Tränen flossen, die Augen vermochten nichts mehr zu sehen, aber das tödliche Würgen war gelöst, und als er zu sich kam und den Salzgeschmack auf seinen Lippen fühlte und wahrnamm, daß er weine, war ihm einen Augenblick, als sei er wieder ein Kind geworden und wisse nichts von Argem" (544).

The shame that Josephus feels springs not from his flight, but rather from the realization that he had been subjecting himself to so much needless suffering. His misery seems indigestible, but its regurgitation is necessary for rumination.[36] The flow of his tears blinds him momentarily, but his inner vision is clear, and when he tastes the salt of his tears this moment of insight – this *Augenblick* – reminds him of the innocence of childhood, of a time before knowledge of good and evil. The image is not unfamiliar to a reader of Nietzsche: the child signifies earnest play, the freedom of creation, neither bound to moral obligations nor reacting too fervently against them, but rather acknowledging the past with an openness toward the future.[37]

"Er lächelte, er schämte sich ein wenig seines Weinens, stand endlich auf und stezte seine Wanderung fort. Er fühlte sich unsicher, wußte niht, wohin seine Flucht führen und was mit ihm werden solle, wie ein Kind kam er sich vor, aber es war kein Kampf und Wollen in ihm, er fühlte sich leichter und wie geführt, wie von einer fernen, guten Stimme gerufen und gelockt, als wäre seine Reise nicht eine Flucht, sondern eine Heimkehr. Er wurde müde, und die Vernunft auch, sie schwieg oder ruhte sich aus oder kam sich entbehrlich vor" (544).

[36] See *Genealogy of Morals*, second essay:
[37] See *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, "On the Three Metamorphoses": "The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a wheel rolling out of itself, a first movement, a sacred yes-saying" (Nietzsche *TSZ* 17).

Just as in Hesse's essays on religion, this affirmative fatalist orientation senses or acknowledges something beyond or greater than the subject, "a God or an 'It,'" and feels as though called by it. Yet, despite there being "no struggle or wanting in him," it was indeed wanting that brought him here. For a moment now the inner life of Josephus and the forces at work around him appear aligned. He is no longer fleeing, but traveling homeward, though he knows not where. Even reason ceases to dictate his actions; the guiding force on his journey is suddenly the feeling of unity between his own sense of self and the world around him. The conditional, hypothetical mood of this thought and action – that he moves "like being called and coaxed by a distant, good voice, as if his journey were not a flight" – speaks to the indeterminacy of his compulsion. His fate is at once a matter of active desire and passive contingency, the ever evolving point of their confluence through time, and "reason appear[s] dispensable": as an aesthetic phenomenon existence is suddenly bearable by virtue of the beautiful accord between his inner life and the outer world.

Reason is, however, of rather central importance to Josephus's well-being and sanity, but primarily as regards the internal narrative of his self, the narrativization of his life and the integration of his experiences into a coherent image and story of his self. This process is thematized through its piecemeal performance within the text. When Josephus comes to a watering hole to rest for the night, he overhears two travelers, an older man and a younger man, discussing their respective journeys and destinations. They speak of their travels and their mutual desire to find a father confessor, the younger man explicitly naming Josephus Famulus and describing his gentle way with penitents. The older man scoffs at his description of this "dreadfully pious" man and goes on to describe the father

confessor whom he seeks, Dion Pugil, whose reputation aptly suits his moniker.

> "[M]an nennt ihn Dion Pugil, das heißt den Faustkämpfer, weil er sich mit allen Teufeln rauft, und wenn einer ihm seine Schandtaten beichtet, dann, mein Guter, seufzt der Pugil nicht und behält das Maul, sondern legt los und tut dem Mann den Rost herunter, daß es eine Art hat. Manche soll er verprügelt haben, einen hat er eine ganze Nacht auf nacktne Knien in den Steinen knien lassen und ihm dann erst noch auferlegt, vierzig Groschen den Armen zu geben. Das ist ein Mann, Brüderchen, du wirst sehen und staunen; wenn er dich so richtig anschaut, dann schlottert dir schon das Gebein, durch und durch blickt dich der" (547).

Josephus is intrigued by this man who handles his penitents with such force and violence, pondering as well his own reputation as a gentle and kind father confessor. As he hears his own person described in such stark contrast to Dion Pugil, his vision of himself as well as of his journey takes further shape, and after listening a while longer decides that it is to this Dion Pugil that his journey will take him. "Dieser berühmte Beichtvater, Seelenrichter und Ratgeber würde auch für ihn einen Rat, ein Urteil, eine Strafe, einen Weg wissen; ihm wollte er sich stellen wie einem Vertreter Gottes und willig annehmen, was er ihm verordnen würde" (549). Still plagued by the guilt of having abandoned his post, Josephus longs to confess his own sins and see himself properly punished. This seems the most reasonable path for him, a fitting conclusion to this episode, his crisis of faith and self.

Traveling and finding Dion, the deep intertwinement between these crises – that of faith and of the self – reveals itself as Josephus must negotiate between his expectations and reality and come to understand the tragic nature of his subjectivity. His

path crosses serendipitously with the aged and quiet Dion, who, it seems, is also on a journey of his own, and the two walk together for days until finally the elder invites Josephus to confess. The younger father confessor bares his soul: in his confession, he narrativizes his experience into a logical sequence, he leaves no detail out of his account, from the years spent in isolation to his impressions and prejudices of Dion himself, and, after talking for hours, prepares himself for his punishment.

> "Die Sonne stand schon tief, als er zu Ende gesprochen hatte. Der alte Dion hatte mit unermüdlicher Aufmerksamkeit zugehört und sich jeder Unterbrechung und Frage enthalten. Und auch jetzt, wo die Beichte zu Ende war, kam kein Wort von seinen Lippen. Er erhob sich schwerfällig, blickte Josef mit großer Freundlichkeit an, neigte sich zu ihm, küßte ihn auf die Stirn und machte das Kreuz über ihm. Erst später fiel es Josef ein, daß dies ja dieselbe stumme, brüderliche und auf Urteilsspruch verzichtende Gebärde war, mit welcher er selbst so viele Beichtende entlassen hatte" (556).

Dion's "tireless attention" and refraining from "interruption and question," his silence in the wake of the confession, his slow movement, and finally his kind gaze and gentle kiss – it is all familiar and comfortable, but it surprises Josephus and almost disappoints him. After some brooding contemplation, however, he accepts it: "der Blick und Bruderkuß Dions hatte ihm genügt, es war still in ihm, und bald sank er in wohltätigen Schlaf" (557).

With the confession, Josephus's journey has indeed proven itself to be a homecoming (*eine Heimkehr*) rather than a flight, though it is as if home returns to him through Dion's kindness and charity. The gateway of the moment brings the past and future together in the present, disrupting his expectations for change while affirming the

past in its repetition. Fate takes shape here not as the moment of death and physical sacrifice, but as a psychological phenomenon, a reckoning with the past that determines the orientation toward the future and death. Anticipating punishment, Josephus wants and expects to regret his past and resent himself, but Dion brings him home to himself and employs his own methods to calm his heart and help him affirm his fate. His future need not be filled with rueful thoughts, nor need it be unduly proud, but rather at peace, acknowledging the past and the present situation in order to make life meaningful into the future.

The morning after his long confession, Josephus follows Dion back to his hermitage and begins living with him, watching and learning from him, led to a new home, but having undergone a kind of spiritual transformation. While this new life reminds him of the one he left, there is one fundamental difference: "Nur war er jetzt nicht mehr allein, er lebte im Schatten und Schutz eines andern, und so war es denn doch ein vollkommen anderes Leben" (557). Indeed, Josephus Famulus now fulfills his namesake as a sort of servant to Dion Pugil and feels himself no longer languishing in isolation, but rather living as part of a small community which itself seems to mirror the greater context of God's creation.

