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Author(s): Lydia Baer

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THE LITERARY CRITICISM OF LUDWIG KLAGES AND THE KLAGES SCHOOL

AN INTRODUCTION TO BIOCENTRIC THOUGHT

I. INTRODUCTION

The elevation of Ludwig Klages to a position of importance in German literary criticism and the infusion of his polemics into the field of literature give rise to questions which urgently invite discussion. Widely known as a graphologist and psychologist, and since 1929 as a philosopher, his literary credo has been little recognized and less respected in the past. Yet its main touchstones, often indispensable members of his psychology and philosophy, have been accessible for many years. It is proposed, in this paper, to give a short exposition of the philosophic premises which cannot be divorced from Klages' view of poetry and of poets and writers, to trace briefly the steps by which his literary criticism appears to have evolved, and to inquire into his standards, if standards there be. It will be necessary to show how completely antagonistic his outlook on life is to all and any forms of humanism, how unreservedly he identifies himself with German romanticism, and finally, how Klages and his followers have influenced contemporary literary criticism in Germany.

It is not enough to dispose of Klages with a shrug of the shoulders or a paragraph, as has happened too often in the past.¹ He is a formidable opponent who has waited thirty years for recognition, and the widespread ramifications of his thought deserve serious consideration. His magnum opus, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*,² was introduced by a comprehensive series of vituperative remarks³ concerning plagiarism, indifference of the public, and the general stupidity of the "Bildungs-

¹ Among American scholars Martin Schütze, "Toward a modern Humanism" *PMLA* LI, No. 1, March, 1936 refers briefly to Klages and calls his doctrine "deliberately irrationalistic, biological-mystical" and thinks it is merely another variant of what Schütze calls "minus-rationalism."

² 1. und 2. Bd. (Leipzig, Barth, 1929); Dritter Band, 1. und 2. Teil (1932), hereinafter referred to as GW.

³ By "vituperative" I mean such expressions as for example are profusely scattered through the introduction of GW (see xvi ff.): "geflissentliche Diebstähle," "ausbeuterische Niedertracht," "Rassentypisches," "geistige Diebe," "Raubbau an der Charakterkunde," "Patrone," "Unverfrorenheit," and more of the same character.

philister" which appear to have lost a good deal of their validity in the ensuing years. Certainly between 1931 and 1936 Germany neither overlooked Klages, nor did it treat him as negligible, but on the contrary, he achieved a host of followers and friends in high places, who honored him with those superlatives of veneration and respect which he had always maintained were accorded only to things trivial.⁴

In a bibliography which laid no claims whatever to being complete, dated 1934,⁵ there were listed almost five hundred items dealing with Klages' own publications and with those of his followers, with his relationship to other philosophies, to politics, psychology, history, medicine, astrology, and the like: in short, to the "Geisteswissenschaften," the natural sciences, and, as an afterthought, to the field of literature. The last was barely touched upon, but the enumeration of these five hundred items clearly demonstrated that Klages' theories had been widely applied in all kinds of contemporary criticism, and the author of the brochure included a short representative list of books of "biocentric" color.

The biocentric method of research, as Klages understands it, and as he and his followers apply it to literature, is accordingly the general subject of this paper, which can only attempt a brief exposition of the main points of view which Klages represents. An exhaustive discussion would fill the pages of many books. It is Klages' proud boast that he is the most original thinker of modern times, and that practically all fruitful present-day philosophy, psychology, medicine, etc., has derived from him, occasionally with acknowledgment, but more frequently by theft: that he is, in short, the most plagiarized author of the contemporary scene.⁶

⁴ *Ibid.*, xxv.

⁵ Julius Deussen, *Klages' Kritik des Geistes* (Leipzig, Hirzel, 1934), pp. 1*-30* (bibliography added to body of book).

⁶ GW, xvi: "ich bin der am meisten ausgeplünderte Autor der Gegenwart." Deussen, (a pupil of Klages) *op. cit.*, p. 1*, affirms that Klages' complaint of plagiarism is justified, giving as one of the reasons for the incompleteness of his own bibliography the *unacknowledged* consideration of Klages' philosophy by A. Bäumler, E. Bergmann, P. Häberlin, H. Much, O. Spengler, F. Werfel, P. Wust and others. A milder construction may possibly be placed on Deussen's statement that related points of view and sometimes parallel investigations may be found in the works of H. Bergson, E. Dacqué, S. Freud, E. Friedell, L. Frobenius, M.

II. THE MEANING OF LIFE AND THE NATURE OF REALITY

The history of literary criticism abounds in speculations on the function of reason within the body of creation. All other anti-rational premises pale into insignificance before the sweeping condemnation of the intellect by Klages. His indictment is so comprehensive that in the end not a shred of what we are accustomed to regard as intellectual achievement remains. It is his contention moreover, that by gradually displacing the soul, reason⁷ has usurped its place, has set up its kingdom as it holds sway in the present age of mechanism and soullessness, and is guilty of having brought humanity to its present impasse of social inadequacy.

This is no new thesis, certainly. But the originality of Klages' discovery lies in the fact that, in taking over the old Greek metaphysical assumption of a three-fold substance of man: body, soul and spirit,⁸ Klages' intuitive powers have vouchsafed the revelation to him that spirit, in some unexplained fashion, constitutes an intrusion into the life process, arresting and frequently destroying the latter.⁹ The metaphysical dissonance thus ensuing between the body-soul unity on the one hand and the rational functions on the other lays the foundation for the elaborate philosophical and psychological structure which, unlike other

Geiger, M. Heidegger, E. M. v. Hornbostel, E. Jaensch, C. G. Jung, F. Kraus, E. Meyerson, W. Pinder, R. Wilhelm, and others. Brief references to Bergson and Freud, whom Klages himself discusses, will be found in this paper. Specific instances of plagiarism, as alleged by Klages' followers, will also be given (note 156).

⁷ The "Geist" is the nous, the pneuma, or the logos, GW, 6, what we would call in ordinary speech the intellect, the reason, the spirit, the mind. I have, for the most part, referred to it as spirit when there is talk of its iniquities; it is non-physical, and in general, the rational side of man, "ausserraumzeitlich." The "Seele" corresponds to the Greek psyche. It is the living principle, the vital spark (GW, 70) and one with the body, soma. ⁸ GW, xxiii and 6.

