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Dramas of Knowledge: The “Fortunate Event” of Recognition

I. “Glückliches Ereignis” as *Anagnorisis* Scene

The autobiographical reflection, “Glückliches Ereignis,” is Goethe’s account of an encounter with Schiller in 1794 that changed the way the two men saw each other and led to the friendship that would permanently alter their lives. It was not published until 1817, some 21 years after the scenario described and 12 years after Schiller’s death, and it conceals or glosses over several important details of the events leading up to and following the fateful meeting. Schiller, for instance, had already made generous overtures to Goethe in writing and through the intervention of mutual friends during the months preceding their first conversation in Jena. Goethe had in fact already agreed to contribute to Schiller’s pet project, *Die Horen*, though in the narrative the invitation and its acceptance come about as a result of the described encounter. Goethe also seems to conflate several different discussions that took place in Jena in July and September in the one episode he recounts. Even their meeting, which Goethe presents as spontaneous, unexpected and coincidental, was pre-arranged by Schiller and his friends as a way to jump-start the intended rapprochement.¹ I do not contend that Goethe misrepresented the nature of his relations prior to and following the meeting in Jena—no one can deny that a real antipathy existed between the two writers in the years before 1794, and that a rich and productive friendship blossomed between them in the decade thereafter. As we can read in carefully researched biographical accounts and the primary sources collected by Grumach, or even just the first few letters of Goethe’s correspondence with Schiller, however, it becomes clear that the ill will, harbored grudges, and mutual suspicion dissolved slowly, and that the friendship—though truly dramatic in its reversal—grew by faltering steps rather than in a momentary about-face. I suggest instead that “Glückliches Ereignis” merely rearranges a few details in order to present the *process* of the change from hostility to friendship in the instant singularity of a tableau.

Goethe’s account presents us with a tale of sudden and fortuitous turn-around from extreme antipathy to deep and meaningful friendship, and from artistic barrenness to fruitful productivity. The text records Goethe’s disappointment and lethargy in the years directly following his return from Italy: he feels “gelähmt”: “die Betrachtung der bildenden Kunst, die Ausübung der

Dichtkunst hätte ich gerne aufgegeben, wenn es möglich gewesen wäre." The rapprochement with Schiller, however, sealed a cooperative "Bund, der ununterbrochen gedauert, und für uns und andere manches Gute gewirkt hat." In emphasizing their estrangement previous to the encounter, Goethe writes that Schiller's "hateful" works "disgusted" him "utterly."² "An keine Vereinigung war zu denken" (MA 12:88). He then frames their carefully arranged meeting as a fateful coincidence, by first recalling that he made a habit of attending Batsch's botanical lectures, and then adding: "einstmals fand ich Schillern daselbst, wir gingen *zufällig* beide zugleich hinaus, ein Gespräch knüpfte sich an. . . ."³ Goethe even throws in the spice of tense precariousness at the moment of climax: after Schiller declares Goethe's presentation of the metamorphosis of plants to be an idea and not an experience, he narrates: "Ich stutzte, verdrießlich einigermassen." He remembers some insulting lines from Schiller's essay, *Über Anmut und Würde*, and "der alte Groll wollte sich regen." We imagine how easy it would have been for Goethe to withdraw again behind his wonted coolness and distance, but he "pulled himself together" and came out instead with his famous quip: "Well, bully for me, then, that I have ideas without knowing it and can even see them with my own eyes!" This one-liner combines in its harmonious fury and humor at once an expression of Goethe's very real frustration with Schiller's unwillingness to accept the relation of his experiences as such, a droll debunking of Schiller's Kantian pretensions, and a humble admission of the untenability of Goethe's own position. It is an invitation for the two men to laugh at themselves, and to accept the trenchant difference of opinion as a stimulus—an *Anstoß*—rather than impeding to their relations. Precisely because of this engaged and passionate challenge to one another, they become fast friends and collaborators: thus, "durch den größten, vielleicht nie ganz zu schlichtenden Wettkampf zwischen Objekt und Subjekt," they "forged an alliance that brought about much good for themselves and for others" (MA 12:89).

The structure of this narrative as Goethe frames it in "Glückliches Ereignis" bears a striking resemblance to the classical drama of reversal and recognition as described by Aristotle. Book 11 of his *Poetics* provides the definitions of what Aristotle earlier calls the "greatest means by which tragedy moves the soul":

Peripeteia is the change to the opposite of the things being done . . . and this, as we were saying, in accord with what is likely or necessary . . . And *anagnorisis*, as even its name implies, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, leading toward either friendship or hostility in people bound for good or bad fortune. A recognition is most beautiful when it happens at the same time as a reversal . . . (1452a).⁴

Every detail of the narrated account fits Aristotle's definition to a tee. Goethe even manages to stress the events' accordance with "what is likely or necessary," which is a demand repeatedly linked by Aristotle to imitations of surprising plot twists. He mentions that his attendance at Batsch's lectures in Jena was habitual and that Schiller had just moved to Jena: the "chance" occurrence of Schiller's presence at the lecture, and the equally "accidental" incident of their happening to strike up a conversation on the lecture's

subject matter upon leaving the hall is natural and likely, even if at the same time the subject matter's fortuitous felicity to bring the two men's differences to a point of harmonious contrast is remarkably surprising. This combination of the wonderful and the natural is precisely Aristotle's recipe for a well-made plot. The inclusion of reversals and recognitions, and especially the coincidence of both in the same scene, serve to make a story complex, and more importantly, to let a story move men's souls. In "Glückliches Ereignis," I would argue, Goethe has fashioned his encounter with Schiller into the most beautiful type of drama, in which Goethe's reversal from poetic fallowness to creative ferment occurs simultaneously with his discovery that Schiller is not a foe, but a friend.

Why does Goethe, consciously or un-, go to such lengths to recast the remembered events into this moving plot structure? Surely it is not merely to make the brief account more dramatic and memorable (though it certainly manages to do this as well). We cannot answer this question, I would contend, without expanding our view to other aspects of the text: the adroitly crafted theatrical *anagnorisis* (enemies become friends) is not the only type of recognition going on here. The narrative also dramatizes how the two men develop reflective and mutually influential views of one another. The seed of Goethe's account of his contrast with Schiller becomes most visible at the height of the very climax where *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* converge, when Goethe is about to withdraw in frustration and their incipient friendship is in sudden danger of collapse: the distance between what Goethe claimed as "experience" and Schiller classified as "idea": "der Punkt, der uns trennte, war dadurch aufs strengste bezeichnet" (MA 12:89). This meeting spawned the respective character sketches of themselves and each other, pictures that were never-quite congruent, but always mutually responsive and challenging.⁵ Not only does the moment of *peripeteia* coincide with the foe-to-friend *anagnorisis* here, but they also occur simultaneously with the genesis of a powerful explanatory model of understanding themselves and one another. Goethe's account expands the traditional trope of *anagnorisis* to include and crystallize the reflecting *Gegenbild des Anderen*, and in so doing, it utilizes the dramatic form of recognition to reveal the necessary relation of reversal and discovery with a kind of schematic and intuitive understanding of character: a picture of self-knowledge formed with and through recognition of the other.