During their time together Josephus becomes increasingly aware that his sense of self is bound up within his religiosity, not only in that he identifies as a believer and an ascetic, but in the continuous confrontation with fate required by his chosen practice of his faith. Confession comes in this context to function as a conceit for the existential-psychological reckoning with fate discussed in the previous chapter as Hesse's recognition of the divine within the human being. In the assessment and affirmation of

fate, the subject negotiates its position in the *Schuldzusammenhang des Lebendigen*, but a father confessor, whose days are consumed by considerations of guilt, must reckon endlessly with fate. This Dion explains after Josephus asks him one days why he did not prescribe a terrible punishment for his confession when first they met, but rather met him with gentle kindness. The old man answers:

> "Nun, so laß es gut sein. Auch habe ich dir ja damals eine strenge und lange Buße auferlegt, wenn schon ohne Worte. Ich habe dich mitgenommen und als meinen Diener behandelt und dich zu dem Amt zurückgeführt und gezwungen, dem du dich hättest entziehen wollen. ... Die Weltleute sind Kinder, mein Sohn. Und die Heiligen – nun, die kommen nicht zu uns beichten. Wir aber, du und ich und unseresgleichen, wir Büßer und Sucher und Weltflüchtige, wir sind keine Kinder und sind nicht unschuldig und sind nicht durch Strafpredigten in Ordnung zu bringen. Wir, wir sind die eigentlichen Sünder, wir Wissenden und Denkenden, die wir vom Baum der Erkenntnis gegessen haben, und wir sollten einander also nicht wie Kinder behandeln, die man mit der Rute streicht und wieder laufen läßt. Wir entlaufen ja nach einer Beichte und Buße nicht wieder in die Kinderwelt, wo man Feste feiert und Geschäfte macht und gelegentlich einander totschlägt, wir erleben die Sünde nicht wie einen kurzen, bösen Traum, den man durch Beichte und Opfer wieder von sich abtut; wir weilen in ihr, wir sind niemals unschuldig, wir sind immerzu Sünder, wir weilen in der Sünde und im Brand unseres Gewissens, und wir wissen, daß wir unsere große Schuld niemals werden bezahlen können, es sei denn, daß Gott uns nach unserem Hinscheiden gnädig ansieht und in seine Gnade aufnimmt. ... Wir haben es nicht mit dieser oder jener

> Entgleisung oder Übeltat zu tun, sondern immerdar mit der Urschuld selbst; darum kann einer von uns den andern nur des Mitwissens und der Bruderliebe versichern, nicht aber ihn durch eine Strafe heilen" (564-5).

Josephus, in his eager wish to learn from Dion, administered his own punishment without realizing that it was his punishment. This image is the core of Dion's explanation: a punishment must correspond to the belief of the penitent, else it is ineffective to teach him anything. That is to say: even in confession one seeks to justify existence aesthetically, which requires an accord between subject and world that here corresponds to the affirmation of fate (in the act of narrativizing oneself and one's past) and the good faith that sacrifice (in the form of the prescribed punishment) will endow the past with meaning for the future. "The people of the world are children," they conceive of their sins as singular transgressions that can be atoned for through acts of prayer or punishment, thus Dion helps them to overcome their guilt by prescribing punishments that accord with their psychological and aesthetic sense of justice. But Josephus, as a fellow father confessor, has been the desert sand into which the confessions of other flow, has felt *Mitschuld* and recognized the vast and complicated web of interdependence and shared responsibility in the guilt nexus (*Schuldzusammenhang*) that is fate.

What unites the two men is their shared awareness of "original sin itself" in the "fire of [their] conscience," the knowledge that all of their knowledge and piety can only ever be appeals to grace. Whether this be understood as divine forgiveness for their sins or, as Dion suggests, a reassuring hope that "God will regard [their] departure from life mercifully," it represents, as Kenneth Calhoon puts it, an antidote against the weight of history, especially as this takes shape with every confession insofar as the past gains its

character and becomes meaningful through narration. And not only narration, but the narrativization of events, thoughts, and actions from the perspective of a subject likewise implicated in the web of guilt and who stakes with every pronunciation a meaningful sense of self and world. Thus Josephus sees that the "joint knowledge and brotherly love" with which Dion received his confession performs its function in accordance with the faith motivating, detailed by, and seeking consolation in the act of the confession: it recognizes that every confession contains its own recipe for forgiveness and expiation, that the pronunciation and affirmation of fate that it contains is itself the appeal to grace. Led back to the life that he once sought to flee, Josephus rediscovers its meaning for him as the purpose and conciliatory power of confession, of narrativization, so as to make sense of the past and orient himself toward the future.

Josephus's intense and express inwardness (*Innerlichkeit*) directs itself toward the service to and reverence for Dion as a father confessor. The world accords most harmoniously with his inner life where he is able to maintain a comfortable degree of isolation and devote himself to the practice of inward reflection. In this way his *Innerlichkeit* is not solipsistically oriented and thus his affirmative fatalism is ethically directed toward others through the service that he provides as father confessor. His sacrifice, his sense of duty and denial of desire, his dedication to his penitents – it all issues from that profound recognition of the inescapable web of guilt in which he tarries and of which he is ever aware.

Since his entire life is more or less spent pondering the paradoxes of faith, sin, guilt, and grace, it comes as no surprise that Josephus is quite at peace with the inevitability of not only his own death, but of Dion's as well. As the elder, Dion draws

attention to this, to his own impending departure from life, and invites the younger to aid him in digging his grave as he feels death approaching. The daily task of digging in the hard earth seems to return a certain vivacity to Dion, "als bereite die Arbeit ihm Vergnügen" (566). One day Dion explains:

> "'Du wirst eine Palme auf mein Grab pflanzen', sagte er einmal bei dieser Arbeit. 'Vielleicht wirst du noch von ihren Früchten essen. Wenn nicht, so wird ein anderer es tun. Ich habe je und je einen Baum gepflanzt, aber doch zu wenige, allzu wenige. Manche sagen, ein Mann sollte nicht sterben, ohne einen Baum gepflanzt zu haben und einen Sohn zu hinterlassen. Nun, ich hinterlasse einen Baum und hinterlasse dich, du bist mein Sohn'" (566).

The promise of the spiritual sacrifice embodied by Dion and Josephus as father confessors is mirrored in the palm to be planted upon Dion's grave. Just as their asceticism and contemplative lives are to inspire others and help them along their way, so the palm, growing out of the earth nourished by Dion's body, shall bear fruit to feed and help others who pass by. That "one should not die without having planted a tree and leaving behind a son" speaks to the general notion in Hesse's writing as well as throughout the tradition of tragic narrative that no generation lives or dies for its own sake, but rather that death is by necessity – and by virtue of its necessity – not only "an expression of the subjugation of guilty life to the law of natural life," as Benjamin puts it, but also always a gesture, however traumatic, that remains with and influences the living. But all of this even reflects on the nature of the text itself: the value of a life and meaning of its end reside in its lingering afterlife, and the act of narrative composition is the gesture that preserves it for posterity. Its sacrificial component lies in the decision

(cutting-off) of what to write, how to compose, what to omit and what to enshrine in written language for the future.

To accompany the palm that shall bear fruit upon his grave, Dion provides a narrative that shall likewise remain with Josephus long after his death, and which perhaps even Josephus shall recount to inspire others. Dion finally tells Josephus the story of how he came to be traveling at the same time when the two met years ago: he was likewise fleeing his own post, having grown bored and overcome with despair, but had heard tell of a father confessor named Josephus Famulus whose odd yet gentle treatment of his penitents had intrigued him. So he sought to find this man and confess to him, to see what strange power he might have. After fortuitously finding Josephus and learning that he, too, was suffering terrible doubts, he felt as though God had brought them together to learn from one another, and so Dion took the younger man under his wing to help him rediscover and create new meaning in his life. Finally he says in reference to the thoughts of suicide that plagued them both:

> "Es ist nicht bloß eine Sünde und Torheit, sich einen solchen Tod zu bereiten, obwohl es unserm Erlöser ein kleines ist, auch diese Sünde zu vergeben. Aber es ist auch überdies jammerschade, wenn ein Mensch in Verzweiflung stirbt. Die Verzweiflung schickt uns Gott nicht, um uns zu töten, er schickt sie uns, um neues Leben in uns zu erwecken. Wenn er uns den aber den Tod schickt, Josef, wenn er uns von der Erde und vom Leibe losmacht und uns hinüberruft, so ist das eine große Freude. Einschlafen dürfen, wenn man müde ist, und eine Last fallen lassen dürfen, die man sehr lang getragen hat, das ist eine köstliche, eine wunderbare Sache" (569).

The sentiment lies at the core of affirmative fatalism: that "fate leads to death," as Benjamin puts it, but this death should come as a sweet release from the mortal coil, and whatever suffering that leads to it should not grip the human subject with despair and inspire suicide, but rather should motivate and inspire action that will echo into the future. Despair, issuing from tragic insight, as in the recognition of the inescapable web of guilt, should "awaken new life" in the subject and drive one to create meaning from that insight.

That night, Dion dies in his sleep. "[Josephus] begrub ihn, er pflanzte den Baum auf das Grab und erlebte noch das Jahr, in welchem der Baum die ersten Früchte trug" (570). These final sentences walk forward succinctly and logically, eschewing excessive sentimentality and closing the narrative with the fulfillment of the promise of the palm tree, which Josephus, in seeing its first fruits, likewise fulfills for Dion as his son and spiritual heir.

Indischer Lebenslauf

The third and final *Lebenslauf* tells the story of a prince named Dasa who, after his father's death and in light of his stepmother's sinister ambition to put her own son on the throne, is stolen away by one of the high brahmins and sent to live with the shepherds who guard the king's holy cows. His fate unfolds through a series of twists and intrigue a bit denser than the previous two narratives, thus this analysis will remain isolated to a series of formidable moments in the text, but as Dasa's tale progresses, it becomes clear to any reader of Hesse already familiar with *Siddhartha* that a very similar story unfolds which echoes many of the themes from *Der Regenmacher* and *Der Beichtvater* while also

developing the ideas of Hesse's essay *Ein Stückchen Theologie*. Namely, Dasa is drawn out of innocence into guilt, must reckon with despair, and eventually chooses to seek comfort in faith.