⁹ Klages does not explain clearly how this intrusion was able to take place. It came from without (GW, 7), wedged itself into the body-soul unity, hence was an action (GW, p. 250, "Tat"), which already confers a stigma upon activism. Cf. also Ludwig Klages, *Vom Wesen des Bewusstseins*, 3. Auflage, (Leipzig, Barth, 1933) p. 42: (referred to as WB) Warum und wie es geschah, dass innerhalb eines vorgeschichtlichen Volkes irgendwann einmal zuerst der ausserraumzeitliche Geist hineinzuwirken vermochte in die raumzeitliche Lebenszelle, ist ein heute noch nicht zu lösendes Rätsel.

vitalistic conclusions,¹⁰ terminates in a profound pessimism.¹¹ (I use the abused word "profound" deliberately, and, I think justly, to emphasize this pessimism.)

The importance of this metaphysical dissonance in literary criticism based on the Klages philosophy must not be forgotten. It is the chief instrument for the dissection of poets and writers who appear to have strong leanings, to say the least, toward the camp of humanism. With its aid the Klages school reassembles Goethe, Schiller,¹² and Keller, to name the outstanding examples, re-appraises them, lauds the biocentric values and points out the logocentric errors.

¹⁰ For example Bergson, whose attitude toward Progress, Morals, Ethics, Christianity is justifiably critical but in no wise partakes of the fierceness of Klages' wholesale condemnation. Hans Kinkel, "Geist und Seele, die Grundlagen der Anthropologie bei Ludwig Klages," *Philos. Jahrbuch der Görresgesellschaft*, Fulda, 1933, xlv, 16 ff., thinks that Klages may have derived from Bergson, instead of vice versa. In GW, 50 f., 458, Klages discusses Bergson and thinks he is not to be taken too seriously.

¹¹ This has an important bearing on Klages' literary criticism. GW, p. 574: Noch sei erwähnt, dass weitaus die meisten Lebenslehren "optimistisch" einerschreiten. Man sieht aber ohne weiteres, wie leicht der fragliche Optimismus in einen Schopenhauerischen Pessimismus umschlagen könne. . . . Welche höllmässige Aussicht vollends eröffnet sich, wenn man bedenkt, dass alles und jedes immer nur Mittel ist, niemals Zweck. . . ohne dass ein Endzweck auch nur gedacht werden könnte, der dem entsetzlichen Aufwand doch eine Art von Sinn verleihe, es sei denn die Vernichtung des ganzen Getriebes, das Wiedereingehen in den Geist der Verruchtheit, der es erfunden und ausgeheckt!—Überflüssig auszumalen, welche grauenhaften Zerrbilder herauskommen, wenn moderne Hohlköpfe, ohne um ihre Abhängigkeit von solcher Lebensauffassung auch nur selber zu wissen, sie gleichwohl benutzen, um an den Mann zu bringen, was ihnen am Herzen liegt, ihr widriges Gewäsch über Sexualität und Erotik! . . . Auch wer nicht etwa neue "Morgenröten" aufsteigen sähe, sondern mit dem Verfasser dieses Buches der Meinung wäre, dass die Menschheit in Kürze ausgespielt haben werde, dürfte ohne Seherblick vorauskünden, diese Art von lebensphilosophischer Triebverleumdung ende noch vor dem Ende. This disposes of naturalistic and psycho-analytic excesses. Deussen, *op. cit.*, p. 1*, calls attention to the implications of Klages' philosophy in the thought of the "Selbstmörder-Philosophen" (W. Calé, W. Gräser, A. Seidel, M. Steiner, O. Weininger u. a.). *Ibid.*, p. 86 he discusses "Selbstmord und Ekstase."

¹² Schütze, *op. cit.*, cites the application of Klages' standards to Schiller in Volume xx of the *Goethe Jahrbuch*: "In Deubel's interpretation of Schiller's 'Hymn to Joy' enthusiasm becomes 'orgiasm,' 'joy,' 'ecstasy,' and the expansive vision of a rapturous Olympian fervor is sensationalized into a Dionysian fury." Schütze does not mention that this goes back to an authorization by Klages himself, as will be shown later. (Cf. notes 81, 82, 83.)

Klages, like other present-day thinkers, throws Idealism and Materialism into the discard as outmoded philosophies, useless if not actually harmful in creative functioning. He finds no difference between them and thinks they are merely aspects of the same thing.¹³ He calls the English realist a secret Platonist; for the latter, properties float in empty space, or rather in Nirvana, as independent essences.¹⁴

Klages raises life to an absolute value. He hypostatizes it. There is no greater value than life, none that approaches it, none subordinate to it. He shares with the German romanticists their passionate devotion to intensity of living; as it was to them, life is festive to him, and he believes in honoring the feast of life by uninterrupted celebration. But he has nothing to do with their systems of philosophy or religion; monism and pantheism alike are the objects of his scorn and derision. Their dualistic world of polarity is his world; his is a "metaphysic of the Many"¹⁵ that makes no compromises.

Klages defines life as eternal flow, change, becoming, renewal, chaos. His chaotic world is actually that of the flux and flow of Heraclitus and the *panta rei*, but without the indwelling Logos.¹⁶ It is dynamic beyond the possibility of holding fast even one reality, except, as we shall see, through the medium of poetry.

¹³ GW, p. 161 f. Because they are both concerned with preserving the fiction of an intelligent order of the universe, which to Klages is "kleinleutehaft." He finds, for instance, precisely the same train of thought in Schiller's

Einstweilen, bis den Bau der Welt
Philosophie zusammenhält,
Erhält *sie* das Getriebe
Durch Hunger und durch Liebe,

and Darwin's instinctive survival and adaptation theories. Both the idealist and the materialist lay stress upon the preservation of individual and species.

¹⁴ Klages has a very low opinion of English philosophy: GW, pp. 161 f.: Die Engländer mögen vieles verstehen, von Philosophie verstehen sie jedenfalls nichts. Platonism is the last word in "error" to Klages and the Klages school.

¹⁵ I have borrowed this phrase from Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, Cambridge, 1928, because it is on just this score of the "many" that he attacks romanticism most fiercely. It is very appropriate to Klages, who is the antithesis of everything that Babbitt held most dear.

¹⁶ GW, p. 62, Heraklit entging nicht dem Schicksal, seine Lehre zu verfälschen durch die Annahme eines ihr innewohnenden Logos. Note the term "verfälschen," with which the Klages school operates freely.

Everything living is unique, incomparable, connected with everything else and never repeating itself alike.