The recognition scene as a scene, as a dramatic unity, underscores the central paradox of recognition *überhaupt*: somehow we are forced to contain the living fullness and totality of another being in the limited picture of the imagination. Three such problematic objects of knowledge converge at the climax of Goethe's tale: the *Urpflanze*, the actual topic of their conversation; Schiller's and Goethe's schematic understandings of each other and themselves; and a synoptic view of the process whereby this understanding comes about, i.e., the action of *anagnorisis*. I do not mean to suggest that these three orders of knowledge are identical by any means, but they share a very peculiar structure. All three of types of knowledge are constituted by a process: a long and often difficult activity. All three, however, tend to be represented—to ourselves or to others—as moments or flashes of insight.

Contrast, for example, Goethe's chronicle of the slow, plodding *Werdegang* of his understanding of the *Urpflanze* in "Geschichte meiner botanischen Studien," with the depiction we get in *Italienische Reise*. In a later expansion of the former text (which significantly appeared together with "Glückliches Ereignis" in the first issue of Goethe's *Morphologische Hefte*), Goethe claims:

Nicht also durch eine außerordentliche Gabe des Geistes, nicht durch eine momentane Inspiration, noch unvermutet und auf einmal, sondern durch ein folgerechtes Bemühen bin ich endlich zu einem so erfreulichen Resultate gelangt. (MA 18.2:457)

In his *Italienische Reise*, meanwhile (whose initial publication in 1816-17 took place within a year of the first issue of *Morphologische Hefte*), Goethe's account of his conception of the *Urpflanze* is strikingly different, and can easily be construed as a "momentary inspiration," both "unexpected and in a flash," despite all claims to the contrary in "Geschichte meiner botanischen Studien." Descriptions of the (experienced) idea's genesis in the reconstructed diaries and letters published as *Italienische Reise* present a vision of Goethe wandering among the beautiful and exotic plants of Palermo, dreaming up a tragedy about Odysseus' encounter with Nausicaa, imagining himself in her father's garden, when he is struck by the sudden conviction that there must be an archetype, an *Urpflanze* uniting all the manifold of variations of individual plants: "Eine solche muß es doch geben!" (MA 15:327). A little later he adds that the botanical notion that thus possessed him drove away his poetical musings and transformed the world he saw around him: "Gestört war mein guter poetischer Vorsatz, der Garten des Alcinous war verschwunden, ein Weltgarten hatte sich aufgetan." In a letter to Herder also included in the *Italienische Reise*, Goethe confides the "Geheimnis der Pflanzenzeugung und -organisation" with a description that is similarly sudden and transformative, to which we will return presently (MA 15:456).

This contradiction (the drive to represent ongoing, successive processes as singular moments, schematic formulae or turning points) seems to be inherent in our (or at least Goethe's) nature. Instead of struggling to change or deny it, however, Goethe and Aristotle make the most of this curious feature of the human subject. Aristotle displays this quirk of our nature by identifying *anagnorisis* as an *action* whose depiction in a momentary tableau is the greatest means to move men's souls. Goethe also made productive use of this paradox in all three fields brought together in his climactic tale: his scientific studies; his poetical efforts; and his self-reflexive life among men. To see how these three dramas of knowledge hang together, let us return once more to the *Poetics*.

II. *Recognizing Action: Visualizing Stories*

"Recognition," Aristotle tells us in chapter eleven of the *Poetics*, "as even its name implies, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, leading toward either friendship or hostility in people bound for good or bad fortune" (1452a 30ff.). It is easy to see how this definition applies to Goethe's account of the

birth of his friendship with Schiller. Can it in all fairness, however, cover the broader applications I will try to bend it towards in seeing the central action of a text, or, even more seemingly far-fetched, to scientists' engagement with the objects of their study? Of course, the modern English word "recognition," with its multiple meanings ranging from identification to realization to acknowledgment can easily deck all of these instances, and it would be simple enough to justify ignoring or discounting Aristotle's use of the term in any study we undertake today. It would indeed be irrelevant to an argument about recognition in Goethe to establish the exact parameters of Aristotle's definition of *anagnorisis* were it not that I wanted to argue that recognition figures elsewhere in the *Poetics* in a way helpful to understanding its workings in *Glückliches Ereignis*. Chapter sixteen of the *Poetics* presents a list of the various "kinds" of recognition, all of which, as it turns out, are based on the type of sign through which the recognition takes place. I would first like to propose a second list, also deduced from Aristotle's observations in the *Poetics*, yet perhaps more fundamental in its division of recognition according to its objects rather than its means. It is clear from the discussion following the definition in chapter eleven cited above that the operation of recognition is not limited to discoveries of people, but can also occur in relation to things or actions, even if these other types are not as dramatic as those between persons. This admission lets one discern three distinct types of recognition: 1) of people; 2) of non-living and random things; 3) whether or not someone has done something (1452a 36). All three of these kinds of recognition play important roles in the text of the *Poetics*, and as I hope to show, in both "Glückliches Ereignis" and readers' approach to it: 1) e.g., Goethe recognizes Schiller; 2) e.g., scientists recognize the archetype of all plants; 3) e.g., readers recognize the unifying action depicted in the narrative. But before we jump ahead of ourselves, let us return to the *Poetics*, which will show how *knowledge* on the one hand and *ethics* on the other converge in the action of recognition, regardless of its object.

The first incidence of recognition occurs already in chapter 4, in which *mimesis* or imitation figures as one of the most distinctive and important features of human nature. Aristotle traces the origin of the poetic arts back to two sources, both of which are aspects of *mimesis*. First of all, imitation is an inherent element of our behavior that both marks us as human and serves as a basis for our knowledge.

For imitating is co-natural with human beings from childhood, and in this they differ from the other animals because they are the most imitative and produce their first acts of understanding by means of imitation. (1448b 6)

In the second place, imitation is something in which we naturally take great delight. Both the pleasure and instruction provided by *mimesis*, however—imitation as entertainment and as a foundation of knowledge—participate in the same basic structure. They involve an act of learning in which philosophers and non-philosophers alike can partake:

What is responsible for this [delight in imitation] is that understanding (*μανθάνειν* = learning, coming to know) is most pleasant not only for philosophers but for

everyone else, though they share in it to a short extent. They delight in seeing images for this reason: because understanding (μανθάνειν) and reasoning out (συλλογίζεσθαι, i.e., one of the means of recognition to be delineated in chapter 16) what each thing is results when they contemplate them, for instance “that’s who this is.” ... (1448b 13ff.)

Both the joy and edification that imitation affords are the result of an act of recognition. It is the excited exclamation, “That’s him!” (οὗτος ἐκεῖνος—literally ‘This one is that one!’) in which the epistemological and pleasurable boons of *mimesis* bear fruit. The pleasure need not derive from imitations of human beings nor even of beautiful things: “contemptible insects and dead bodies” (1448b 13) can also provide the enjoyable “click” of recognition.