Dasa lives a long time among the shepherds, encountering one day a yogi who so impresses him that he begins to daydream of going to live as his pupil, but he is soon entranced by a young woman, Pravati, and asks her father for her hand in marriage. He consents and Dasa is brought to live with the family, working their land with them and finding great joy in his union with Pravati. He is so overcome by her beauty and his feelings that he desires nothing more than to be bound together with her in an eternal present.

> "Von manchen Göttern und Heiligen erzählt man Geschichten, daß sie, von einer entzückenden Frau bezaubert, dieselbe tage-, monde- und jahrelang umarmt hielten und mit ihr verschmolzen blieben, ganz in Lust versunken, jeder anderen Richtung vergessend. So hätte auch Dasa sich sein Los und seine Liebe gewünscht. Indessen war ihm anderes beschieden, und sein Glück währte nicht lange" (579).

To extend their embraces "for days, months, and years" is his deepest desire, to make eternal each moment that he basks in her presence, but "his fortune [does] not last long." The seeming innocence of his love is corrupted within a year by the experience of profound loss.

Soon enough his stepbrother, the king Nala, steals Pravati away while hunting in the area and hides her in his tent. Dasa is cut to the core; he feels all his joy and his life torn away from him. After days of stalking Nala and watching the tent, recognizing

Pravati inside, he is driven by anger to kill his stepbrother. He waits in a tree and leaps down upon the king, striking him with his slingshot and leaving him dead, for no sooner does he realize what he has done than he recognizes that the terrible deed has doomed him as well. Thrust into the world of guilt, Dasa flees into the wilderness, where he ponders for a long time what has become of him.

> "Während er vom Baum gesprungen war, während er im Rausch der Tat seine Schleuder gewirbelt und den Tod entsendet hatte, war ihm so gewesen, als lösche er auch sein eigenes Leben damit aus, als entließe er die letzte Kraft und werfe sich, mit dem tötenden Steine fliegend, selber in den Abgrund der Vernichtung, einverstanden mit dem Untergang, wenn nur der gehaßte Feind enen Augenblick vor ihm fiele" (581).

Here Dasa's relationship to desire and time is inverted: whereas with Pravati he sought to make the beauty and innocence of their love last an eternity, here he seeks to exact revenge and inflict pain just to see "the hated foe fall before him for a moment," and, dooming himself to be haunted by this deed for the rest of his life, "throws himself, flying along with the deadly stone, into the abyss of annihilation." Indeed, the moments that he would like to make eternal do become so in memory, but so does his act of murder. The loss of his joy is avenged not with the intention of reclaiming it, but rather with the embrace of his own destruction. And its description, the stacked clauses that illustrate the attack, the repeated images of "the abyss" and "downfall" – the prose spirals, *gewirbelt* like the slingshot, through his mind.

For a long time he lives as an outlaw in the wilderness, his momentary deed living on as the sentence to isolation, until finally one day he comes upon a place that seems

very familiar to him: "[Ein] Gefühl von Wiederkehr und Heimat...führte ihn Wege, die seine Füße von selbst zu finden schienen, bis er...zu einer winzigen Hütte gelangte, und vor der Hütte an der Erde saß der regungslose Yogin" (584). Again in the presence of this holy man, Dasa feels a sense of relief and peace, and makes up his mind to stay and live alongside the old yogi. After some time, overcome with frustration at his failed attempts to meditate and find the stillness that the yogi seems to have achieved, he confesses his life to him and begs him to teach him his ways. Like Josephus, he bares his soul to the old man, but unlike Dion, this teacher does not receive him entirely sympathetically:

> "Der Yogin hatte dem Ausbruch ruhig mit niedergeschlagenen Augen zugehört. Jetzt schlug er sie auf und richtete seinen Blick auf Dasas Gesicht, einen hellen, durchdringenden, beinah unerträglich festen, gesammelten und lichten Blick, und während er Dasas Gesicht betrachtete und seiner hastigen Erzählung nachdachte, verzog sein Mund sich langsam zu einem Lächeln und zu einem Lachen, mit lautlosem Lachen schüttelte er den Kopf und sagte lachend: 'Maya! Maya!'" (588).

The anticipation built by the description of the gaze, like the building tension and frustration in Dasa's heart, is undercut suddenly by the old man's laughter, which, although silent, is then intensified by its doubling: "zu einem Lachen, mit lautlosem Lachen."

"Ganz verwirrt und beschämt," Dasa gapes as the yogi goes back about his business, and then ponders the meaning of the laugh and exclamation (588). His questions, like so many of these inward trains of thought, run one after another until meeting stagnation: "Er konnte es nicht enträtseln" (589). After much time ruminating –

"seine Gedanken kauten an diesem Gelächter herum wie an einer harten Wurzel" – he begins to digest the experience:

> "'Maya! Maya!' Was das Wort ungefähr meine, wußte er halb, halb ahnte er es, und auch die Art, wie der Lachende es ausgerufen hatte, schien einen Sinn erraten zu lassen. Maya, das war Dasas Leben, Dasa Jugend, Dasa süßes Glück und bitteres Elend, Maya war die schöne Pravati, Maya war die Liebe und ihre Lust, Maya das ganze Leben. Dasas Leben und aller Menschen Leben, alles war in dieses alten Yogin Augen Maya, war etwas wie eine Kinderei, ein Schauspiel, ein Theater, eine Einbildung, ein Nichts in bunter Haut, eine Seifenblase, war etwas, worüber man mit einem gewissen Entzücken lachen und was man zugleich verachten, keinesfalls aber ernst nehmen konnte" (589).

His meditation on the idea, whether he knows it or not, breaks through stagnation by means of repetition, as illustrated in the paratactical chain of predicates. Repetition describes, after all, the form of a practice, the devotion to a idea in praxis, even where that praxis is internal or abstract. As he equates Maya one by one with particularities – "Dasa's life, Dasa's youth, Dasa's sweet joy and bitter sorrow" – the word's meaning unfolds as a blanket concept for all of the phenomena and experiences of the ephemeral world. But it also prepares both Dasa and the reader for an eventual challenge to this understanding of Maya as "child's play, a play, a theater, a delusion, a nothingness."

Particularly this final equivalence with nothingness does not sit well with Dasa, and he decides that this yogi's ways will remain unobtainable for him. Before he departs, however, he asks the old man to tell him more about Maya, but the master does not say a word. Instead, he hands Dasa a bowl and directs him to fetch fresh water. Dasa does as he

is told, but as ever his thoughts swirl in his mind, and the narration moves back and forth between his actions and his inner monologue.

> "Dasa gehorchte und lief, und Abschiedsgefühle zuckten ihm im Herzen, da er zum letztenmal diesen kleinen Fußpfad zur Quelle ging, zum letztenmal die leichte Schale mit dem glatten, abgegriffenen Rande hinübertrug zu dem kleinen Wasserspiegel, in dem die Hirschzungen, die Wölbungen der Baumkronen und in versprengten lichten Punkten das süße Himmelsblau abgebildet standen, der nun beim Darüberbeugen zum letztenmal auch sein eigenes Gesicht in bräunlichem Dämmer abbildete. Er tauchte die Schale ins Wasser, gedankenvoll und langsam, er füllte Unsicherheit und konnte nicht ins klare darüber kommen, warum er so Wunderliches empfinde, und warum es ihm, da er noch zu wandern entschlossen war, weh getan habe, daß der Alte ihn nicht eingeladen hatte, noch zu bleiben, vielleicht für immer zu bleiben" (591).

As he dips the bowl into the "Wasserspiegel," his conflicting feelings are reflected through the relationship of interior and exterior, as once again a repetitive series of formulations gives the reader access to Dasa's thoughts.

But the external world enters into the narrative here primarily through its relation to Dasa's thoughts, insofar as it is perceived as a reflection of his internal world and concerns. This tendency of Hesse's writing is noted in Gerhart Mayer's article "Hermann Hesse: Mystische Religiosität und dichterische Form":

> "Vor 1917 dominierte in Hesses Werken ein durschaus konventioneller, realistisch gehaltener Stilwille. Seit dem *Demian* aber wird die äußere Handlung in ihrer Eigenbedeutung weitgehend entwertet. Sinclairs Umwelt – Etlernhaus, Heimat-

> und Universitätsstadt – bleibt weithin ungestaltet. Nur einige wenige plastisch geformte Charaktere tragen die Handlung. Diese besitzt lediglich die Aufgabe, einen gewissen zeitlichen Ablauf zu veranschaulichen, um einen äußeren Maßstab für die innere Entwicklung der Hauptgestalt zu gewinnen. An markanten Stellen, wo die Umwelt plötzlich in lebendiger Gegenständlichkeit aufleuchtet, wohnt der Handlung eine hinweisende, zeichenhafte Funktion inne: Sie spiegelt Sinclairs seelisch-geistige Entwicklung an deren entscheidenden Wendepunkten. Damit enthüllt sich ein Formprinzip, das im Wesentlichen bis zum *Glasperlenspiel* seine Gültigkeit behält: die raum-zeitliche Wirklichkeit wird nicht mehr ernst genommen. … Die Poesie sollte ihm nunmehr die Wesenstiefen der Seele erhellen und dadurch seinem sehnsüchtigen Erlösungs- und Vollendungsdrang Vorschub leisten" (444).

