Analytical Psychology and German Classical Aesthetics:

Goethe, Schiller, and Jung (review)

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pathologies explored in the book’s final four chapters on *Werther*, *Anton Reiser*, *Wilhelm Meister*, and *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*.

An intervening chapter on trauma in the seventeenth century, presented here with what the editors nicely call the “Mut zum Fragment” (15), explores the genre of the Protestant *Leichenpredigt* which flowered from the end of the sixteenth into the eighteenth centuries and has bloomed again more recently in scholarship inspired no doubt in part by Kowalik’s work (Niekus Moore, Kobelt-Groch). Drawing on work by Jonathan Shay on combat trauma, Kowalik proposes to examine trauma, particularly after the Thirty Years’ War, in *Leichenpredigten* measured in terms of one of its universal features: rage. “The question before us,” she writes, “is not whether trauma occurred—thousands of victims have testified that it did—but what the quality of trauma was and what kinds of mechanisms evolved that did or did not allow victims to come to terms with extraordinary violence, injury, and loss” (96).

Unlike much recent historical and theoretical work on early modern Europeans’ practices of spiritual and bodily mortification, particularly among mystics (de Certeau, Hollywood, Strasser, Temme), Kowalik hardly shies from moral judgments of the book’s actors. Leading Pietists come away particularly badly. We read, for example, that unlike in England, “across the channel Francke’s orphanage in Halle was exploiting child labor, abusing its charges, and creating depressives at an astonishing rate—and, worse, it was becoming the model for Prussia as a whole” (34). Her introduction intriguingly proposes that absolutism required this affective regime and suggests that her work should be read as a contribution to “The History of Central European Sadism” (25). While the work on the *Leichenpredigt* does not here bear this out, the proposition demands further attention. It certainly might be explored profitably in readings of *Trauerspiele*, epicedia, and other lyric forms missing altogether from these pages.

Recent years have witnessed vigorous study of historical affect (Sabean and Medick, Roper, Rublack, and others) and of trauma (Scarry, Hermann, Caruth, LaCapra, Butler, and others). One will look in vain in the pages of *Theology and Dehumanization* for most of these references. One must mourn what might have been created had Kowalik been able to read them—or to consult comparative studies, such as Jill Lepore’s *The Name of War*. Yet, in seeing Kowalik’s essays into print, Hart, Mahlendorf, Saine, and Medick have provided valuable thought for later readers. Hardly only troubled waters, these pages are also remarkably rich. May the talent of their future navigators equal that of their source.

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In a review of the literature, the author finds that “in all these works there is a curious omission: the absence of any detailed discussion of Jung’s relation to Weimar classicism, and specifically to Goethe” (7). He examines particularly Richard Noll’s thesis “that analytical psychology was originally founded as a neopagan cult” (6) and that this thesis had its “inaugural moment” in 1916 when Jung addressed the ‘newly founded Psychological Club’ (8) with references to Goethe’s poem “The Mysteries” (*Die Geheimnisse*) from 1816. The book begins here, where the author discovers his own critical moment in a new thesis that despite all the studies and poems on Greco-Roman and Germanic pagan mythologies, “Weimar
Classicism was not a cult” (8). Rather it was a corrective grounded in natural philosophy that fed nineteenth-century German depth psychology from Freud and to Jung. But “the burgeoning literature offering Jungian interpretations of Faust” (8) was framed mainly in alchemical terms that confirmed the assumed cult origins of analytical psychology. In this trend the author found solid ground in Jack Herbert’s work on “Goethe, Jung and Rilke” (2001:37): “what Faust does is to alchemize psychology—that is to present psychology in an alchemical guise. Or, in reverse, psychologize alchemy” (9). With Goethe and Jung linked by core concepts of Goethe’s science, “polarity and intensification” (Polarität und Steigerung), the author decides to rethink the connection without throwing the child out with the bath. In this study he hopes to “pack away the retort, clear the room of salamanders,” but retain “the vision of totality—central to the work of the adept, embraced by Weimar classicism” (9). His plan is to keep holism, “often regarded today as null and void at the centre of this non-alchemical opus” (9). So here we get a fresh look at how Goethe and Schiller helped shape analytical psychology with attention to universals in the character of the mind.