Hence we first see *anagnorisis* in action in Aristotle’s book on poetry at the very roots of the poetic art: it is an integral and necessary element of imitation. Then in chapters eleven and sixteen, *anagnorisis* makes its explicit entrance as a vital part of any story that should move men’s souls. Immediately following Aristotle’s chapter on the types of *anagnorisis*, I would argue, recognition makes a third appearance in the activity of poets or critics viewing a work of fiction. Before elaborating on this final model, let me propose another list of three different kinds of recognition in action in the *Poetics*. If Aristotle’s own enumeration of five types of *anagnorisis* in chapter 16 is based on its *means*, and my above division into three classes was derived from the *objects* of recognition mentioned by Aristotle, then the present distillation could be said to identify three separate *levels* of recognition:

- 1) *Audience recognizes character*
 “that’s him!” (audience recognizes subject of depiction) [*Poetics* 4, 13, 15, 22]
 (e.g., “The chubby one must be Goethe!”)⁶
- 2) *Character recognizes character* (person recognizes person)
 within plot: “change from ignorance to knowledge leading to friendship or enmity among persons headed for good or bad fortune” [*Poetics* 11, 14, 16]
 (e.g., Goethe comes to know Schiller)
- 3) *Reader/Spectator recognizes the action of recognition in story*
 Character recognizing character in turn moves audience’s soul [*Poetics* 6, 9, 22]
 (e.g., Goethe’s coming to know Schiller excites us in its unexpected yet natural surprise; or, secondarily, at a more consciously attentive level: we come to know that recognition is the central action of the text as a whole)

The schemata of these three levels of recognition, which can be seen a kind of zig-zag between the within and without of the dramatic work, between audience/reader and play/poem, demonstrate how *anagnorisis* unites in one action both epistemology and ethics. The pleasing “aha!” moment of identification in the first level (present in every instance of recognition) is an operation of coming-to-know. On the second level, when regarding another person, this new knowledge leads to friendship or enmity, and hence enjoins

one to reevaluate one's relational responsibility to the other. The degree of attentiveness we are called upon to give to a story in the third level is itself a unification of the demands of knowledge and ethics in the first two.

Chapter seventeen offers a model *in nuce* of the task of the poet and critic, and if we take time to crack the nut, we will find all three levels of *anagnorisis* to make up layers of the shell. After having stressed the importance of beholding the general outline of a story in organizing and working out a play or a poem, Aristotle illustrates his point with plot synopses of two stories: one drama, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*; and one epic, *The Odyssey*. Recognition is at work in three vital ways here. The first level of *anagnorisis* has to work backwards, so to say, from its normal operation: instead of seeing an actress on stage and thinking, "Oh, that's Iphigenia!" we are urged to forget her particular identity for the moment and label her as "a certain girl."⁷ On the second level, within the plot, we are led to see that both of these stories hinge upon a recognition scene (or scenes, in the case of Odysseus) that coincides with the *peripeteia*, the reversal or turning point, of the action. Thirdly, the very operation Aristotle exemplifies with these two summaries is a kind of recognition: Aristotle has urged the poet "to put [the stories] before the eyes," since only thus can one distinguish the central action from mere episodes. True, this is not the kind of recognition that can be imitated for a soul-moving drama, a virtue chapter eleven has already reserved for recognition between persons, but as we have seen, Aristotle admits that *anagnorisis* "can happen in relation to nonliving and random things, or to discover [*ἀναγνωρίζειν*] whether someone has or has not done something" (1452a 35), and this is precisely what a poet must do to before she can shape her material into a soul-moving work of art. All of these operations of recognition—the identification of "types"; the encounters between persons resulting in changes in knowledge leading to friendship or enmity; and encounters with objects resulting in the contemplation of actions as wholes—are vital parts of "Glückliches Ereignis" and our engagement with it as a dramatic scenario and a text.

Throughout this investigation, I will leap from viewing operations of recognition within the text and its action to observing myself viewing the account, and try to behold the structure of recognition on the part of the reader. In this process, too, I will take a cue from chapter seventeen of the *Poetics*. The method by which Aristotle recommends that a poet arrive at a view of the central action of a story is quite surprising. Armed with the etymological roots of words like "theory," "synopsis," "idea," etc. in vocabulary of the physically visible, one might expect the poet or the critic to *step back* from her creation in order best to see its ownmost lineaments. Perspective and distance are generally held necessary for fair discernment of form. Instead, Aristotle encourages poets imaginatively to place themselves *within* their works: to place them before the eyes, yes, but to view them as if from in their midst.

In order to organize the stories and work them out with their wording, one ought, as much as possible, to *put them before the eyes*. For one who *sees things most vividly* in this way, *as if he were among the very actions taking*

place, would find what is appropriate and would least overlook incongruities. A sign of this is what Carcinus was blamed for . . . which he overlooked by not *visualizing* it. . . . As many things as possible ought to be *worked out with gestures*, for those who are *immersed in the experience* are the most persuasive from nature itself. . . . (1455a 22–28, emphasis added)

This indeed is no process of distilling the central movement of the plot through some intellectual operation arrived at by judicial observation from afar, but rather in the very sensual activity of imagining seeing the story performed beside oneself on stage: of actively placing oneself in the physical presence of the actors and visualizing their gestures. One would think that, far from revealing the structural core of the plot, this method would lead poets to get caught up in the details of spectacle, which Aristotle seems to disparage. But no: imagining its *performance* is the way to recognize the central movement of the story. And Aristotle does not stop with his deservedly famous demand that one place the story “before the eyes.” He also suggests that one imaginatively work through the gestures and the other sensual affects of an experience in order to discern the true core shape of an action. He almost seems to condone a kind of proto-Stanislavskian “method” for the poet. But just as Stanislavski struggled throughout his career for a balance between the loss of control resulting from tapping the wellsprings of the actor’s emotional history and the call for control necessitated by an intellectual understanding of the character to be portrayed within the larger framework of the drama, so too would Aristotle’s “method” appear fraught with problems. Paradoxically, in order to identify the one action in story that should serve as the organizing principle of the whole, an artist must project herself into the immediacy of a single scene. How can one “immersed in the experience” of all the physical sensations and emotional pulls of a story judiciously distinguish central action from mere episode? Standing naked and salt-encrusted with Odysseus on the beach of Phaiakia as he gazes at the bathing form of Nausikaa, any poet would be hard pressed not to be “persuaded from nature itself” to identify her story as the most moving and important part of the tale.⁸ As if in acknowledgement of this difficulty, Aristotle closes the paragraph with one of his few jokes, harking back to Plato’s *Ion* and setting the stage for Shakespeare’s Theseus, that poets teeter precariously on the border between brilliant talent and insanity: “Hence, the poetic art belongs either to a naturally gifted person or an insane one, since those of the former sort are easily adaptable and the latter are out of their senses” (1455a 28–30).