Thus "the hart's-tongue ferns, the arches of the treetops," and the "sweet blue of the sky" provide at once a comfortable and enclosed space, a familiar realm that has also come to envelop and limit Dasa in his development. Feeling as though he cannot grasp the meaning of Maya, having given up his desire for tutelage but still driven to follow the yogi's commands, he finds himself torn between the desire to stay and to leave, and the repetitious meditation on "the last time" brings the external world to bear on his interior as a reminder of the dual nature of the world in its impermanence and the haunting power of memory.

This tension regarding the distinction between exterior and interior, between the material and abstract, which is also to say: between reality and illusion – this characterizes the essence of Dasa's personal conflict at the heart of *Indischer Lebenslauf*,

though it will also come to bear upon the Castalian Knecht as an ethical problem. For what proceeds from this moment at the spring is a series of events that rattle Dasa to the core: Pravati emerges from the woods and embraces him, tells him that he is to be named king, and leads him back to the capital city where he assumes the throne and becomes ruler of his late father's realm. He sires a son who becomes the center of his world, and for the boy's sake and the sake of his kingdom Dasa engages in a war with a neighboring land after acts of aggression at the border. He is deeply conflicted about his course of action, but finds that once he has begun, he cannot relent, and the war rages on until finally his city is invaded, his son is murdered, and he and Pravati are taken prisoner. As he lies beaten and bloody in a cell, he closes his eyes, anticipating death, but when he opens them again, he finds that he is still standing bent over the water, dipping the bowl in the spring, and that the entire life that he just lived was nothing but a dream.

Standing shaken, horrified, and relieved, Dasa replays the memories through his head again and again, on the one hand convinced of their reality and on the other hand amazed at how intensely a mere illusion could affect him.

> "Er hatte weder eine Schlacht noch einen Sohn verloren, er war weder Fürst noch Vater gewesen; wohl aber hatte der Yogin seinen Wunsch erfüllt und ihn über Maya belehrt: Palast und Garten, Bücherei und Vogelzucht, Fürstensorgen und Vaterliebe, Krieg und Eifersucht, Liebe zu Pravati und heftiges Mißtrauen gegen sie, alles war Nichts – nein, nicht Nichts, es war Maya gewesen (610)!

Although none of what he experienced was real, it was also "not nothing": he is left deeply stirred by the dream, all of its details linger in memory as though it were real. Indeed, it is to some extent indistinguishable from reality, insofar as what is real and past

lays claim to its status through its material effects or the memory thereof, in perceptibility and observability. But an experience entirely internal to the subject, while imperceptible to other subjects, remains no less burned into memory and asserts its power over the subject's sense of self and world. This Dasa likewise recognizes about the experience:

> "O wie rasch, wie rasch und schauerlich, wie grausam, wie gründlich war er über Maya belehrt worden, wie viele Jahre voll von Erlebnissen schrumpften in Augenblicke zusammen, geträumt war alles, was eben noch drangvolle Wirklichkeit schien, geträumt war vielleicht alles jenes andre, was früher geschehen war, die Geschichten vom Fürstensohn Dasa, seinem Hirtenleben, seiner Heirat, seiner Rache an Nala, seiner Zuflucht beim Einsiedler; Bilder waren sie, wie man sie an einer geschnitzten Palastwand bewundern mag, wo Blumen, Sterne, Vögel, Affen und Götter zwischen Laubwerk zu sehen waren. Und war das, was er gerade jetzt erlebte und vor Augen hatte, dies Erwachen aus dem Fürsten- und Kriegs- und Kerkertum, dies Stehen bei der Quelle, diese Wasserschüssel, aus der er eben ein wenig verschüttet hatte, samt den Gedanken, die er sich da machte – war alles dies denn nicht am Ende aus demselben Stoff, war es nicht Traum, Blendwerk, Maya" (611)?

The distinction between Dasa's actual experiences and the dream becomes blurred as he contemplates the psychological and emotional effects of his memories. "Everything was dreamed," but "perhaps everything else that happened before was dreamed" as well. The events, recalled in thought, fall into a sequence of images compared to a relief carving in which they flow into one another lacking any essential differentiation between true and false, lived or dreamed. Where doubt is cast upon the supposed reality of all experience,

the question shifts to one of value. What is to be learned? What is to be gained? And finally: what is to be done?

The dreadful memory of the vision, in which Dasa was saddled with the ultimate responsibility of sovereignty and in which, despite his best efforts, he could not manage but to fall prey to the consequent dangers and follies of that responsibility, taints the thought of venturing back out into the world. In Dasa grow fear and doubt – despair – regarding the myriad possibilities of his life beyond the woods. Pondering likewise the possibility of reincarnation, or even to understand it as a metaphor, there seems to be no escape from the cycle of desire and disappointment, of gain and loss, of joy and sorrow. Even to take up the life of the yogi, to seek peace and to extinguish desire, may only lead again to frustration or suffering. Finally Dasa, fulfilling his namesake (*dasa*: servant), decides that at least to return to the yogi and serve him, to learn from him but more importantly to devote himself to the service, will be easier and allow him to live with a cleaner conscience.

> "Es war ein Dienst, den man von ihm verlangt hatte, es war ein Auftrag, man konnte ihm gehorchen und ihn ausführen, es war besser als zu sitzen und sich Methoden der Selbsttötung auszudenken, es war ja überhaupt Gehorchen und Dienen weit leichter und besser, weit undschuldiger und bekömmlicher als Herrschen und Verantworten, so viel wußte er. Gut, Dasa, nimm also die Schale, fülle sie hübsch mit Wasser und trage sie zu deinem Herrn hinüber" (612-3)!

The service to which he ultimate commends himself is once again reminiscent of Hesse's essay on theology, the movement from guilt into faith, the recognition of some greater power or force, be it natural, social, or spiritual, to which one can devote oneself and be

at ease in a world so full of risk and peril. It is the recognition that one is not individually responsible for the suffering in the world, that one can only do what seems fitting and right to improve one little corner of the world.

Dasa never leaves the forest again. Thus ends the long thought experiment, the Magic Theater of Josef Knecht's *Lebensläufe*. But although this is the end of the novel in its physical, published form, it is not the end of Knecht's contemplation of fate and the possibilities for his own life. For if the reader is to take the editor and narrator at his word that these stories are to be understood as the writing exercises of a young Josef Knecht, then their function is not merely to close the novel with a playful exploration of Knecht's possible reincarnations, but rather to shed light on the development of his relationship to his own fate in Castalia – one that does not so cleanly reflect the conclusions drawn in each of the stories.

Castalian Knecht

The "real" Josef Knecht, the protagonist of the novel's central story arc and diegetic author of the *Lebensläufe*, is an orphan raised within the educational province of Castalia whose natural intelligence and industriousness help him rise through the ranks of the elite schools, eventually becoming a remarkably young but gifted *Glasperlenspielmeister*, one of the highest offices in Castalia. During his time studying, he explores scholarly realms relatively unconventional for the average Castalian, namely history and eastern philosophy, but as a skilled Glass Bead Game player, it behooves him to cast a wide net across disciplines, for the ostensible purpose of the game is to put ideas from various fields – most popularly music and mathematics – into dialectical play with

one another, for example:

> "...das Nebeneinanderstellen, Gegeneinanderführen und endliche harmonische Zusammenführen zweier feindlicher Themes oder Ideen, wie Gesetze und Freiheit, Individuum und Gemeinschaft, und man legte großen Wert darauf, in einem solchen Spiel beide Themata oder Thesen vollkommen gleichwertig under parteilos durchzuführen, aus These und Antithese möglichst rein die Synthese zu entwickeln" (40).

This most developed of games is described by the narrator of Knecht's biography (and editor of his posthumous writings) as a sort of Hegelian play with concepts that obtains a religious significance for its most devoted practitioners and players. "Es bedeutete eine erlesene, symbolhafte Form des Suchens nach dem Vollkommenen, eine sublime Alchimie, ein Sichannähern an den über allen Bildern und Vielheiten in sich einigen Geist, also an Gott" (40). Knecht grows into one such devoted player and master of the game, and in the true spirit of the game seeks to broaden the horizon of his understanding to the greatest extent possible.