The author’s approach is to locate analytical psychology in the critical discourse found in the autobiographical writings of Weimar classicism. He begins with the “family romances” about fantasized illustrious heritage that Freud and Jung shared with Goethe (12). In “biographical affinities” (19), the author seeks a new meta-language that shows “parallels between Goethe and Jung in terms of the psychological strategies they developed for turning fears and weaknesses to creative account” (24). These parallels include shared experiences of “rebirth” that Goethe found in Italy (39) and Jung encountered in the unconscious (40). Higher levels of shared biographical experiences include the bi-polar dynamics of “analysis” and “synthesis” in concept formation. Between 1911-16, Jung studied Goethe’s Faust and from this aesthetic representation formed a distinctive theory of the unconscious that would emerge as a theory of the collective unconscious. As a result of this experience, Jung broke with Freud’s theory of the force of the libido so that in part one of the story, Faust is driven by instinct, while part two “is the Jungian part, dealing with the ‘uncanny background’ to the ego—the ‘self’” (54). In sexual theories the author concludes that “Jung did hear the ‘primordial melody’ of the instincts; he thought, however, that their tune was a mythological one” (55). As the study moves forward Goethe’s Faust seems to become the defining moment of Jungian psychology: “In this respect, Faust’s dilemma is not simply Jung’s, it is the one, single universal dilemma of analytical psychology” (61). True to the virtues of “totality” gained in Weimar classicism, Goethe’s Faust, in the hands of Jung, is “as fundamental to the modern world as that of Oedipus for the Hellenistic world” (62). In this chapter the phallic symbols of Faust define the libido of Goethe, of humankind, of the urge to create universally, so that in Goethe’s work, fantasy and imagination become the “psychic economy” that defines Jung’s theory of the unconscious in the individual (70). The author ends this part of the book with suggestions for further analysis of the human psyche shaped by factors of time usually framed in concepts of archetypal representation.

However, further analysis of the structure and function of archetypes that link Goethe’s aesthetic with Jung’s psychological experiences is postponed for another volume. Instead the author seeks to broaden the basis of Weimar classicism by establishing the connection to Jung’s Psychological Types (1921) in Schiller’s theory of typology. He connects Jung’s conception of psychological
representations to a typology of differences in “analysis and synthesis” that distinguish Goethe’s intuitive from Schiller’s speculative way of thinking (86). In the meeting of these two minds, the author sets up a holism of complementary traits for artistic-intellectual discourse that later resonated in Wagner and Nietzsche and again in Freud and Jung. Here past dualisms are turned into new holisms driven by an urge to form. The author links Jung and Schiller in the latter’s “pioneering, or ‘prophetic’ work” (95) “On the Aesthetic Education of Humankind” (1795) that engaged Jung in the Psychological Types and at the same time supports the author’s thesis that concepts of “totality” and “holism” mark the contribution of Weimar classicism to analytical psychology. The connection shows Jung committed to a worldview of “social development” (97), to theoretical constructs of “introversion and extraversion” (102), to layers of “superior and inferior functions” (116) that follow from Schiller’s theory of living forms embedded in the human beings urge to art. Jung found in Schiller’s human being a body integrated by a “sensuous drive” and a “formal drive” in “reciprocal relation” and in this concept a “higher faculty than ratio—indeed, maybe a mystical one (131).

As a final touch to his project on holism in Weimar classicism, the author examines Jung’s doctrine of “personality” by standards of poetic character distinguished in Schiller’s essay “On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry” (1796). True to his stated methodology, the author locates the source of Schiller’s distinction between intuitive and speculative types of poetic character in “biographical affinities” (19) that each writer experienced in the work of the other. And others, too, found neat permutations of the reciprocal relations, for example, later cast as “conceptual pairs, such as the Apollonian and the Dionysian in Nietzsche’s The Birth of Tragedy” (151) from 1872. But somewhere the organic base of Schiller’s holism turned mechanical and so the author tries to sort out views of the Frankfurt School of theoreticians, in particular Jürgen Habermas’s “critique of Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique of instrumental reason” (155). In the end the author asks, rhetorically I think, if Jung was “led by culture back to nature along the path of reason and freedom that Schiller describes?” (156). He suggests that Jung better than Schiller saw that “the whole being” is not just a “poetic ideal” in which all differences and deficiencies vanish, but is an ideal that can be realized. This conclusion leaves us with the paradox that Schiller believed the ideal was an ill advised path toward the real, but that he would not have disagreed with Jung that “unattainability is no argument against the ideal, for ideals are, in this sense, only the signposts, never the goal” (156). The author plans a second volume on The Constellation of the Self by further study of the processes of individuation but with focus on how they are threatened by “collective triumphs” that mask social order (159). Schiller’s concept of beauty and Goethe’s theory of morphology promise more on the place of holism in analytical psychology.


The author of this work, with its ambitious title, did not have a clear concept of the audience he intended to reach. There is much that smacks of a survey for undergraduates. Good are the clear, readable style, the straightforward textual analysis of fairly familiar texts, and a concern to make scholarship relevant. There are no intense jargon-driven theoretical passages. All the German quotations are