The world of events and the soul stand in polar relation to each other. The soul receives the content of experience (what Klages calls the "Bild"¹⁷ and I have translated as "image") from the world, and in their close kinship and dependence one upon the other: the soul upon the world, the world upon the soul, lies the meaning of experience. The content of experience is not things and their qualities, but vital forces: life, soul content, which appear within the stream of images. Our experience of the phenomena of the world is originally and immediately an experience of the appearance of living souls. The elemental resemblance of the receptive soul and of soulful reality is the necessary prerequisite for all true experience.¹⁸

Primitive peoples, Klages says, do not need proof that appearances are souls, but we moderns prove it in every-day speech, for instance when we speak of a "warm red" or a "cold blue."¹⁹ We impute our own experiences to the colors. In other words, colors, degrees of heat or cold, spatial attributes, sensual or sensory modes are suitable only to the description of personalities with souls, because they themselves (the colors, etc.) are living (*beseelt*).

Reality is, in Klages' eyes, a world of images with souls, or conversely, souls which appear in the immediacy of the image.²⁰ He arrives at a dynamic world where not only living beings but all nature and all things are alive and have meaning. The soul (meaning identity of the name,²¹ not of the person) is "eine überorganische Seele." Suddenly we have a poetic world. Organic and inorganic nature partake of the life of the images and of the life of the cosmos, in the sense of images which are to be lived (I avoid the term "apprehended"); plants live, as well as animals and human beings; the rock, the cloud, water, wind and flame,

¹⁷ The index to GW refers the reader, under "Bilder," to "Abbild, Anschauen, Eindruck, Entfremdung, Erscheinung, Raum, Schauung, Scheinbild, Spiegelung, Traum, Vergegenwärtigung, Zeit." The difficulties of one accurate translation are therefore almost insuperable. It is clear from this that the "Bild" is not optical, but qualitative. See also Deussen, *op. cit.*, pp. ix, 50. My authorization for Bild as "image" is GW, p. 783.

¹⁸ GW, 1121.

¹⁹ WB, pp. 29-31; 34.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²¹ GW, p. 1015: Der Leib eines Namens ist natürlich der Laut, der Geist ist der Begriff. . . . Was also ist denn die Seele des Namens? Die Wortbedeutung.

as well as sun- and star-dust, the desk, and even space and time. The spirit-concept unity, static and not alive, inextricably bound together with (not dual to) the soul-body unity of the person, continually causes disharmony.²² It is the adversary, the arch-enemy, ever making war upon the living soul.

It is not matter which is constant, for the matter of which man is composed changes in the course of time. But the image continues to live as it wanders from body to body: the image of the beech, of the oak, of the human. This wandering image is a changing image, in a rhythmical universe;²³ it changes by growth, flowering, age and death, by thousands of years of change in the genus, which is also subject to change and decay. We have a very close approach to the animism of the primitives, as we read Klages' eloquent expositions, though he is at pains to point out the differences.²⁴

Finally, in a phenomenal world that awakens to life as it makes contacts with the living soul, the poet takes his place as the medium through which we have some approach to a permanent reality.

By Klages' definition, the poet is one who preserves lost forms of life, lost long ages ago in the gradual estrangement and final divorce of man from his cosmos. Genuine poetry testifies in words, which are equivalent to meaning, symbol and recollection,

²² Each has its own sphere: GW, p. 1014: der Leib ist Träger des Empfindens und der Eigenbewegung, die Seele Träger des Schauens und Wirkens (= "Webens"), der Geist Träger von Auffassungsakten und Willensakten. Dem lebendigen Geiste entspricht sonach die Körperlichkeit der Welt oder, abstrakter gefasst ihre Materialität, der eingekörperten Seele die Erscheinung der Weltcharaktere, wachsend an seelischem Gehalt mit wachsender Seelenvorherrschaft; dem verörtlichten Geist eine Welt mit sich identischer Gegenstände.

The shade of Goethe's "Erdgeist" is very much alive in this definition: "So schaff' ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit—Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid."

²³ Klages' universe is rhythmical in nature. Cf. Ludwig Klages, *Vom Wesen des Rhythmus*, Kampen auf Sylt (Kampmann) 1933. Deussen, *op. cit.*, p. 1*: "Besonderen Bibliographien bleibt auch der Zusammenhang des Klages'schen Werkes mit dem Schrifttum der Rhythmislehren (Tanz, R. v. Laban, M. Wigmann u.a.) vorbehalten."

²⁴ GW, pp. 121, 384, 499, 1476. Klages' quarrel is mainly with definitions of an animism which inflicts "spirits" upon nature or associates souls with persons. He is much more in sympathy with Tylor's presentation and quotes him a number of times, despite an alleged "obsession" with the concept "animism." GW, pp. 499, 1147, 1271, 1283, 1288, 1293 ff., 1476.

to the character of the events which take place in the receptive soul. Klages asserts that it is a mark of genuine poetry to affect the emotions of the receptive listener by means of its pictures or images.²⁵

Poetry renews itself in every generation in the passive "pathic" soul. In flagrant opposition to this pathic soul of the poet stands the will, with its desire for action, an indispensable ingredient of the character of the doers of the world, whereby intellectual action is as pernicious as physical. The poet's pathic disposition is equally antithetical to the so-called aesthetic mode of perception, which tries to glean from the surface of the object its properties. We have to "describe" by means of materials and forms; but in Klages' view, the image that is propertyless cannot possibly be so hypostatized. It can only live when we, or the poet, point to it and interpret its character.

The poets of all the ages constantly capture and recapture reality, and with it, moments of time and eternity.²⁶ This, their unique ability for regeneration and renewal, sets them apart from the conceptual isms that have been led astray by their implicit faith in facts and phenomena. Attaching names and calling these "reality" is to assume that every experience of a life is always one and the same; poetry makes no such assumptions. In place of the rigid entities of philosophy and science, which can never renew themselves, poetry isolates the countless manifestations of the soul through the wonder of the word in infinite variety. The poet does not say "I," he is merged into the immensity of the "It"; he has no concern with the ethical, his feeling is cosmic.²⁷ The stream of his poetry flows through the

²⁵ Cf. GW, pp. 1254 ff. If the soul of the poetry, hence its meaning, appears in the REALITY of the image which the poet or prophet successfully evokes, it follows that this is true of every experience, even of a toothache. In every bodily pain the soul asserts itself, according to Klages, in an image, or there would be no experience of pain. Cf. also WB, p. 27, in which Klages says that the key to the whole philosophy of vitalism lies in the fact that not objects have souls but their images when they appear, and *ibid.*, p. 39: only souls can appear at all. The whole phenomenal world becomes alive.

²⁶ GW, p. 1194: Wir untersuchen nicht, welcher Weise des Sprachgebrauchs das Wunder der Auflösung des Zeitaugenblicks und der Verwirklichung des mit ihm unvergleichlichen Ewigkeitsaugenblicks gelinge. Man kommt ihr am nächsten, wenn man sie . . . die *vollendet* dichterische nennt . . .