Castalia is, for the most part, however, a fundamentally uncreative realm. Students as well as practitioners of the game are not generally encouraged to articulate their "own" ideas, but rather always to play with pre-established concepts and motifs, their creative drive sublimated in dialectical extrapolation and synthesis. But during certain years of study students are asked to perform writing exercises in which they practice imagining their lives in different times and cultures, indulging in the study of the various languages and stylistic traditions associated with the imagined reincarnations. Three of these *Lebensläufe* by Knecht are retained and appended by the narrator, who reveals their

pedagogical purpose and thereby formal function in the composition of the novel: "Denn natürlich waren die meisten dieser imaginierten Vorexistenzen nicht nur Stilübungen und historische Studien, sondern auch Wunschbilder und gesteigerte Selbstbildnisse: die Verfasser der meisten Lebensläufe schilderten sich in demjenigen Kostüm und als denjenigen Charakter, als welcher zu erscheinen und sich zu verwirklichen ihr Wunsch und Ideal war" (119). There is scant further mention of the imagined biographies throughout the rest of this central biography of Castalian Knecht, but taking seriously the narrator's comments about their general nature provides invaluable insight into the development of this "real" Knecht.

The previous three sections walked through and explored the aspects of the biographies that vividly expressed meditations on the nature of Knecht as an introspective subject becoming increasingly aware of how his subjectivity, position in the world, and orientation toward death are conditioned and determined. Throughout them dominates the dialectical spirit of the Glass Bead Game, especially the play with those examples mentioned earlier in the narrator's introduction: "laws and freedom, individuality and community." The stories function as the young Knecht's meditations on the possible paths and orientations of his own spiritual devotion to the life of the mind, but, generally speaking, each concludes very similarly: the character takes a relatively conservative affirmative fatalist stance in relation to the purpose and meaning of his social role. The stories reveal that the young Knecht maintains a profound respect for tradition and the absolute integrity of the Castalian order; his imagined personalities are each willing, in spite perhaps of some terrible knowledge, to give themselves wholly to spiritual institutions or traditions for the sake of a community or the ideal of personal inner peace.

But the older Castalian Knecht, whose death organizationally precedes the presentation of the appended biographies, takes a radically different path, though it is no less informed by his introspection and spiritual devotion. As the end of his story approaches, the reader finds that he is less motivated by an absolute allegiance to the educational institution as an organized body and instead finds his calling beyond Castalia's borders. This is not in spite of the institution, but rather is informed by its core principles, and represents one of the recurring motifs in the *Lebensläufe* which the younger Knecht could only partially appreciate: the dialectical fullness of the world as expressed in the generational relationship between teacher and pupil.

Just as in each biography there is a dominant operative metaphor that illustrates the subject's confrontation and identification of itself with fate, the Castalian Knecht finds order and meaning for his own position within the *Schuldzusammenhang* in music. It is music that first inspires and draws Knecht into the educational institution and an understanding of the Glass Bead Game after, as a young boy, his school is visited by the old Music Master and he is asked to improvise a fugue together with the esteemed teacher. The two play together, the layers of their musical voices building a beautiful contrapuntal composition that leaves a profound impression upon him.

> "Des Knaben Herz wallte von Verehrung, von Liebe für den Meister, und sein Ohr vernahm die Fuge, ihm schien, er höre heute zum erstenmal Musik, er ahnte hinter dem vor ihm entstehenden Tonwerk den Geist, die beglückende Harmonie von Gesetz und Freiheit, von Dienen und Herrschen, er ergab und gelobte sich diesem Geist und diesem Meister, er sah sich und sein Leben und sah die ganze Welt in diesen Minuten vom Geist der Musik geleitet, geordnet und gedeutet, und als das

> Spiel sein Ende gefunden hatte, sah er den Verehrten, den Zauberer und König, noch eine kleine Weile leicht vorgeneigt über den Tasten, mit haldgeschlossenen Lidern, das Gesicht von innen her leise leuchtend, und wußte nicht, sollte er jubeln über die Seligkeit dieser Augenblicke oder weinen, daß sie vorüber waren" (54).

The reader who has taken note of the interwoven and recurring themes of the *Lebensläufe* will see that this scene thoroughly prefigures the development of Knecht's thought throughout the entire novel. Here he is awakened in moments (*Augenblicke*), as future potentiality moves through the present and into the past, anticipating the movement of the music in the awareness of a "spirit behind the tone-work coming into being before him." There is an ordering force that gives the elements of music an aesthetic form which opens itself to interpretation, deftly navigating the tensions of possibility and actuality in "the delightful harmony of law and freedom." The Music Master's calm but ecstatic expression, "shining softly from within," speaks as well to an existential orientation that seeks an accord between the inner and outer world, between impression and expression. The spirit of music described here anticipates the Rainmaker's corporeal, ritual appeal to the villagers beneath the meteor shower, where the rhythm and tone of their prayers are able to quiet their fears.

Knecht's conception of music as a mediating and ordering force follows him in his tenure as student, teacher, and eventual Glass Bead Game Master. Reflecting on his ascendancy, he remembers that first encounter with the Music Master and distills from it the also the spirit of Castalia itself, a spirit of dialectical play:

> "Die Szene im Klavierzimmer, das Hereintreten des Alten zu dem Knaben,

> wiederholte sich immerzu, unendliche Male, der Meister und der Knabe folgten einander, wie am Draht eines Mechanismus gezogen, so daß es bald nicht mehr zu erkennen war, wer komme und wer gehe, wer führe und wer folge, der Alte oder der Junge. ... Und aus diesem Stadium entwickelte sich eine neue Vorstellung, mehr schon Symbol als Traum, mehr schon Erkenntnis als Bild, nämlich die Vorstellung oder vielmehr Erkenntnis: dieser sinnvoll-sinnlose Rundlauf von Meister und Schüler, dieses Werben der Weisheit um die Jugend, der Jugend um die Weisheit, dieses endlose, beschwingte Spiel war das Symbol Kastaliens, ja war das Spiel des Lebens überhaupt, das in alt und jung, in Tag und Nacht, in Yang und Yin gespalten ohne Ende strömt" (238-9).

The Rainmaker, Father Josephus, and Dasa each participate in this reciprocal relationship, here imagined by Knecht years after the composition of the imagined biographies. Both the teacher and pupil long to learn from one another while also aware of what they have to teach, such that they fulfill their roles where these are most fluidly performed. And even these relationships in their interplay are, to some extent, merely a manifestation of the more fundamental affirmative fatalist comportment, a negotiation of inner and outer worlds and the subject's orientation toward action in light of certain terrible knowledge, namely the indifference of nature and inevitability of death.

But Knecht's attitude toward this relationship must be contrasted with the naïveté of the idealized characters written by his younger self. While each of these is certainly a compelling narrative focused on an affirmatively fatalist subject, the social and historical milieux in which they are imagined are, for the most part, highly apolitical, save for the illusion seen by Dasa in which his sovereignty becomes embroiled in war. Indeed it is the

tension between the three *Lebensläufe* and the life of the "real" Castalian Knecht that provides the novel with significance as regards any materialist reading of affirmative fatalism. For Knecht does not, like the protagonists of the imagined biographies, choose in every case to devote himself entirely to an idealized institution for the sake of its integrity or merely because of his own desires, but rather chooses the trajectory of his life taking into account the broader arc of history. The *Lebensläufe*, on the other hand, while situated historically and meant to function as exercises in historical imagination, do not concretely thematize the social or political implications of their central figures' affirmative fatalism. They are primarily exercises in reconciling the desire for spiritual with the sentiment that Nietzsche articulated with brutal honesty: "only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence still bearable to us."

The *indischer Lebenslauf* presents the reader (and author Knecht) with the question of whether or not an imagined experience – a dream or vision – might leave the kind of lasting impression which one typically finds in traumatic memories. More than this, the question probes into the relationship between memory, thought, and action as regards the imagined experience, and asks whether or not its impression or influence is as valid as that left by real experience. This is, however, a projection in the narrative space of a question that plagues the Castalian Knecht, namely: Can the experiences imagined in the *Lebensläufe* have a lasting impact on his budding worldview and can they come to bear in a meaningful way upon his actual thoughts and actions? The *Lebensläufe* then represent for Knecht what the vision at the spring represented for Dasa: the attempt to draw from creative narrative a productive or insightful lesson about one's actual fate as a living subject in a dynamically developing world that will itself become the narrative

history read by a future generation.

