KANT AND GOETHE

1. In this paper we want to consider the inner connection between Kant and Goethe; therefore we want to emphasize primarily aspects they have in common rather than points of opposition. Goethe says for example about Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* that this "voice has brought a great advancement," in so far as through it man has been able "to awaken concerning himself," concerning his "highest faculty of reason." Goethe was above all impressed, however, by the *Critique of Judgment* and he confessed: "The great main ideas of this work were analogous to my own previous ideas." It was for him "an exceedingly great deed... that Kant placed art and nature in his *Critique of Judgment* side by side" so that they could "illuminate each other." Goethe found it very important that Kant "drew the boundaries which the human intellect is able to reach" and that he nevertheless arrived through his transcendental, critical method at necessary philosophical insights. Goethe, however, wanted to expand these insights still further by means of his own morphological method.

2. Now we come to the subject-object problem. Both Kant and Goethe wanted to overcome a simple vis-à-vis of the subject and the object. We can speak of a similar starting basis, which however led to different points of view. Goethe said that they had a "common path." Subject and object are for Goethe dependent on one another. All predicates "belong necessarily to the subject" and are "perceived by the subject". Goethe agrees to the acceptance of "synthetic a priori judgments", though understood in a wider sense than for Kant. Every experience (Erfahrung) as seen from the side of the subject as directing itself toward the object is certainly a "constructive" product in accordance with our subjective standard of perception and thought rather than a mere reproduction or picture. We could use perhaps the old concept of *secundum modum cognoscentis* to characterize this idea of Goethe. It is also decisive for the difference between Kant and Goethe.
that he refuses to speak of a ‘thing-in-itself’ beyond the reach of our cognitive capability. Subject and object are instead ‘never separated’; one could speak more properly of a ‘One-in-itself’ which affects us.7

As a result Goethe sees the inner and outer worlds as one encompassing totality, an “indivisible one” and speaks therefore of the interconnection of subject and object. Moreover he wants, as he says, to transcend this polarity; this ‘can’ however only “be achieved by the subject.”8 The subject-object polarity leads us to Goethe’s decisive problem of “original polarity” (Urpolariitāt), which he says was suggested by “Kant’s natural science.”

The concept ‘polarity’ refers us to a self-forming ‘unity’, which as a basic phenomenon is found in metamorphosis. Goethe states that for him metamorphosis is “completely in agreement with Kant’s theory.” The unity of a structure maintains itself through all changes and developments despite the multiplicity of objects: “distinct form which in the process of life continues to develop.”10 We could mention here the “eternal systole and diastole” as well as in the case of cognition where the former is synthetic and the latter analytic. Goethe claims here, too, to have been influenced by Kant’s theory.11

3. At the same time systole and diastole led him to see with Kant the fundamental difference between understanding and reason. Just as for Kant reason is the faculty “of the unity of the rules of understanding under the control of principles” and finally the “possibility of the ideas,” we can find related points in Goethe’s thought. He wrote to Eckermann that understanding tries to attain the static state of words and concepts through sensual experience; reason, on the other hand, procures for us the highest universal as the “manifestation of the Idea” in the individual developmental processes of life.12 In this way, he says, we secure the “originary phenomena” (Urphänomene) as basic phenomena, which confront us always with dynamic fundamental forms.13

These considerations lead us however to Goethe’s statements about the Critique of Judgment. Judgment is as a mediating form of knowledge, the middle link between understanding and reason, between nature and freedom, between the Critique of Pure Reason and the Critique of Practical Reason. For this reason, Goethe says, he owes to Kant a “most highly joyous era of life.”14 Intuition is for Kant sensory intuition, and he speaks