²⁷ These two distinctions Klages claims, among others, as wholly unique discoveries, GW, xx f. He classes them with Goethe's "Urphänomen," the romantic

channels of ecstasy and intoxication.²⁸

To sum up, then, Klages' reality with which we are here concerned is a poetic, artistic reality, a reality of the imagination. It has nothing whatever to do with the world of things or events, any more than Klages'—and the poet's—*Erleben* and *Erleiden* have to do with sense experience in the every-day meaning of the term. By virtue of this distinction between the reality of immediacy, and the falsely-claimed reality of things and events, Klages establishes critical touchstones²⁹ which he names Life and Existence.³⁰ Out of Life poetry is born; Existence is sterile. Poet-artist equals soul-life-reality-vitality; scientist-technician equals spirit-existence-death-stagnation. Truth is incommensurable with reality and is no aspect of it.

Wordsworth in his preface to "Lyrical Ballads" asserted that "poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is on the countenance of all science," but Klages, with a superlative scorn of epistemology, disputes the validity of science entirely, in the interest of his absolute value, life. He says that science is the purest precipitation of reflective consciousness; it freezes reality and makes it

concept "polarity," Nietzsche's "Dionysisches und Sokratisches" as antitheses, and his use of "Ressentiment." "Durch Gunst des Schicksals wurde auch mir die Findung gewisser Urbegriffe teil, etc." "Niemand vor mir hat jemals Personen, Völker und Zeiten eingeteilt aus dem Gesichtspunkt des Gegensatzes, etc." "niemand vor mir wusste um die Wesensgegensätzlichkeit, etc."

²⁸ Klages has devoted a whole book to the subject of the poet's source of inspiration. For definitions and detailed discussion of "ecstasy" and "intoxication" and their relation to Nietzsche's "Dionysisches" see Ludwig Klages, *Vom Kosmogonischen Eros*, 3. Auflage (Jena, Diederichs, 1930), pp. 56-144. Cf. also GW, 815: Nicht das "Apollinische," wie noch Nietzsche in seiner erleuchteten "Geburt der Tragödie" meint, sondern, um in seiner Sprache zu reden, grade das Dionysische ist das bilderströmende Auge der Welt, welches erwacht im Empfinden der Körperlichkeit. Das Musterbild des geistigen Menschen aber zeigt er uns selbst in der Gestalt des begreifenden und durch die Denktat entseelenden Sokrates.

²⁹ I have taken the liberty of using Matthew Arnold's happy term, which is so well-known by now that quotation marks seem superfluous.

³⁰ Klages uses these terms so arbitrarily that even Deussen, whose critical study is a wholly sympathetic one, is forced to depart from Klages in order to make himself generally understood in philosophic circles. For a brief discussion of the term "Existenz" as it is employed by Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Heidegger, see Werner Brock, *An Introduction to Contemporary German Philosophy*, (Cambridge, 1935) pp. 82 ff.

rigid, and, in falsifying reality, science detracts and subtracts from life.

The reality of poetry and literature is summed up in Klages' accusations against what has hitherto been called psychology. He himself always uses the expression "Seelenkunde." What all the "science" (quotation marks by Klages) of psychology has accomplished, he says, weighs lighter than one psychological page of Goethe or of Jean Paul. Klages continues that one tries in vain to escape the bitter truth which Novalis already recognized and compressed into the statement:

Die sogenannte Psychologie gehört auch zu den Larven, welche die Stelle im Heiligtum eingenommen haben, wo echte Götterbilder stehen sollten.³¹

Language in general, and the language of poetry in particular, thus becomes a factor of extraordinary significance, a subject of close scrutiny and of revaluation in the Klages school. It assumes the importance of a measuring-stick of reality.

III. THE GROWTH OF THE BIOCENTRIC METHOD

In the period between 1893, when the momentous association of Klages with Stefan George and his circle began,³² and 1929, when the first volume of *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* was published, certain highlights of aesthetic, intellectual, and emotional experience in the life of Klages are discernible. They deserve particular emphasis, as having a large share in confirming and supporting the thesis that the spirit is the adversary of the soul; they removed Klages ever farther from the humanistic standpoint, and they perpetuated his extraordinary feeling of kinship with certain poets and thinkers of German romanticism.

Klages was a contributor of poetry and prose to the *Blätter für die Kunst*,³³ he was one of the three members of the so-called "Kosmische Runde" in Munich. At about the turn of the century he became aware of Bachofen, a secret which was known

³¹ Ludwig Klages, *Die Grundlagen der Charakterkunde*, 5. und 6. Auflage (Leipzig, Barth, 1928), p. 8 (referred to as *Grundlagen*).

³² According to Friedrich Wolters, *Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst* (Berlin, Bondi, 1930), p. 65.

³³ Poetry and prose by Klages appeared in the *Blätter* and was reprinted in the collections and excerpts: *Eine Auslese aus den Jahren 1892-98* (Berlin, Bondi, 1899), pp. 131-43. *Eine Auslese aus den Jahren, 1898-1904* (Berlin, Bondi, 1904), pp. 97-108.

only to this select circle,³⁴ and which they guarded jealously until it was disclosed to the public some twenty years later by the publication of a part of *Gräbersymbolik*.³⁵ A friendship with Friedrich Huch inspired Klages, in 1901, to an essay³⁶ which tells us as much about Klages as it does about the novel *Peter Michel*, which the essay ostensibly discusses. In 1902 Klages published a book called *Stefan George*,³⁷ which is a clear and unequivocal statement of his literary credo, valid for biocentric appraisal to this very day. Of like magnitude with the brilliance of Bachofen, the star of Carl Gustav Carus has guided Klages ever since 1910, when he first sighted it.³⁸

These are the chief steps by which Klages' outlook on literature can be traced; they are definite enough in rejecting any humanistic implications. If that had not been so, the *Brief über Ethik*,³⁹ which Klages published in 1918, was thoroughly enlightening; nevertheless, in 1928⁴⁰ Klages again felt impelled to emphasize that rejection in unmistakable terms.

³⁴ Wolters, *op. cit.*, p. 241, credits the actual discovery to Karl Wolfskehl, "der bei den Studien und Vorarbeiten zu seiner Dissertation über Androgynismus in Sage und Mythos auf 'das Mutterrecht, eine Untersuchung über die Gynaikratie der alten Welt nach ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur,' gestossen war und Schuler und Klages alsbald von dem gewaltigen Eindruck Mitteilung machte, den dieses Werk auf ihn ausübte."