Yet this seeming paradox of methodology has guided me in writing this paper. I aim both to visualize as much as possible the action of Goethe’s text in all its immediacy on the stage of the imagination (or in all its concretion on the page), and to share thereby the difficulties and rewards of trying to grasp this action “as a whole,” that is to recognize it “in universal form” (καθόλου), which is the task of both poet and critic. The simultaneous injunctions that one “see the story in its wholeness at a glance” and that one be “immersed” in the sensual experience of the story’s details require readers to dip back and forth from within and without the text, to sink into close engaged reading and then to gasp for breath as one surfaces for air and a wider perspective.

My effort will be to trace the acts of *anagnorisis* on all three levels along the fixed lines of text on the page and in the fluid dance of spoken word and spectacle in our mind's eye.

In insisting that the central action of "Glückliches Ereignis" is recognition, I would not seem to be making any new or revolutionary claim. After all, its version of the rapprochement between Goethe and Schiller, with the whole *Idee* vs. *Erfahrung* exchange, is the one anecdote about the two men's relation most often remembered and quoted. But although everyone gloms onto the story embedded at the center of the text, most commentators focus more on defending or debunking the accuracy of the iconic characterization of the two men and their relations as it was canonized, in the text, or they concentrate instead on what it reveals about Goethe's scientific views.⁹ No treatment of the text that I have found considers the encounter reported at the middle of the publication as an *anagnorisis* scene per se, nor interprets the rest of the text in light of this central motif. In fact, the final four paragraphs of "Glückliches Ereignis" are almost universally ignored, although, as we shall see, they offer some of the most fascinating reflections on the limits and potentials of our knowledge vis-à-vis other human beings.

The brief text consists of only fourteen paragraphs in all. Of them, only four (8–11) deal explicitly with the endlessly repeated anecdote of their famous encounter: the "fortuitous event" itself. We have already seen how it presents the rising tension, the mounting climax and the harmoniously tense resolution of the central story. While the first seven paragraphs partly manage the preparatory work for this embedded climax, much of their bulk and wording would be puzzling without tying them to the central thread of *recognition*. The final three paragraphs, which usually go un-commented and are in fact entirely lopped off of many anthologized versions of the text,¹⁰ I contend, can only be properly interpreted through the lens of the moral demands and epistemic limitations of recognition. We will return to them later on. For now, I will limit myself to aspects of the first half of the essay that open up interesting vistas of *anagnorisis*.

The opening sentence of the small text is a compact piling-on of conditionals that map out the structure of the tragedy¹¹ to be narrated with their intensifying layers of comparisons. This complex layering of clauses encapsulates the beginning and end of the action to be imitated in the story to follow: **If** I enjoyed the most beautiful moments of my life while I explored the metamorphosis of plants back in Italy (etc.), **then** these efforts became even more valuable by providing the occasion for my later fortune" (MA 12:86). It is important to note how the text begins by evoking the lost happiness of Goethe's Italian sojourn before linking it to the (by the time of writing) now equally lost happiness of his friendship with Schiller. There is an elegiac tone to this foreshadowing of a happy ending reflected already in the first sentence of the story (the text will return to this combination of wistfully impossible longing with hopefully expectant sanguinity in its closing paragraphs). It is also significant that the first sentence is composed of such an extreme series of conditionals. One almost has to diagram it in order to fully appreciate the force of the "if-then" clauses. This is no paradigmatic conditional construction, contra-factual or otherwise, one might have encountered in Latin

class. The four main verbs of the protasis do not technically present a condition the fulfillment of which is necessary to determine the truth-content of the apodosis. Instead, we meet with a series of intensifications: “**If** I enjoyed *x*, **if** *x* enthused my experience of Naples, **if** I came to love *x* more and more, **if** I practiced *x* constantly [all of which is tacitly understood to be the case] . . . **then** *x* was made even more invaluable by bringing about *y*.” In other words, *x* (i.e., Goethe’s ideas about the metamorphosis of plants) is doubly great for making both his time in Italy pleasant and for making his friendship with Schiller possible. Again, the contingent and tentative nature of the conditional structure contrasts with the repeated heightening of positive clauses to create a contradictory mood: the sentence weaves the syntax of uncertainty with the lexical intensification of optimism. The second and final sentence of the paragraph then brings all three levels of knowledge mentioned in the first (and thematized throughout the text) into tight interdependence: “Die nähere Verbindung mit Schiller [the recognition of another person] bin ich diesen erfreulichen Erscheinungen [the recognition of the metamorphosis of plants] schuldig, sie beseitigten die Mißverhältnisse, welche mich lange Zeit von ihm entfernt hielten [the action of dramatic *anagnorisis*]” (MA 12:86). In other words: “I owe the recognition of Schiller to the recognition of plants since it set in motion our recognition scene.”

The second, fourth and fifth paragraphs describe Goethe’s return to Germany from Italy, where the very first sentence already stressed he had spent the “schönsten Augenblicke [seines] Lebens” (MA 12:86). It does so in the manner of every good and honest homecoming story ever since the *nostos* of Odysseus, who finally made his way back to Ithaca only to find his home beleaguered by hostile suitors for his wife’s hand. What Goethe discovered upon his return home “anwiderte” him; the popular poets, wooing and winning the hearts of his countrymen, were “verhaßt”; Schiller poured forth upon his “Vaterland” the very juvenile excesses Goethe himself had learned to be ashamed of (MA 12:86). Both the returner and the land left behind have changed unalterably in the interval of absence. There is never any true homecoming: every *nostos* comprises *algea*.¹² Aristotle claimed the *Odyssey* to be “*anagnorisis* through-and-through” (1459b 7), and there is an element of this estranged homecoming to every instance of re-cognition. The fourth paragraph especially represents the nadir of Goethe’s alienation after his return: the general approbation of the uncouth suitors, of “jenen wunderlichen Ausgeburten,” “erschreckte mich, denn ich glaubte all mein Bemühen völlig verloren zu sehen” (MA 12:87). The disappointed and bitter tone of Goethe’s description of what he found upon his own return to the homeland (after nearly two years of imagining himself under the same sky and on the same seas as Odysseus) is equally fitting to prepare the way for the recounting of his own most dramatic recognition scene that will figure as a more true and satisfying homecoming than Goethe’s soured relations with his reading public.

The third paragraph foreshadows, in its attempt to “excuse” Schiller for the bad taste of *Die Räuber*, what will figure as the greatest challenge to true recognition in the final section of “Glückliches Ereignis”: man’s ever-changing nature. Every man, it claims, cannot help but be active in terms of whatever “Stufe der Bildung” he finds himself at any given moment. “Daher denn so viel

Treffliches und Albernnes sich über die Welt verbreitet, und Verwirrung aus Verwirrung sich entwickelt" (MA 12:86). The potential for confusion and misunderstanding caused by the challenge of comprehending another human in the flurried midst of his own (and one's own) metamorphoses is downright dizzying. The few reflections Goethe offers following the narration of his recognition scene with Schiller will provide the only answer he can give to the dangers alluded to here.