The legacy of tragedy is easily discernible in this formulation, where a subject may contemplate its fate and orientation toward death in consideration of what this action, as gesture, might mean for a future generation. It is this idea that increasingly permeates Knecht's attitude toward the Glass Bead Game and the Castalian educational institution, as he intimates in a speech about the role of the teacher and the game:

> "Nun, ihr wisset so gut wie ich, daß auch das Glasperlenspiel seinen Diabolus in sich stecken hat, daß es zur leeren Virtuosität, zum Selbstgenuß künstlerhafter Eitelkeit, zur Streberei, zum Erwerb von Macht über andere und damit zum Mißbrauch dieser Macht führen kann. Darum bedürfen wir noch einer andern Erziehung als der intellektuellen und haben uns der Moral des Ordens unterstellt, nicht um unser geistigaktives Leben in ein seelischvegetatives Traumleben umzubiegen, sondern im Gegenteil um geistiger Höchstleistungen fähig zu sein. Wir sollen nicht aus der Vita activa in die Vita contemplativa fliehen, noch umgekehrt, sondern zwischen beiden wechselnd unterwegs sein, in beiden zu Hause sein, an beiden teilhaben" (256-7).

The invocation of a *diabolus* is immediately reminiscent of Benjamin's discussion of evil, noted in the earlier second chapter, and its relationship to knowledge, namely in that it tempts one into the depths of isolation and melancholy – a *vita contemplativa* divorced from action, a self-serving *Innerlichkeit*. The knowledge gained by practice of the Glass Bead Game, Knecht insists here, should be put toward purposes that eschew such a descent into nihilism. The "morality of the Order" is meant to guide Glass Bead Game players to find balance between the lofty world of ideas and the world of action, or put

differently: the sense of order provided by the literal Order of Castalia is its morality, a playful, simultaneously contemplative and active engagement with knowledge and its application. But as Knecht continues to climb the ranks of the Order, eventually becoming Glass Bead Game Master, the finer points of what exactly that morality is and what form its application should take, moving between contemplation and action, become an source of increasing concern.

Indeed, up to this point the concrete applications of the game are not made explicit; the novel, as Anni Carlson writes in "Hermann Hesses *Glasperlenspiel* in seinen Wesensgesetzen," is inspired more by an idea than a singular character or biography with its contingent implications (200). "Die Biographie Josef Knechts ist also gleichbedeutend mit der Biographie des persofizierten kastalischen Gewissens" (187). And yet it is the "Castalian conscience" – which is meant to remain, so the narrator insists, impersonal, unindividuated and apolitical – personified in Knecht that eventually turns toward questions of the personal and political, and begins to question its position, as the position of the institution itself, in relation to its historical context, particularly as regards the powers that allow for Castalia's existence. After some years in his role as Glass Bead Game Master, Knecht decides that it is in keeping with the institution's ideals and the Castalian conscience that he must leave the province, explaining in a long letter to the other members of the high council that the knowledge and weight of history have provided him with an insight that is also a warning. The world around Castalia is changing again, political tensions are mounting, and the institution, in his view, is too complacent, too unconcerned with the development of history outside its borders, thoroughly taking its existence for granted. His earlier warning about the *diabolus* of the

game extends here to the whole educational province.

> "Wir sind im Niedergang, der sich vielleicht noch sehr lange hinziehen kann, aber in jedem Falle kann uns nichts Höheres, Schöneres und Wünschenswerteres mehr zufallen, als was wir schon besessen haben, der Weg führt abwärts; wir sind geschichtlich, glaube ich, reif zum Abbau, und er wird unzweifelhaft erfolgen, nicht heut un morgen, aber übermorgen. ... Es wird alsdann auch ohne Zweifel eine kriegerische Ideologie in Schwung kommen und namentlich die Jugend ergreifen, eine Schlagwort-Weltanschauung, nach welcher Gelehrte und Gelertentum, Latein und Mathematik, Bildung und Geistespflege nur soweit als lebensberechtigt gelten, als sie kriegerische Zwecken zu dienen vermögen" (391-2).

The continued existence of Castalia as an idealized realm has been undercut by the reality of the larger context beyond its borders. The language of a "downfall" and a "swing" back toward "a belligerent ideology," the likes of which have not been seen in centuries, echoes Hesse's personal essays on religion, the vacillations between good and evil, beautiful and ugly, that assert themselves with the undeniability of necessity and which must, in Nietzschean fashion, be confronted, accepted, and dealt with in such a way as to make them meaningful and beneficial to the growth of the individual and society. Knecht sees Castalia in danger of becoming a mere tool of the ruling powers, its knowledge exploited to violent and oppressive ends, and so decides that he must leave the province and take his teaching out into the world in hopes of educating and inspiring the younger generation to resist the siren's song of aggressive politics.

Knecht's warning and resignation are rejected by the high council. The other

magisters are consumed by an unwavering devotion to the institution, ever reluctant to acknowledge the social and historical contingencies that both brought it into being and sustain it. Likewise, Master Alexander, with whom Knecht disputes his request, embodies a certain spirit of bureaucracy as well as a general anxiety toward the uncertainty of a world ever in flux. Castalia seeks to remain timeless and ethereal, it wants to be the yogi's hermitage, cut off from the concerns of the outside world and secure in its position. But Knecht doubts the certainty of this position, and instead embraces the uncertainty that comes with his departure from the province, affirming the anxiety that necessarily comes with freedom.

Throughout the novel there dominates an insistence on the impersonality of the Castalian Order and a veneration for absolute devotion to it at the expense of individual recognition, an interesting conversion of the sacrificial gesture into the mundane practice of almost monastic scholars. Knecht represents this ideal and its opposite in beautifully dialectical fashion, as it is his dedication to the fundamental principle of education which leads him to leave the institution. As his biography unfolds, the narrator's foreword takes on greater significance, specifically in his paradoxical definition of personality and Knecht's exemplary status as Castalian.

> "Es ist ja allerdings das, was wir heute under Persönlichkeit verstehen, nun etwas erheblich anderes, als was die Biographen und Historiker früherer Zeiten damit gemeint haben. Für sie, und zwar namentlich für die Autoren jener Epochen, welche eine ausgesprochene biographische Neigung hatten, scheint, so möchte man sagen, das Wesentliche einer Persönlichkeit das Abweichende, das Normwidrige und Einmalige, ja oft geradezu das Pathologische gewesen zu sein,

während wir Heutigen von bedeutenden Persönlichkeiten überhaupt erst dann sprechen, wenn wir Menschen begegnen, denen jenseits von allen Originalitäten und Absonderlichkeiten ein möglichst vollkomenenes Sich-Einordenen ins Allgemeine, ein möglichst vollkommener Dienst am Überpersönlichen gelungen ist" (9).

This strange new-speak of the future where Castalia exists, in which a personality has significance insofar as there is nothing personal in it, is not only inherently contradictory, but it also anticipates its dialectical undoing. For what could fulfill this notion of impersonal personality more perfectly than a figure whose devotion to the Order goes so deep as to declare the Order insufficient to contain the most potent realization of its ideal? This is certainly the overarching irony of the novel. And if the irony of the tragedy of subjectivity consists in the necessary sacrifice that redefines the subject's individuality and its meaning for the future – cutting away at the stone, as Zarathustra put it, to craft oneself – then the irony of the tragedy of Castalia and the Glass Bead Game consists in the necessary sacrifice of one of its great personalities – the disruption of Knecht's departure and death – that redefines their purpose and meaning for future generations. The narrator clues the reader into the ironic and ultimately tragic nature of his story at the beginning of Knecht's biography:

"Knecht gehört zu den Glücklichen, welche recht eigentlich für Kastalien, für den Orden unf dür den Dienst in der Erziehungsbehörde geboren und vorbestimmt scheinen; und wenn ihm auch die Problematik des geistigen Lebens keineswegs unbekannt gelieben ist, so war es ihm doch gegeben, die jedem geistesgeweihten Leben eingeborene Tragik ohne persönliche Bitterkeit zu erleben. Es ist wohl

> auch nicht so sehr diese Tragik selbst, welche uns verlockt hat, der Persönlichkeit Josef Knechts unsre eingehende Betrachtung zu widmen; es ist vielmehr die stille, heitere, ja strahlende Art, mit welcher er sein Schicksal, seine Begabung, sene Bestimmung verwirklichte. Wie jeder bedeutende Mensch hat er sein Daimonion und seinene Amor fati, aber sein Amor fati zeigt sich uns frei von Düsterkeit und Fanatismus" (45).

The string of signifiers – fate, talent, purpose – which Knecht is to "realize" by the end of his story speaks to his being "predetermined" to become a sacrifice himself. The narrator is not, however, tempted to tell Knecht's story because it is merely tragic, but because he realizes his fate in such "a quiet, cheerful, even radiant way," positioning Knecht like a guiding star. He is not, after all, a simple rebel, which the narrator also makes clear (10). Instead his life and legacy are clearly possessed of an insight the narrativization of which shall benefit the generations following him. This is the true essence of his tragic nature and affirmative fatalism: the conflict that arises between him and the Order does not only lead to his seemingly untimely death, but also performs a gesture containing wisdom for the future.