³⁵ It is usually believed that Klages unearthed Bachofen: Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Mutterrecht und Urreligion* (Leipzig, Kröner, no date), edited and introduced by Rudolf Marx (1926), p. XIX: Hinzuleiten zu diesem Kern seines Werkes, dessen Wert zuerst Ludwig Klages um die Jahrhundertwende wieder aufging, dessen Bedeutung von einem kleinen Kreise in München wie ein seltenes Geheimnis gehütet wurde, bis . . . Neuausgabe . . . (1923) die Schar der Eingeweihten sprengte, ist der Sinn unserer Auswahl. Cf. GW, pp. 908-11 and many other references.

³⁶ Ludwig Klages, "Friedrich Huch" in *Der Lotse*, II. Jahrgang, 16. November 1901, pp. 206 ff.

³⁷ Berlin, Bondi, 1902. Klages repudiated this book, so far as it concerned George, in *Zur Ausdruckslehre und Charakterkunde* (Heidelberg, Kampmann, 1927).

³⁸ According to Klages' introduction to C. G. Carus, *Psyche* (Jena, Diederichs, 1926), p. XVIII.

³⁹ Now contained in the collection *Mensch und Erde* (Jena, Diederichs, 1933), pp. 111-30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, *Vorwort zur dritten Auflage*, p. 3: . . . Wahrnehmung, dass, wie es scheint, nicht allzu viele seiner Leser die Tiefe der Kluft zwischen dem Weltbild des Verfassers und den Zielen JEDER Art von "Humanismus" völlig zu bemerken vermochten.

A biographical note will not be amiss to explain how deeply ingrained are certain tendencies in Klages. He has, apparently, a natural inclination toward mystery, dreams and visions. He is gloomy and pessimistic by temperament, a North German, to whom the landscape of heather and heath offers all the mysteries that his soul requires; it is in his blood to believe in signs, symbols, runes, and to be possessed of the faith that all nature is alive. Ponderous and heavy by nature,⁴¹ he has always been an individualist, a "Sonderling" or "Eigenbrödlar," as his associates have called him.

In a spirited account of the Cosmic Circle, written by one of the most sophisticated women in Munich,⁴² Klages stands out conspicuously, and is easily recognizable as the same individual who thirty years later storms through the pages of *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*, filling pages with violent invective, others with sheer poetry, always challenging conventional mental sluggishness, and stimulating the intellect even in his most abusive moments.

Thus the personal comment made by the Gräfin Franziska v. Reventlow almost forty years ago seems equally valid today, in an impersonal sense:

Mein Gott, was ist (Klages) eigentlich? Am Ende doch nur ein Mensch mit Grössenwahnsinn und Ichsucht und einem wundervollen Verstand, der uns alle hingrissen hat. Aber wohin reisst er die Menschen?⁴³

⁴¹ His views of humor are enlightening in this respect. His own writing is unhumorous but surcharged with irony, frequently of a bitter flavor, much in the manner of Nietzsche. He traces the etymology of "humor," concluding: (Cf. GW, 1469). "In der Form der Sentimentalität äussert sich nämlich das noch verfügbare Liebesvermögen zumal als unverhülltes Mitleid mit sich selbst; wohingegen im Humor versucht wird, das zu verdecken durch *Ironie* (ein Wort, das ja eigentlich Verstellung bedeutet). Der Humor ist eine Art des Sichverstellens: man gibt sich den Anschein, überlegen zu spotten, während man im Grunde zugleich einen Verlust, einen Mangel, ein Unvermögen *beklagt*; daher das 'durch Tränen lächeln' des Humors." Previous to this all lighter forms of humor had been summarily ruled out from consideration under this definition: (wobei die verbreitete Nebenbedeutung: Witz, Scherz, Lustigkeit ohne tieferen Gehalt natürlich ausgeschlossen bleibt.) Cf. what is said note in 112 about Hoffmann.

⁴² Franziska, Gräfin zu Reventlow, *Gesammelte Werke* (München, Albert Langen, 1925); and *Briefe der Gräfin Franziska zu Reventlow* (München, Albert Langen, 1929), to supplement the *Werke*, which is a compendium of first-hand information. Klages is "Hallwig."

⁴³ Reventlow, *Werke*, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

The interesting fact about these comments is to realize how astonishingly little Klages has changed the general tenor or tone of his beliefs. Klages' paganism is fully developed before 1900; the Gräfin reports innumerable conversations, the main theme of which repeats that "there is no God; there are many gods"; her diary is filled with the terminology of "Erosdurchleuchtet," "Sturm-Eros," "Eros der Fremde," and other varieties of Eros. She refers at times to Klages' "Niedergangstheorie," which frightens her. Sometimes, when she has spent an evening in the company of Klages, we hear that he appeals to "meine mystische Seite, die drehende Swastika," or she describes him as "der einzige Mensch, der alles versteht und der fliegen kann," and his intellectual hold on her is so strong that he forces her, almost against her will, to write a confessional novel. But there are bitter accusations, too, the only one which concerns us here being the characterization: "gerade diese Seite von Eigensinn, die es immer so dreht, dass nur der andere eigensinnig ist."

This was the Klages who disinterred the forgotten Bachofen,⁴⁴ latest of the late romanticists, who furnished his disciple with an acceptable key to the origin of the world, in the symbol "Magna Mater." Bachofen had erected a monument to his own mother by perpetuating the concept "matriarchy" for posterity; Klages uses the symbol of the mother in place of a First Principle.

In close conformity to the antique cults of the Great Mothers (Istar, Astarte, Isis, Rhea, etc. etc.) Klages makes the Magna Mater the life-producing eternal womb, the root, the source, which in no wise corresponds to masculinity; it is the nucleus, undeveloped. The world of Klages is not creation, but birth; the Magna Mater is all-bearing and all-destructive. The unity of the mother symbol is that in regard to which all polarities take place.⁴⁵ Not the man belongs to her, but the child. Bachofen's

⁴⁴ Wolters describes the effect of this on the life of the community in detail, *op. cit.*, p. 255: "Weit über die bisherigen Wünsche romantischer und zeitgenössischer Bewegungen wurde die weibliche Seite des Menschentums ja des ganzen Kosmos plötzlich zur höchsten Wertung gesteigert. Die Zeugung trat zurück vor Empfängnisbereitschaft und Schwangerschaft, die Tat und Handlung vor Puls und Wogung, der fordernde Wille vor dem triebhaften Wünschen." Cf. GW, 1325 ff. Wolters' account is not first-hand, but GW confirms it.