The sixth paragraph contains a critique of Schiller's essay *Über Anmut und Würde*, in which Goethe even *recognized* some passages to parody himself: "Gewisse harte Stellen sogar konnte ich direkt auf mich deuten." He accuses Schiller here of mistaken recognition: "[S]ie zeigten mein Glaubensbekenntnis in einem falchen Lichte" (MA 12:87). More fundamental, however, is Goethe's criticism of Schiller's Kantianism, which also amounts to an attack on Schiller's mode of recognizing things in the world around him: "Anstatt sie [die große Mutter, die Natur] selbständig, lebendig vom Tiefsten bis zum Höchsten gesetzlich hervorbringend zu betrachten, nahm er sie von der Seite einiger empirischen menschlichen Natürlichkeiten" (MA 12:87). The alternative Goethe praises, of viewing nature as "independent, living, and lawfully productive from its depths to its heights" turns out to be the very mode of seeing that Goethe recommends to the scientist. Despite the evident difficulties of seeing nature as a living whole, it is the only method he holds to be equal to the task of recognizing the true sources of the phenomena around us.

The challenges of this approach to nature are similar to the ones faced by the reader in seeing the principle *praxis* of a story. It should now be clear, however, how the very problem of such a vision is refracted in its multitudinous manifestations throughout the text of "Glückliches Ereignis"—both in the introductory musings that make up the entire first half of the piece as well as in the central action of recognition imitated in the narration. In considering the third mode of knowledge represented in the text, that of seeing other people, we will return to view the paradox of recognition in the final section of the text. First, however, let us look more closely at the kind of recognition Goethe recommends to Schiller as an antidote to the Kantianism of *Anmut und Würde*.

III. *Recognizing Things: Experiencing Ideas*

Ultimately this poetical problem of recognizing a story's central action (both in its creative and critical aspect) is kin to the epistemological one of *intellektuelle Anschauung*, or as Goethe preferred to name it, *anschauende Urteilskraft*, which was at once a bone of contention and the seed of friendship between Schiller and Goethe. It is indeed fortuitous that the "glückliches Ereignis," the plot-twist that brought about their recognition scene, took the form of a discussion about the very contradiction inherent in all instances of *anagnorisis*.¹³ In the account the text offers us, Goethe was enthused and encouraged by Schiller's dissatisfaction with the "zerstückelte Art die Natur zu behandeln" evinced by Batsch's lecture. In response, Goethe launched into an excited description of another kind of knowledge. He explained

daß es doch wohl noch eine andere Weise geben könne, die Natur nicht gesondert und vereinzelt vorzunehmen, sondern sie wirkend und lebendig, aus dem Ganzen in die Teile strebend darzustellen. (MA 12:88)

This amounts to a precise description of the very mode of knowledge that Kant elaborates on as imaginable by, but unattainable to humans (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*, §§76, 77). For Kant, human understanding works discursively. Our knowledge requires two elements—a spontaneous conceptual faculty that bestows form on experience; and a receptive faculty that receives the content of experience. He insists that these two elements can only ever be distinct in humans; for Goethe, this would doom us to a forever “zerstückelte Art” of seeing nature. The tantalizing bait Kant held out with his vision of a “divine understanding” that could operate not discursively, but intuitively, was infinitely more appealing to Goethe, and what’s more, the poet/scientist was convinced he had *experienced* just this mode of knowledge in his conception of the archetypal plant.

Schiller, as a good Kantian, refused to accept that his soon-to-be friend could “experience” the symbolic plant Goethe sketched for him in their fatefully fortunate encounter. He insisted that the insight was an “idea,” to which Goethe made his famous reply, “Das kann mir sehr lieb sein, daß ich Ideen habe ohne es zu wissen, und sie sogar mit Augen sehe!” Eckart Förster has written convincingly on what must be involved in the “Auge des Geistes”¹⁴ that is the foundation true scientific knowledge for Goethe. He concludes that it “is not a conceptual unity that the understanding contributes, but a unity that is the object’s own,”¹⁵ and, good Kantian though Förster is, he refuses to condemn this seemingly ridiculous notion outright without taking the time and effort to replicate Goethe’s many years of experience with plants.

It is worthwhile to examine another report of the encounter between Goethe and Schiller, because it is instructive in revealing what is involved in seeing wholes or archetypes in and through the partial appearances we have access to. The following account was recorded by Johannes Daniel Falk after a conversation with Goethe in 1812:

Nun traf es sich, daß beim Nachhausegehn die Rede auf die Vorlesung kam, wo ich bemerkte, daß man sich unaufhörlich mit den Generibus und Speciebus der Pflanzen herumquälte und darüber *das Allerwichtigste, die Verwandlung, den Übergang, die Metamorphose* vernachlässigte. Ich teilte ihm hierüber meine Ansicht mit, die er freudig auffaßte und hinzufügte, dies sei ja eine Idee, und ich möchte sie ihm ja nicht vorenthalten. Ob es eine Idee sei versetzte ich, das läßt mich völlig unbekümmert, die Data aber, die *meine Betrachtung* zu diesen Resultaten führten kann ich jedem *vor Augen legen*.¹⁶

The highlighted portions of this excerpt point to two important aspects of the kind of recognition Goethe strives for. First of all, it is to the *transitions* that we must turn our attention. What plants have in common with the *Handlung* of a drama, or with another human being in whom we come into contact, is the fact that all three of them live in *motion*: they play out their nature in processes of change and development, which for individual plants, stories and people, at least, all have clear beginnings and ends. Hence, to see

a plant or a *Handlung* as a whole, or in coming to know another person (or ourselves), our understanding must move along with the transitions and metamorphoses they undergo. Förster lays out the two requirements of this kind of observation: "First, we must follow a natural process completely, from beginning to end. Second, this process must then be held together, as it were, and *viewed as a whole*, as a single phenomenon."¹⁷ Not only is recognition an action, as Aristotle makes clear, but Goethe lets us see that its objects, too, are in motion. The problematic activity of *anagnorisis* consists of getting one moving process in synch with another: of "molding oneself well" to a foreign process. This truly fits the job description Aristotle gave of the poet: the "naturally gifted" (*εὐφροῦς*) who "are easily adaptable" (*εὐπλάστοι*). Literally they are of a "good nature" and can "mould themselves well and easily." Seth Benardete translates the latter term as "easily take on any shape,"¹⁸ and this precisely describes the characteristics of the scientist in her study of a phenomenon according to Goethe: her mind must mould itself to the object of her study. If we hear the echo of Aristotle's demands for the poet in Goethe's requirements for the scientist, then it is no wonder that the madman is not far behind: "Und eine Naturwirkung, die wir der Idee gemäß als simultan und sukzessiv zugleich denken sollen, scheint uns in eine Art Wahnsinn zu versetzen. Der Verstand kann nicht vereinigt denken, was die Sinnlichkeit ihm gesondert überlieferte . . ." ("Bedenken und Ergebung," MA 18:99). "Yet," Förster concludes, "this is what Goethe requires of an adequate attitude towards living nature." It is also what Goethe and Aristotle both require of an adequate attitude toward moving plays and living people.