The cheerfulness with which Knecht approaches his fate is in part due to a naïveté differentiated from that of the characters of his *Lebensläufe*, perhaps more akin to an innocence yet unmarred by fear, an emotional and existential comportment toward the uncertainty of the future which, affirming the inevitability of anxiety entailed in freedom, extinguishes the mundane fear of future uncertainty. It is the spirit of music that Knecht so revered as a boy and which thoroughly colors his worldview. Specifically, it is the veneration of specific tonal tendencies and organizations which, he feels and trusts,

mimic the patterns of nature and the forces or movements to which the human being is subject in life. This is the good humor of his *amor fati*, the good faith that the arc of his life will follow a meaningful development that may resound into the future. This is expressed in a poem, "Stufen," that he wrote as a younger student and which recurs to him one day prior to his departure from Castalia.

"Wie jede Blüte welkt und jede Jugend
Dem Alter weicht, blüht jede Lebensstufe,
Blüht jede Weisheit auch und jede Tugend,
Zu ihrer Zeit und darf nicht ewig dauern.
Es muß das Herz bei jedem Lebensrufe
Bereit zum Abschied sein und Neubeginne,
Um sich in Tapferkeit und ohne Trauern
In andre, neue Bindungen zu geben.
Und jedem Anfang wohnt ein Zauber inne,
Der uns beschützt und der uns hilft, zu leben.
Wir sollen heiter Raum um Raum durchschreiten,
An keinem wie an einer Heimat hängen,
Der Weltgeist will nicht fesseln uns und engen,
Er will uns Stuf' um Stufe heben, weiten.
Kaum sind wir heimisch einem Lebenskreise
Und traulich eingewohnt, so droht Erschlaffen,
Nur wer bereit zu Aufbruch ist und Reise,
Mag lähmender Gewöhnung sich entraffen.

Es wird vielleicht auch noch die Todesstunde

Uns neuen Räumen jung entgegensenden,

Des Lebens Ruf an uns wird niemals enden...

Wohlan denn, Herz, nimm Abschied und gesunde" (483-4)!

The poem is a paean to impermanence, echoing the insight of Dasa's vision, the lesson of Maya. The apparent world is not mere illusion, but neither is its reality eternally determinable. Instead, the experience of life moves through time without end, the future passes through the present, the only locus of experience, into the irretrievable past, which may haunt the present in memory, but which is inalterable and lost. To become too acquainted to one space – or one idea, one memory – poses the threat of limp complacency. The "world spirit" instead seeks to drive us through experiences as up steps in some development. Discussing the poem with his friend Tegularius, Knecht is admonished for making the poem too pedantic. But Tegularius certainly reads Knecht's affinity for music in the text:

> "Sein eigentlicher Inhalt ist mit dem Titel 'Stufen' nicht schlecht angedeutet; Ihr hättet aber ebensogut und noch besser 'Musik' darüber schreiben können. Denn nach Abzug jener moralisierenden oder predigenden Haltung ist es recht eigentlich eine Betrachtung über das Wesen der Musik, oder meinetwegen ein Lobgesang auf die Musik, auf ihre stete Gegenwärtigkeit, auf ihre Heiterkeit und Entschlossenheit, auf ihre Beweglichkeitund rastlose Entschlossenheit und Bereitschaft zum Weitereilen, zum Verlassen des eben erst betretenen Raumes oder Raumabschnittes" (412).

Considering its tonal qualities and movement that provide momentary harmony amid

uncertain explorations of discord, this description of music, which once appeared to Knecht as the force ordering and making (at least aesthetic) sense of the world, reflects the journey of the human subject through time, becoming and confronting fate "as the entelechy of events in the field of guilt" (Benjamin *OGTD* PAGE NEEDED). That Knecht conceives of his life so similarly bespeaks the good faith of *amor fati*, an embrace of temporal transience in hope that the whole composition of his life will linger like a beautiful piece in the memories of others. This is the cheerful innocence with which he embraces his fate, whatever it may be, as his path leads him out of Castalia into a future rushing toward him unknown and unseen.

Knecht gaily brushes aside Tegularius's criticism of the poem's pedantry, pointing to the predominance of its essential function over its tone. In so doing he conjures up the language of Nieztsche's Zarathustra, the ambivalence of the *Gesicht* (face/vision) and the need to affirm and cut away aspects of the past and himself in order to craft his fate.

> "Also ich habe eine Einsicht, eine Erkenntis, ein ineeres Gesicht erlebt und möchte den Gehalt und die Moral dieser Einsicht mir selber zurufen und einhämmern. Darum ist das Gedicht mir auch, obwohl ich es nicht wußte, im Gedächtnis gelieben. Mögen diese Verse nun gut oder schlecht sein, ihren Zweck haben sie also erreicht, die Mahnung hat in mir fortgelebt und ist nicht vergessen worden" (413).

The poem not only speaks to the nature of music, as Tegularius observes, but also functions similarly. It lingers like an unforgettable melody or harmony, it returns when the present and the past align to awaken a memory and a thought, and its actual impermanence vis-a-vis its apparent persistence stakes its claim to profundity and

significance. Fate – envisioned as the subject's confrontation with the past and inevitable future death, the moment in which the subject must order and make meaning from experience for the sake of making meaning in the future, the affirmation and incorporation of the *Schuldzusammenhang* as well as the acceptance of endless movement through time – is described by this poem which also strikes Knecht with an awareness of the very phenomenon that it seeks to illustrate.

After leaving Castalia, Knecht takes on a private pupil, Tito, the son of his old friend Plinio. Knecht travels out to the family's mountain villa to meet Tito and finds the boy especially clever and inspiring. Eager to begin teaching him but also sensitive to the young man's need for a degree of freedom and independence, Knecht decides to wait a day before beginning their work together. The next morning he awakes to find Tito outside on the lake shore, performing what appears to be a spontaneous, ecstatic dance to welcome the sunrise over the mountains. Noticing after a moment that he has been seen, Tito seems to shake off his embarrassment by challenging Knecht to swim across the lake with him to see if they can reach the other side before the mountains receding shadow. Knecht, overcome by a fresh zeal for life despite the weakness of age and fatigue from his travels, throws himself into the water and swims after the boy, but in Dionysian fashion, like a sailor answering the sirens' song, is lost to the waves and literally absorbed into this final experience.

> "Er war nach dem Absprung schnell wieder emporgetaucht, entdeckte mit großem Vorsprung vor sich den Schwimmer Tito wieder, fühlte sich von dem Eisigen, Wilden, Feindseligen bitter bedrängt und glaubte noch um die Verringerung des Abstandes, um das Ziel des Wettschwimmens, um die Achtung und

> Kameradschaft, um die Seele des Knaben zu kämpfen, als er schon mit dem Tode kämpfte, der ihn gestellt und zum Ringen umarmt hatte. Mit allen Kräften hielt er ihm stand, solange das Herz noch schlug" (470).

The final moments of Knecht's life exemplify his affirmative fatalism in the most bittersweet of terms. Having already performed one sacrifice for his own sense of self – leaving Castalia, losing the respect of his fellow magisters, but maintaining his integrity and devotion to the ideal of the Glass Bead Game – he performs this last sacrifice for his pupil. Wishing on the one hand to win over Tito's affection and on the other hand to plunge into a spontaneous and wild experience unlike anything that he had heretofore allowed himself, Knecht throws himself forward while simultaneously feeling thrown and embraced by death. Otherwise banished to obscurity, his fate lies in the impression that he can make upon this student, the wisdom that he can impart, and to these ends he will challenge even death with full knowledge of his age and weakness.

The Glass Bead Game Master embodies the ideal of the Game: the dialectical play with ideas, the tragic play with competing narratives necessitating a sacrifice for a synthesis. Living this ideal in himself, rejecting the sterile asceticism of Dasa and Josephus, taking a cue from the Rainmaker and redirecting his intentions, Knecht teaches his final lesson, which reaches Tito after he reaches the opposite shore.

> "Oh weh, dachte er entsetzt, nun bin ich an seinem Tode schuldig! Und erst jetzt, wo kein Stolz zu wehren und kein Widerstand mehr zu leisten war, spürte er im Weh seines erschockenen Herzens, wie lieb er diesen Mann schon gehabt hatte. Und indem er sich, trotz allen Einwänden, an des Meisters Tode mitschuldig fühlte, überkam ihn mit heiligem Schauer die Ahnung, daß diese Schuld ihn selbst

und sein Leben umgestalten und viel Größeres von ihm fordern werde, als er bisher je von sich verlangt hatte" (471).

Of course Tito is not directly responsible for Knecht's death, but the thought pierces his heart and draws him from innocence into guilt – indeed, an awareness of the *Schuldzusammenhang des Lebendigen* is awakened in him. And this guilt will have transformative power, will forever change his sense of self and world, and "demand much greater things from him." If the Glass Bead Game is the spiritual heir to the Magic Theater, then its essence truly lies in the production of meaningful narratives which, taken together and in conversation with one another, must be continually reworked, reformed, and negotiated in order each time to yield with increasing clarity a view of oneself and the world which both aesthetically and ethically justifies existence. Tito's first task is to make meaning out of Knecht's seemingly senseless death. And while it is pointless to conjecture about the identity of the narrator, it is certainly a sign of the lasting significance of Knecht's life and death that the editor of the biography insists on his exemplary status as student, teacher, and master of the Glass Bead Game.