⁴⁵ GW, 1329: "Nicht eindringlich genug aber kann man sich gegenwärtig halten, dass Weibheit in *diesem* Verstande nicht das Gegenstück zur Mannheit

is a well-balanced dualism (the romantics used the term "polarity") of maternity and paternity; Klages lays all the emphasis on maternity. From it, with its symbol of the loving mother and the beloved child, he raises love to a supreme value.

In the manner of this interpretation, Klages retained the Bachofen dualisms of earth and sun, nature and spirit, woman and man, paganism and Christianity, night and day, so that all the emphasis was shifted to darkness, mystery, night, paganism, nature, full sensuality, earth. He enlarged on Bachofen, defined Spirit in numerous ways, of which the mechanizing reason and the purposeful will were the lowest expressions, because he considered them the arch-enemies of all life, which destroyed it unmercifully.⁴⁶ This rejection of Reason, Volition, Teleology is a corner-stone of the biocentric method.

Klages transfigured the old romantic "Back to nature" slogan into the more vital wish: "Back to the ardor and beauty of the original soul." In making war upon Christianity, he condemned it as the way upward toward the light, a way which led to the static Logos and to the rigid symbol of the cross,⁴⁷ while the pagan road downward led to primeval forces, the creative powers of darkness, and to the fruitful Magna Mater.

Bachofen also provided Klages with the romantic Golden Age that he needed, in order to round out the picture of a past which should be remote enough to be shrouded in mystery, and yet perfect enough to provide a suitable background, a home of

bildet, sondern ein noch unentfaltetes Diesseits so der Geschlechter wie aller nur möglichen Gegensätze; und ebenso stellt mütterliches Dunkel, mütterliche Nacht, mütterlicher Raum, mütterliche Ruhe, mütterliches Unten nicht den Gegensatz dar zu Helle, Tag, Bewegung, oben sondern das ungeschiedene Diesseits von Dunkel und Helle, Nacht und Tag, Raum und Zeit, Ruhe und Bewegung, unten und oben."

⁴⁶ In the book on George, criticizing George indirectly. Wolters, p. 254: "Man weiss, dass der Gegensatz in dieser Form eine völlige Umkehrung der Sicht Bachofens ist und Klages daher eine Unterscheidung zwischen Herz- und Kopfgedanken Bachofens vornehmen musste. Er würdigte den Geist, das Apollinische Licht, zu einer Gegenmacht des Lebens herab und verstand unter ihm nur noch den zerlegenden oder mechanisierenden Verstand und zwecksetzenden Willen." Wolters resents the implied criticism of George, of course.

⁴⁷ Stefan George, *op. cit.*, p. 68: Man denke an den bestürzenden Formenreichtum . . . gotischer Fenster . . . und wie alles dennoch wie nirgends in der Welt der Despotie *eines* Gesetzes von unerbittlicher Erhabenheit dient, tausend Formenzierden umblühen hüllend *ein* Skelett: das starre Kreuz.

the soul adequate to the biocentric thesis. The Pelasgian stage of mankind, with its "chthonic" primeval religion, fulfilled this requirement.

It should be stated here that while Klages glorifies the primitive and is an adherent of the "Noble Savage"⁴⁸ faith, he distinguishes sharply between various stages of primitives: those in whom spiritual forces have already accomplished their devastating work, inspiring them with fears and making them depraved, and the mythical Pelasgians. The Pelasgian is the archetype of visionary, the original poet, as it were: his vision is wholly symbol and image. Through the medium of poetry it is possible to recapture this lost state of abundant life.⁴⁹

Strangely enough, a nineteenth century Darwinist, the almost forgotten singer of the *Nibelungen*, Wilhelm Jordan, furnished Klages with an acceptable hypothesis as to how the poet can find anew his prehistoric home of the soul, where a state of exalted living had existed on some more perfect star than this earth. Despite his materialistic outlook, Jordan had substituted the term "Erinnerung" for the "instinct" of his day, so despised by Klages. Jordan wrote a long didactic poem with the title "Erinnerung,"⁵⁰ which Klages considers quite on a par with Lucretius. Two stanzas will illustrate the nature of this recollection, which plays a considerable role in the biocentric school of thought:

Was also wars, was einst in lauer Welle
Dem Stoff gewann die Form der ersten Zelle?
Erinnerung an frühere Gestaltung
Und Wunschkraft zur ähnlichen Entfaltung.

.

Erinnerung an tausendmal zuvor
In gleicher Art vom ganzen Ahnenchor

⁴⁸ Cf. Hoxie Neale Fairchild, *The Noble Savage* (New York, 1928) p. 2: "The conception of a Golden Age is to the ancient world as the Noble Savage idea is to the modern world. Each represents a protest against the evil incidental to human progress; each looks yearningly back from the corruptions of civilization to an imaginary primeval innocence." Klages' world contains both the Golden Age of Pelasgian life and two types of Noble Savage, as will appear later.

⁴⁹ GW, 1259 f., 1403 f., and many other passages.

⁵⁰ I have translated this "Erinnerung" by "recollection" as opposed to "Gedächtnis." It is a recognition, a renewal, not an instinctive remembrance. Cf. GW, p. 360. Of course it has no connection with Platonic recollection, which is spiritual.

Getanes lehrt, geschickt, obwohl noch blind,
Zu melken schon das neugeborne Kind.⁵¹

The recollective powers of the poet are of the same kind,⁵² and we shall see the theory of "Erinnerung" applied to Stefan George's poetry.

In the time of Klages' association with George and the *Blätter*, he considered Friedrich Huch as the prose writer who, in *Peter Michel*,⁵³ portrayed most significantly the metaphysical incompatibility between "life" and the thinking capacity. Klages attributed a high degree of poetic reality to the depiction of the "struggle of life with death," that is, of a rational existence which triumphed over the "real" dream world of the child. He said that all the sensible, rational people, as the representatives of death, combined to destroy the living child. His discussion is an indictment of the training and education by means of which the child, when it grows up, enters the realm of the "dead" world of utility and becomes just another Philistine exuding platitudes.

Incidental to its non-intellectual character, Klages valued in Huch's book a style which was rich in soul content, while its delicacy of perception reproduced moods within the simplest conversations; the situations occur with the most sparing use of intellectual turns of phrase.

In calling *Peter Michel*, to which Huch himself gave the ironic sub-title "ein komischer Roman" (and which is treated as such by some critics), one of the most terrible tragedies of our day, Klages applies the biocentric method liberally. He enlarges on the two antagonistic worlds. One is the world of Will and Deed, of the passions of the day, of the subtleties of science, of the compulsion of cause and effect. The other is the world of "real" substances, an earth world without spirit or sin, containing fate and doom, but in no wise to be apprehended by reason. And in 1901 Klages came to the conclusion: Logic is organized darkness, mysticism is rhythmic light.