IV. *Recognizing People: Moving Tableaux*

A second point of interest in Falk's report arises from its version of Goethe's reply to Schiller's doubt. Here, upon Schiller's insistence that the *Urpflanze* is an idea, instead of the challenge-contained-within-a-self-deprecatory-admission-disclosing-an-ivitation that we find in the famous quip from "Glückliches Ereignis," we get: "Ob es eine Idee sey versetzte ich, das läßt mich völlig unbekümmert, die Data aber, die meine Betrachtung zu diesen Resultaten führten, kann ich jedem vor Augen legen."¹⁹ The facts that lead Goethe's *Betrachtung*—his view, inspection, or contemplation, as well as consideration—to the result (of what Schiller called an idea and Goethe an experience) can be *laid before the eyes* of another. As one scientist to another, Goethe is just saying that anyone can read over the recorded data of his experiments. But it is no accident that he uses the age-old rhetorical figure of "placing before the eyes" to say so. The insight that Goethe has into the nature of plants is sensible—it is "seen" with the organ he describes as the "Auge des Geistes." As such, another person will only be convinced of its truth when she herself also *sees it physically* with the inner organ of sensible understanding. The means whereby such knowledge is shared will be largely rhetorical, a question of *Überzeugung*. Goethe's enthusiastic description of the *Urpflanze* to Schiller is reminiscent of Wilhelm Meister's presentation of his Hamlet interpretation (i.e., his recognition of the central action of *Hamlet*: "eine große Tat auf eine Seele gelegt, die der Tat nicht gewachsen ist") to Serlo and Aurelie (MA 5:245).

In "Glückliches Ereignis," Goethe seizes to pen and paper in order to make a visible sketch of his "idea" for Schiller; and in the novel, Wilhelm *performs* his version of Hamlet to make the siblings *see* Hamlet as he does. But Schiller is no more convinced by the impassioned diagrammatic evidence than is Serlo entirely won over by Wilhelm's histrionic mode of persuasion.

We have seen what pitfalls and dangers to the understanding and sanity were involved in recognizing, or putting before one's own eyes, the central action of a story for Aristotle and of seeing the archetype of a class of natural objects for Goethe. It is no wonder, then, that attempts to convince others of one's own fragile and narrowly won insights, of putting one's own visions before the eyes of others, would be even more fraught with dangers and impediments. The third type of knowledge represented in "Glückliches Ereignis," that of coming-to-know another human being, compounds in a way these difficulties. In it, we are faced not only with the challenge of envisioning a moving and living *object* outside ourselves, but we must respond to (we are response-ible to) his claims on us as a *subject*. I must take into account his own moving and evolving vision of himself (as far as they can be placed before my eyes) as well as his changing view of myself (which, too, must be somehow communicated). All the while, it is also incumbent on me to represent to my interlocutor my own pictures of both him and myself. Here the motions that must be brought into synch with one another are dizzyingly manifold: at least we never had to worry about plants' and stories' ideas of *us*.²⁰

The madness to which Aristotle refers in the *Poetics* (about recognizing moving action) and Goethe in "Bedenken und Ergeben" (about recognizing nature) rears its head again in the final section of "Glückliches Ereignis" (about recognizing another human), following immediately upon Goethe's narration of his "successful" recognition scene with Schiller. Here he claims that the "obwaltenden Schwierigkeiten" involved in giving an honest and true account even of his own development should be obvious to every "Kenner": they should "sogleich ins Auge fallen" (MA 12:89). He goes on to pile on and compound the difficulties involved in such fair knowledge of oneself or another. It must be confessed "daß ein fast Unmögliches unternommen werde, wenn man *die Übergänge* in eine geläuterten, freieren, selbstbewußten Zustand, deren es tausend und aber tausend geben muß, zu schildern unternimmt" (MA 12:90). Again it is to the *transitions* that we must pay attention, and the task looms as a near impossibility. He even gives up on seeing the transitions as purposeful stages of development (as the third paragraph had hinted at): "Von Bildungsstufen kann die Rede nicht sein, wohl aber von Irr-, Schleif- und Schleichwegen . . ." (MA 12:90). The insurmountable obstacles to recognition reach their fullest flowering in the next paragraph:

Und wer kann denn zuletzt sagen, daß er wissenschaftlich in der höchsten Region des Bewußtseins immer wandle, wo man das Äußere mit größter Bedächtigkeit, mit so scharfer als ruhiger Aufmerksamkeit *betrachtet*, wo man zugleich sein eigenes Innere, mit kluger *Umsicht*, mit bescheidener *Vorsicht*, walten läßt, in geduldiger Hoffnung eines wahrhaft reinen, *harmonischen Anschauens*. Trübt uns nicht die Welt, trüben wir uns nicht selbst solche Momente? (MA 12:90)

Is not every intuition of such knowledge illusory? Are not all such moments of recognition in sooth blind? A more disconsolate, pessimistic passage would be difficult to find in Goethe's works than this radically spiraling doubt in the possibility of knowing other humans. Yet the very next sentence is a declaration of stubborn hope:

Fromme Wünsche jedoch dürfen wir hegen, liebevolles Annähern an das Unerreichbare zu versuchen, ist nicht untersagt. (MA 12:90)

Where does this sudden hope come from? What gives Goethe the right to insist on striving for responsible knowledge of others and himself despite all the undeniable difficulties? First of all, as with his idea of plants, I would suggest that Goethe can trust his *experience* of mutually edifying friendship with Schiller. The evidence of their carefully listening and responsive correspondence can give us a taste of this experience as well. But the text of "Glückliches Ereignis" points towards a more universal answer to this question: the only way in which this impossible project of mutual recognition between humans could ever be manageable is by cheating.

There are two elements of this faithful betrayal, this true deception, that can be distilled from the text. They are both related, and we have discussed each already: one is the trick of seeing collections of parts as wholes, and the second is the tendency to represent processes as moments. The fictive narrative Goethe composes of his *anagnorisis* moment with Schiller is a prime example, but the concentric rings of recognition scenarios that spiral out from around it, as we have seen, provide more instances of the workings of these trickeries. It is the illusion of the *tableau* that is at work here: Goethe writes at the climax of the recognition story, when he and Schiller have their "Ideal!" "Experience!" exchange, that "*der Punkt*, der uns trennte, war dadurch aufs strengste bezeichnet." The same thing occurs in Goethe's report to Falk:

Dieser Punkt ist recht geschickt zu zeigen, worin zwischen mir und Schiller die Übereinstimmung und die Abweichung bestand. Denn eigentlich sind wir über keinen Punkt von dem ersten Moment unsrer Bekanntschaft je zu völliger Übereinstimmung gekommen. (emphasis mine)²¹

Of course it would be foolish to believe that all the fullness and totality of the humans who were Goethe and Schiller, even in the limited context of their relations with each other, could be deduced from this stark tableau of *Idee* vs. *Erfahrung*. Neither of the men would ever have insisted on doing so. And yet viewing such an illustrative "still" with the eyes of Lessing's pregnant moment can allow the image to kip into a moving and productive vantage point from which honest interaction might blossom. The simplifying and fictionalizing operations of seeing parts as wholes and reducing processes to points are necessary to human interaction: they are, indeed, the only way to avoid being brought to a standstill by a kind of Zeno's paradox of motion in ethical relations.