The closing lines of Hesse's (and, diegetically, Knecht's) poem "Stufen" describe the affirmative fatalist worldview which is also at the heart of the Glass Bead Game: "Es wird vielleicht auch noch die Todesstunde / Uns neuen Räumen jung entgegensenden." Obtusely read, the verses are an uninspired musing on the idea of reincarnation, but, given his thoughtful engagement with religious and philosophical traditions, the reader should not think so little of Hesse. Indeed, Knecht is sent at the hour of death into new realms: his story, "the legend" of his life and death, and his *Lebensläufe* survive him and take on a new life of their own. The Game, like the Magic Theater, is not merely a playful

thought experiment, but rather an earnest contemplation of fate as an existential and psychological phenomenon, the development and evolution of the subject, and how these processes are constituted through a tragedy that plays out both within the subject and between generations.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation a dictum of Nietzsche's has appeared time and again as part and parcel of an understanding and rationalization of *amor fati*, that clearest expression of affirmative fatalism: "Only as an aesthetic phenomenon is life still bearable to us." Walter Benjamin criticizes this formulation not only explicitly in *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, but also implicitly in *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, when he points out the specific fascist tendency to aestheticize a politic in order to appeal to and engage the rage of the masses without any express intention of liberating or improving the material conditions of their oppression (*Illuminationen* 167-8). The hindsight of history provides a clear view of how the aestheticization of the National Socialist politic and its thematization of the German people's fate (*Schicksal*) mobilized a sense of affirmative fatalism in the service of an authoritarian war machine and industrialized genocide. But it is precisely here that the sharp distinction must be drawn between affirmative fatalism in its authentic sense – a *love* of and dynamic engagement with fate as discussed throughout the last four chapters – and the passive fatalism of authoritarianism – a prostration before a prescribed fate, the obsequiousness of which is veiled in the language and pageantry of patriotic heroism.

Considering the material conditions surrounding its composition between 1933 and 1941, Josef Knecht's ultimate fate in *Das Glasperlenspiel* – his letter of resignation and sudden death – takes on a broader significance beyond the expression of Hesse's affirmative fatalism, with all of its existential and religious inflections. In defiance of an

institution in danger of abandoning its integrity in the unctuous service of a nationalistic or belligerent politic, Knecht leaves his post like so many German artists and intellectuals, perhaps to vanish into obscurity, perhaps to meet an utterly sudden and embarrassing doom. He is the German conscience that cannot tolerate the supposedly apolitical *Innerlichkeit* which, in its privileged position, more or less unperturbed by anti-Semitism, militarism, and *Gleichschaltung*, tolerates these. That fatalism, even more passive than the authoritarianism of the ardent fascist, is utterly poisonous to the spirit that Knecht represents, and should he die in obscurity, should he fall so far from his position as Glass Bead Game Master that his death arouse not even a sigh, it is a far better fate than devoting his life to an institution with no regard for its potential complicity in the expansion of militarism. This is a fatalism affirmatively defined not only by its aesthetic appeal – to expose oneself to new and beautiful things, to feel the rush of the risk – but by this appeal's accord with a view of human freedom and the divine creative potential of the individual. The aesthetic and ethical orientations of such an affirmative fatalism are united for Knecht as they were for so many writers and artists during the Third Reich: exile was a heartbreaking necessity, but as necessity it became an aspect of fate affirmed through their creative work.

The Glass Bead Game itself as a metaphor need not be limited to the processes of self-narrativization through which a subject, repeatedly but variedly, performs an existential-psychological (and thereby also religious) *Gedankenexperiment* as with the thought of the Eternal Return of Nietzsche's *fröhliche Wissenschaft*, but may also represent the very process playing out before the reader's eyes, in this sentence and the last and next since the beginning of the document at hand. Knecht's traumatic death

inspires guilt in Tito, his pupil, but only insofar as his death has inspired the very legend that the editor includes in the biography, and only insofar as his life and death were noteworthy enough for the editor, a Castalian who professes to adhere to the fundamentally uncreative principles of the educational province, to break with this tradition. And this he does by asserting the exemplarity of Knecht as one such Castalian, although this is achieved by including his creative works. In the final analysis, the dialectical play that characterizes the Glass Bead Game is embodied in the fictional editor's organization and execution of writing Knecht's biography. Similarly, it is in the practice of reading, comparing, and writing about the narrative works of authors that literary scholarship likewise engages in the Glass Bead Game, and in this dissertation it is specifically the thematization of affirmative fatalism as an existential-psychological negotiation of different narratives that exemplifies, on the level of the individual subject, the processes of self-evaluation and the affirmation of fate which authors like Hermann Hesse and Thomas Mann took upon themselves as representatives of the German literary tradition. Works of literature inspire their readers to take the words and ideas represented in them beyond the page, to give them new life in discourse and scholarship, and thereby allow for a dynamic engagement with the past that plays out in and informs the present for the sake of the future. Knecht's apotheosis through the biography is as much a narrative performance of the Glass Bead Game as both of these are metaphors for the process of writing history and coming to terms with it.

Coming to terms with history, of course, implies that it weighs heavily upon the present, like the demon's proposition in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, and recalls the second chapter's discussion of *amor fati* as an affirmation made in the good faith that the

individual or collective formulation of present fate can grant the past a grace which makes it bearable. In affirming the past as the stuff of present fate, a sacrifice is made for the sake of the future: the commitment to a narrative, implicit in the acknowledgement of past necessity, chips away at the stone of perceived possibility, narrowing the field of what *can be* by what *has been*, but in this sacrifice makes its vision of the future clearer and mutely professes an inarticulate faith that it will justify the past, even if only aesthetically.

But the aesthetic justification of existence implies an ethic, insofar as the accord struck between a subject's interior and exterior orients itself toward future action in the hopeful search for further accord. And where this ethic is not explicitly articulated, it must be read out of that orientation and action. In both Hesse's essays on religion and throughout the incarnations of Knecht in *Das Glasperlenspiel* there is a marked tension between a tendency toward *Innerlichkeit* and a desire for belonging which attempts to resolve itself in the critical consideration of the individual's position and role in the larger context of the community. There is likewise however a tension between the belonging sought here and the integration of the individual into a larger authoritarian order, such as the church, political organization, or military, which then attempts to resolve itself in the question of its historical position. Josef Knecht is not merely interested in how his life will serve the Castalian institution, though he certainly values its fundamental ideals, but is rather more interested in the institution's relationship to political power structures and its role in developments that will determine its history. It is an echo from *Zarathustras Wiederkehr* that warns against the potential belligerence of political movements that ultimately exploit the individual's desire for belonging to destructive ends. Instead

Knecht's incarnations seek out peaceful paths in often idyllic environments, narrative and poetic images of the accord between interior and exterior which were most appealing to Hesse and which serve as a fecund, voluptuous alternative to the grime and grind of industry and war machines.

Similarly, the beautiful and ethereal atmospheres of music, with its complex harmonies, awesome structures, and vast possibilities, enchant Knecht and Hesse alike. Although Sinclair in *Demian* expresses that he loves music because it is not moral, there is indeed implied in its form an order and meaning which are not devoid of an ethic. But this ethic is bound to an aesthetic, and the implications of this relationship seem to have evaded Hesse's grasp to some extent, though there is evidence enough between *Gertrud*, *Demian*, *Der Steppenwolf*, and *Das Glasperlenspiel* that a future study of the tensions between Baroque and Romantic musical sensibilities in these novels could prove fruitful for a understanding of how these styles are reflected in their ethics. Such has remained for the time being beyond the bounds of this dissertation.

What this dissertation has sought to achieve is to draw a thread from the traditions of tragedy and *Trauerspiel* through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, focusing on the legacy of the tragic as it lived on in Nietzsche's psychological philosophy and was taken up by Hermann Hesse in his literary explorations of spiritual development and the fate of the German soul. Affirmative fatalism, as the tendential orientation toward the contingencies of social life and the inevitability of death particularly observed here, achieves its most authentic expression not merely through texts and rhetoric that exploit the spectacle of sacrifice, but rather through those that engage with the tragic modality in its various manifestations, taking seriously its implications for the spiritual development

of the individual in relation to social and political movements that offer a sense of belonging or meaning. As eventually illustrated in *Das Glasperlenspiel*, where affirmative fatalism itself becomes thematized within the text itself, this existential-psychological comportment is taken to its logical conclusion when a subject carries out its central process (the negotiation of narratives) on both an individual and communal level, for personal as well as social, national, or world history.

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