Schools and professions, duties and dignities interfere with the preservation of the eternal child. They tear it out of its dreamy bed of reality, torture it into becoming a useful member

⁵¹ Taken from GW, 361 and 362.

⁵² *Mensch und Erde*, p. 169: Das Dichterische ist immerdar Erneuerung eines Vergangenen.

⁵³ See Friedrich Huch, *Gesammelte Werke* (Stuttgart, DVA), I, 3-287.

of a society which calls itself human.⁵⁴ The soul feels that the "good" people are its enemies but can do nothing about it. Klages formulates the equation: existence is death. The counterpart, that death is really life, is a way of escape for Friedrich Huch's delicately drawn and sensitive characters, who, when their souls are in danger of being destroyed, or when they are torn from their dream worlds of illusion, evade "existence" and die of their own volition.

In the discussion of this book, we see the biocentric appraisal in its early stages. The great metaphysical cleft: the soul and the spirit at odds, the cult of the child,⁵⁵ the war upon rational thinking, contempt of the Philistine and of his deadly dullness and self-complacency, are all expressed. The emphasis is on dreams and on the unconscious life, both of them far removed from the psychoanalytic interpretation of the dream and from the subconscious of psycho-analysis. Klages voices his antagonism to the Will, to Action, to Science, to cause and effect. The intellect is excoriated, the every-day world of daily duties pilloried, and the soul emerges as the vital factor.

In his chief work Klages still cites Friedrich Huch as the dreamer of "real sleep dreams,"⁵⁶ romantic, not psycho-analytic ones.

With such a background of thought Klages felt ready, in 1902, to incorporate many of his discoveries and conclusions in the little book which he called—mistakenly, as it seemed to him later on—*Stefan George*. He thought he had found the perfect equation. Stefan George seemed to be the symbol of (1) the COSMIC poet who was gifted beyond all others, the archetype endowed with (2) recollective powers, equipped with the magic ability to bring salvation to a corrupt civilization by the force of his articulated visions. If we are to believe the statement of contemporaries, Klages had never before come into contact with

⁵⁴ Klages has defended himself effectively against the accusation that he advocates idleness: *Vom Kosmogonischen Eros*, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

⁵⁵ With Klages it takes the form of praising the state of unconsciousness, be it the childhood of the race or childhood as such: *Mensch und Erde*, p. 95: "... weil das erste Lebensjahrsiebert, das uns mehr und entscheidender prägt als die nachfolgenden siebenzig zusammen, zugleich ein Jahrsiebert wesentlicher Unbewusstheit ist ...

⁵⁶ GW, 1452: Eine selten schöne Sammlun gvon hervorragend gut wiedergegebenen *echten* Schlafträumen bringt das Büchlein: Friedrich Huch, *Träume* (Berlin, Fischer, 1904); ausserdem der IV. Band der *Gesammelten Werke* ...

a real poet. His admiration had been centered upon such writers as Wilhelm Jordan, as we have seen, and to this day Klages retains a measure of his enthusiasm for Jordan.⁵⁷

To Klages, then, George stood as the living incorporation of (3) a soul which lived by poetry and whose body was visionary. *From this recollection* upon which Jordan and Klages were agreed, George, in Klages' opinion, knew of the forces of the universe, and the language of poetry was a natural source of (4) religious expression to him. Klages believed in a miracle: that (5) intoxication of the blood, with not the slightest dilution of intellectual participation, that signs and symbols and runes and magic could restore the primeval reality of imagery through the medium of a George who, in "Algabal," had created the first visible evidence of this regeneration.

It was the pure paganism⁵⁸ of "Algabal," guaranteeing in

⁵⁷ Illustrations of superlatives in Klages' criticism, as applied to Jordan, *Mensch und Erde*, pp. 133 ff. (written 1919): dem vielleicht nie in seiner vollen Bedeutung gewürdigten Manne, der wie kein anderer mit den strahlenden Zinnen väterländischer Begeisterung das Gebäude einer ganzen Weltanschauung krönte. P. 145: Kraft einer Naturanlage . . . gewann er eine *Meisterschaft des Wortes*, die ihn den sprachschöpferischen Grössen ersten Ranges aller Zeiten und Völker gesellt. Auch wer ihn nicht unter die führenden Dichter rechnet, darf noch keinen Augenblick zögern, ihn nach entdeckenderischer Prägestkraft des geschriebenen Wortes, einem Dante, Eckehart, Luther, einem Goethe oder Hölderlin, einem Görres oder Nietzsche an die Seite zu stellen . . . Erneuerer einer Epik, die seit den Tagen des Hildebrandsliedes oder des Beowulf dem germanischen Sprachkreis abhanden kam. Stabvers . . . den er . . . nach selbstgeschaffenem Gesetz mit einer Sicherheit handhabt wie kein Eddaskalde vollkommener . . . P. 149: Der ahnungsbanke Schein einer weltplanmässigen Notwendigkeit, dessen keines der grossen Epen ermangelt, ist in Jordans Nibelunge zur alles färbenden Beleuchtung geworden. P. 154: . . . kennen wir seit der Blütezeit unsres Schrifttums im 18. Jahrhundert nur zwei Dichter, welche die neuhochdeutsche Mundart mit dem urgermanischen Mark dreifach ausgemessener *Plastik* zu erfüllen verstanden: nämlich in ihren gelungensten Gedichten Annette Droste und selbst noch in seinen *misslungensten* Leistungen Jordan! These judgments all savor considerably of "Deutschtümelei." Over and above all, Klages believes that Jordan shared his "Untergangsstimmung." P. 161: . . . Über Jordans Dichtung die Stimmung einer nahezu unpersönlichen Wehmut liegt, die im Gegensatz zu seiner Fortschrittsgesinnung fast unablässig an das ewige Abschiednehmen alles Lebens gemahnt. GW, pp. 360-63 and 447, 570 are also devoted to Jordan.

⁵⁸ The sources of Klages' paganism are set forth in *Mensch und Erde*, p. 171 f.: . . . in den achtziger und neunziger Jahren den Ozean der Menschheit eine Grundwelle hob, vielleicht planetarisch bedingt und jedenfalls "Element," zu der sich die zeitgenössischen Geschmackslosigkeiten etwa wie Schiffstrümmer

images clear as crystal the rebirth of a pre-Christian human world that had been lost, which catered to one of the strongest of Klages' predilections: that Christianity is responsible for all the evils of civilization.