The narrated anecdote is revealing about the workings of recognition between people at three distinct but interlocking levels. Goethe himself represents the scene as an *anagnorisis* moment that lets us see "at a glance" the relationship between himself and Schiller "as a whole." It is quite appropriate

that the opportunity for the life-changing recognition scene between these two people was offered by a difference over the possibility of recognition of objects. The problematic of the *anschauende Urteilskraft* in relation to plants is reduplicated in their encounter with each other. That this is what recognition aims at ("seeing" another person as a whole) becomes clear, as does the potential of such simplifying but pregnant sight for both fruitful and tragic misunderstanding. Aristotle, too, realized this necessity of simplifying the totalities that make up human character in his insistence on unity in poems:

A story is one, not, as some people suppose, if it is about one person, for many—countlessly many—things are incidental attributes of one person, with no unity taking in some of them. . . . For this reason every one of the poets who has made a *Heracleiad*, a *Theseid*, or other poems of that sort, has evidently missed the mark. (1451a 15–36)

Homer avoided this mistake by organizing the *Odyssey* around a central action. Goethe, too, in recognizing Schiller (and writing "Glückliches Ereignis") does not conceive of a *Schilleriad*, but rather hits upon one central point of their difference and harmony, from which a multitude of further fascinating details might be deduced. If we strive to understand another person, we cannot help but do so in an image that is a whole, and that by necessity must leave out many (even important) aspects of the other's life and character. That this *Bild* is necessarily incomplete need not be a bad thing: it should, however, be responsible and suggestive in its unavoidable insufficiency. On the other hand, it can lead to tragic misunderstanding (tragic because largely innocent in its unlikely necessity—a true *bamartia*, missing of the mark). The decade-long friendship between Schiller and Goethe was truly a mutually beneficial cross-pollination, despite—or rather *because of*—the way both of them tended to dramatize and, in a way, fictionalize their differences. Similar *anagnorisis* moments between potential friends, however, can result in less fortunate tableau-like understandings (think of the oft retold encounter between Beethoven and Goethe).²²

As a consequence of what Aristotle understood about the relation of history vs. fiction to more universal truth (*Poetics* IX), in order to raise the chance events of historical reality to a philosophical level of significance and meaning, we must narrate and to some extent fictionalize them.²³ As Goethe did his encounter with Schiller, we reshape historical processes—which far exceed even ten thousand Olympic race tracks²⁴ in the magnitude of their contingent causes and hence confound our ability to "see them as a whole"—as stories in order to grasp anything of use about them. So too must we recast our notions of other people, whom we can never fully know in the totality (not to mention infinity . . .) of their development, to fit into one comprehensible vision. For someone like Levinas, this attempt inevitably leads to an ethical betrayal of the sublime incomprehensibility of the Other; for Goethe, however, we have no choice but to make the attempt, and if we are in- (and ex-)sightful enough, it is our only hope to engage in fruitful and ethically responsible exchange with another human.

“Glückliches Ereignis,” then, represents in its complex construction the dramas of three different modes of knowing. In doing so it reveals important structural kinships between these three different ways of representing knowledge: all of them share in the necessity of seeing scattered parts “at a glance,” and “as a whole”; all of them tend to represent the discursive processes of coming-to-know with a condensed flash of inspiration; furthermore all of them uniquely combine in the *action* of recognition the claims of epistemology and of ethics. Of course, significant differences are also manifest between the three types of knowledge, not so much in their structure as in the relation of ideas to objects. The archetype or idea of a plant, for Goethe, is fully present in all the individual manifestations and developmental stages of any given instance of a plant (rather like the Hegelian *Begriff*, as Förster argues); experienced and practiced knowledge of the *Blatt*, therefore, amounts in itself to true botanical knowledge. The schematic and reflexive nature of a character sketch or tableau, however, is *never* fully commensurate with or explanatory of the living complexity of another human: at best, it can serve as a pregnant moment that impels people toward responsive interaction with one another; at worst, this shorthand template-recognition of another can lead to tragic misunderstanding and terminal trauma. The recognition of a central action necessary for plot construction and analysis, meanwhile, is attended by all the essential differences (and kinships) Aristotle noted in his pleas for poets not to confuse characters and actions. In a way, the differences could be summed up by comparing the *Nicomachean Ethics* (knowing people) with the *Physics* (knowing actions/objects). They come together in the *Poetics* (a treatise on objects imitating the actions of people), and give us a good indication as to why reading the fictional portrayals of recognition scenes, such as the *Odyssey* or “Glückliches Ereignis,” could teach us more about becoming responsible knowers of men than any number of ethical tracts by Aristotle, Kant, or any other philosopher, for that matter.

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NOTES

1. For the historical details, cf. Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age, Vol. II: Revolution and Renunciation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000) esp. 218–37, and the footnote 837–38; and Goethe, *Begegnungen und Gespräche*, Ernst und Renate Grumach, ed. (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980) 4:97–99.

2. Goethe, MA 12:86. All further quotations from Goethe, unless otherwise specified, will be from this edition and will be cited in parentheses in the text.

3. MA 12:88 (emphasis added). It is only fair to remark, however, that the extent of Goethe’s awareness of the staged nature of this encounter is unclear. It seems that mutual friends who knew that Goethe would be at the lecture encouraged the sedentary homebody Schiller (“whose interest in botany was limited”) to attend in order to facilitate a meeting between the two in congenial circumstances. Cf. Boyle 222.

4. Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2006) 22ff. All quotations from the *Poetics* will be from this translation, unless stated otherwise,

and will be indicated by the Bekker page number in parentheses. Mr. Sachs' translations appear with slight emendations of my own. Citations in Greek are from S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* (New York: Dover, 1951 [1894]), and will be similarly indicated by the Bekker page number.

5. I.e., Schiller's famous *Geburtsbrief* with its distillation of each poet's peculiar genius and Goethe's responsive reply; then the further development of these first *tableaux* embedded in Schiller's treatise on *Naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* and explicit in Goethe's many accounts of himself and Schiller as realist vs. idealist. I'm not interested in assessing the accuracy of the content of these various models at the moment, but rather in their structural commonality.

6. This level of recognition of course will work a bit differently in a narrative we read than in a play we watch. For the latter, we can (usually) dispense with the very superficial "aha!" moment of guessing which actor is portraying which well-known character ("The one in black must be Hamlet!"). But both are also typified by a spectator's or reader's sense of the trueness of the portrayal, whether in a narrated character-sketch or in an acted gesture. Whether we see Wilhelm Meister acting on stage, or read his character analysis on the page, for instance, we will respond with a "Yes, that's just like Hamlet!" or, "No, that's not Hamlet at all!"

7. As a side note, it would be interesting to compare Goethe's *Natürliche Tochter* with his *Iphigenie* in light of this operation. It, too, is a play with "recognition" in the sense of "acknowledgement" as its central action, and all of its characters with the exception of Eugenie (well-born), the daughter to be recognized, are never given names, but rather only have general social titles throughout the play.

8. But then, this is supposedly precisely what Goethe did when he conceived of his aborted tragedy, *Nausikaa*. Immersing oneself in the immediacy of an episode from an epic runs the risk of begetting the central story of a tragedy.

9. Compare, for instance, Boyle 223ff, who takes great pains to point out the historical inaccuracies of the account in "Glückliches Ereignis" only in order further to challenge the simplified, canonic views Goethe and Schiller present of themselves as "realist" vs. "idealist." Or two German monographs: Gisela Horn und Detlef Ignasiak, *"Glückliches Ereignis": Der Arbeitsbund zwischen Goethe und Schiller* (Hain Verlag: Rudolstadt & Jena, 1994), and Klaus F. Gille, "'Glückliches Ereignis': Zum Freundschaftsbund zwischen Schiller und Goethe," *Weimarer Beiträge* 48, no. 4 (2004): 520-30, both of which accept Goethe's story at face value. The former is a sentimentalizing collection of quotations and pictures from Goethe's and Schiller's independent and mutual engagement with the city of Jena; the latter, despite its title, is much more an analysis of the "Arbeitsbund" between the two men, taking off with Goethe's account in "Glückliches Ereignis" and focusing on the exchange of letters about *Wilhelm Meister*. Eckart Förster, as we shall see, uses the text instead to illustrate his understanding of Goethe's epistemology: Eckart Förster, "Goethe and the 'Auge des Geistes,'" *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 75, no. 1 (2001): 87-101.

10. E.g., Horn und Ignasiak.

11. Remember that for Aristotle it is the serious subject matter of a story, and not its unhappy outcome, that makes a tragedy. *Iphigenie in Tauris*, where the recognition between Orestes and his sister provide for the reversal from bad to good fortune, is just as "tragic" for Aristotle as *Oedipus* with its change from good to bad. "Glückliches Ereignis" is an example of the former type of tragedy, which Aristotle even describes as the "most powerful." (Chapter 14, 1454a 5)

12. Even after Odysseus manages to purge his household in a bloodbath of revenge and is reunited with his wife and son, the prophecy that he will one day again have to set forth from home and wander restlessly on land (with an oar until it is taken for a winnowing sheaf) hangs over his head and casts a certain pall over the joys of his restored kingdom.

13. The near kinship of the *anagnorisis* scenario elaborated in "Glückliches Ereignis" with the mode of scientific knowledge advocated by Goethe is further evidenced by the very place in which he chose to publish the small text. One might have expected such a moving monument to Goethe's debt to Schiller to appear as an introductory piece to an edition of the deceased poet's works that Goethe helped see through the press in the decade's following Schiller's death. Better yet, Goethe may well have saved it for the publication of his correspondence with Schiller, which he brought out with great love and care in 1828. Instead, the anecdote reaches the public at the tail end of the first issue of his *Morphologische Hefte* in 1817 (*Zur Morphologie* 1:1). Together with his "Geschichte meines botanischen Studiums," which is the first piece in the edition, the two texts frame a slightly reworked version of Goethe's *Morphologie der Pflanzen*, which had originally appeared—and been largely ignored—in 1790, shortly after his return from Italy. The entire issue can be seen as a way of working through the initial trauma of Goethe's homecoming. One could even read the three pieces that make up the edition together with "recognition" as a key central action, just as the *Blatt* had been Goethe's *Schlüssel* to read the *Geheimnisse der Pflanzenwelt*.

14. Cf. e.g., *Die Farbenlehre*, §242, MA 10:92.

15. Förster 90.

16. "(Aus seinem [Goethes] Munde [27.3.1813] abgeschrieben) von Johannes Daniel Falk, "Schillers erste Bekanntschaft mit Göthen" (**Magdeburgische Ztg.*, Montagsbl. 16.1.1933, Goethe-Museum Düsseldorf, Falk 4:7), quoted in Grumach (n. 1) 4:85.

17. Förster 92 (emphasis mine).

18. Aristotle, *On Poetics*, trans. Seth Benardete and Michael Davis (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2002) 43.

19. Falk in Grumach (n. 1) 4:85.

20. It would be hard to demonstrate these difficulties more assiduously than Peter Szondi manages in his analysis of Schiller's *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, which itself developed out of the vision he and Goethe had of each other in the encounter described in "Glückliches Ereignis." Szondi's relentless comparison of the two archetypal modes of poeticizing intentionally confuses the distinctions (or rather reveals the contradictions contained in Schiller's treatment of his own concepts) only in order to clarify their inherent dialectical relation. Szondi leads us down the never-ending spirals of confusion so as to reach a conclusion that climaxes with (but can by no means be contained by) the paradoxical title of his essay, "Das Naive ist das Sentimentalische." Cf. Peter Szondi, "Das Naive ist das Sentimentalische: Zur Begriffsdialektik in Schillers Abhandlung," in *Lektüren und Lektionen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973) 47–102; and Peter Szondi, "Antike und Moderne in der Ästhetik der Goethezeit," in *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie* I (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974) 149–82.

21. Falk in Grumach (n. 1) 4:85).

22. The (in)famous account of this meeting in Bettina von Arnim's published letters is much like "Glückliches Ereignis" in having more dramatic than historical truth in its depiction of the two men's recognition scenario. (Cf. Scott Goddard, "Beethoven and

Goethe," *Music & Letters* 8, no. 2 (1927): 165–71.) Despite the questionable veracity of the anecdote, it provides another deft example of how *every* dramatic tableau of characterization will necessarily be a) a fiction; and b) a simplified picture that implies more than it literally says. In the case of the pseudo-fiction of the Goethe-Schiller tableau, the crystallized "pregnant moment" points towards a potential for a complex, mutually challenging yet mutually rewarding relationship. In the Beethoven-Goethe story, the pregnant moment leads to a telltale image of the two men's characters and results directly in the stillbirth of a burgeoning friendship, yet it also short shrifts the more complex and rewarding relation they might have had had they but listened and looked more carefully.

23. Compare Goethe's letter to Herder [in which he claimed that "Die Urpflanze wird das wunderlichste Geschöpf von der Welt, um welches mich die Natur selbst beneiden soll. Mit diesem Modell und dem Schlüssel dazu kann man alsdann noch Pflanzen ins Unendliche erfinden, die konsequent sein müssen, das heißt, die, wenn sie auch nicht existieren, doch existieren könnten und nicht etwa malerische oder dichterische Schatten und Scheine sind, sondern eine innerliche Wahrheit und Notwendigkeit haben." (MA 15, 456)] with Aristotle's passage in Chapter 19 "[T]he work of the poet is to speak not of things that have happened but of the sort of things that might happen and possibilities that come from what is likely or necessary. . . . For this reason too, poetry is a more philosophical and serious thing than history, since poetry speaks more of things that are universal, and history of things that are particular" (1451a 7–1451b 7). This is why Goethe is a more philosophical scientist than, say, Linneaus, for the latter describes and classifies particular plants that actually exist, whereas the former writes of plants that are more universal. Hence the poet is the true knower of human nature: because she can create individuals who are instances of universal humanity.

24. Cf. Chapter 7 of the *Poetics*, which discusses magnitude and unity in poems (1450b 37–1451a 3).