With the repudiation of Christianity, and of Judaism, obviously, as the basis of Christianity, Klages had rejected what he considered the rigidity of art under Christian domination. Already, in the *Blätter für die Kunst*, in what he entitled "Aus einer Seelenlehre des Künstlers,"⁵⁹ he had demanded that aesthetic distinctions between the beautiful and the non-beautiful be abandoned and that standards be built upon (6) the intuitive and formative powers of the artist. He believed that these standards should be based on the conscious and unconscious choice of objects by the poet, as he shaped and treated the material of the soul. As the poet was able to produce more potent signs and symbols of the mysterious values of soul and world, in like ratio could his worth be appraised.

Thus, when George created such verse as

Mühle, lass die arme still
da die haide ruhen will⁶⁰

Klages asserted that George had departed from all tradition (for example, of the classic ideal)⁶¹ and had entered a realm where no human culture had left any records, yet the burial monuments and gigantic stone bequests of those wandering tribes on moor and heath had been sufficient to release visions within the poet.

George was on Klages' home ground: landscape, mood, and

und Konservenbüchsen zur Dünung des Meeres verhalten! . . . substantiell der Romantik nächstverwandt, aber von ihr bis zur Verkennung gesinnungsverschieden—samt und sonders im Zeichen einer Erneuerung des *Heidentums* standen . . . Burckhardt . . . Bachofen . . . Böcklin . . . Nietzsche.

⁵⁹ Now in *Blätter*, 1892–1898, pp. 136–42.

⁶⁰ *Werke*, I, p. 57.

⁶¹ *Stefan George*, p. 7 ff.: Starke Visionen, die (die grossen Dichter des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts) zu bannen vermochten, hielten sie äusserer Würdigung bedürftig und gaben Hinweise, welche Verbesserung menschlicher Dinge daraus entstünde . . . Was sie Edelstes boten, blieb dem nachkommenden Jahrhundert fremd: dieser ärmlichsten Frist der Menschheit, die seelenmörderischen Frohndienst "Fortschritt" hiess . . . Man kann die Klassik lesen, ohne die tagtäglichen Spannungen des Geistes zu verlassen . . . Vorratsspeichern ähnlich sind unbescheidene Redensarten aufgestellt von Jugend, Freiheit, Frauenliebe. Der Kirchenverstand der Nüchternen fühlt sich erwärmt und geschmeichelt.

expression were all designed to appeal to Klages' innermost sympathies. Thereupon Klages asserted (7) that the characteristics of sinister gloom and dark mystery stamped George's visions as genuine ones. The personal bias of Klages' literary criticism is nowhere more evident than in this phase of his elucidations. Somber coloring and irrational, mystic background are his preference.⁶²

In George's "Graue rosse muss ich schirren" Klages believed that the barriers of ordinary lyric expression had been broken even more impressively by the force of the inward urge which drove Algalab back to barbaric antiquity, and there is a sentence about "George's blood, which had signalled to him in terms of thunder out of the night of Uranos, as it reverberates in these lines amid the intoxicated screams of an iron and copper age."⁶³

But Klages, as time went on and he detected the growing clarity of George, felt that there was a weakening of the original soul substance which had manifested itself in the paganism of Algalab; George had, as Klages expresses it picturesquely, allowed the frosty light of reason to supersede the fructifying darkness until, in the *Teppich*, "we actually stand on Christian soil and under the cold sky of a transcendent churchliness."⁶⁴ George, said Klages, had permitted rational considerations to

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 44: Wir versagen uns Aufschluss zu geben, warum der Charakter des Unheimlichen und Düsteren zum Ächtheitszeichen solcher Visionen gehört—unerweckt ist jene Vorwelt—Deutsche Muse aber hat nur *ein* Mal (weniges in Friedrich Hebbel ausgenommen) von jenen finsternen Reichen zu künden gewusst und dieses eine Mal blieb es das sich nicht wissende Stammeln eines Kindes: Annette Droste Hülshoff . . . (Hünengräber und Steinhäuser der Heide—Land, auf dem noch keine Kulturschicht sesshafter Menschheit abgelagert.)
⁶³ Wolters, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 257. Klages' hatred of Christianity and the symbol of the cross is also expressed characteristically in *Vom Kosmogonischen Eros*, p. 214: Will man sich schliesslich auch noch eine Vorstellung machen, wie das Symbol beschaffen war, das solches mit Blitzesschnelle vermitteln konnte, so suche man sich die Vorlage dazu auf dem packendsten Blatte von Holbeins Totentanz! Im übrigen ist es ja im Grunde eben dieses Symbol, das die weltfeindliche Religion des Christentums seit zweitausend Jahren zu gestalten sich bemüht: der Sinn des Lebens als Selbstkreuzigung der Kreatur! Wer sich davon recht augenfällig überzeugen will, vertiefe sich in das berühmte Kreuzigungsbild des mittelalterlichen Malers Grünewald. Die Stimmung des *sinnlos zu Tode Torturierten* als Stimmung des Lebens überhaupt, das ist sein tief pessimistischer Gehalt.

replace cosmic intuition which had once been expressed in sensory symbols. There were still evidences of some primeval life, but it was not of the forest and of the demons of the earth. It was the rich and heavy culture of an antiquity that contained Dionysos, but the magic charm of a Germanic past had vanished.

The rift between Klages and George is primarily on the issue: spirit or soul. The remainder of their quarrel is on a far lower plane of personal animosities and mutual recriminations. It has no place in the present discussion.⁶⁵

In 1910 Klages found a magnificent reinforcement of his thesis of the soul when he "rediscovered" Carl Gustav Carus, a late romanticist who also belonged to the forgotten legion, and ever since that time Klages has elaborated and extended Carus, or corrected him on the score of his idealistic and Christian "errors."⁶⁶ He accepts, of course, Carus' romantic definition of the soul, as synonymous with life, and adds to it the famous Novalis quotation which locates the soul at the point of contact between the inner and the outer world. A gift for studying the soul, Klages says, rests on a capacity for seeing its meaning within the phenomenal world. But to see the meaning is to see the phenomenon symbolically. Like Novalis, Klages then links the philosopher-poet functions, saying that both follow an irresistible impulse and compulsion when they see things symbolically, and that in his symbolic vision the poet, in spite of

⁶⁵ Wolters gives a detailed account of it from the George point of view, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-70. Cf. Conrad Wandrey, "Ludwig Klages und seine Lebensphilosophie," *Preussische Jahrbücher*, ccxxx (Heft 3, Dezember 1932), 205-19. Wandrey protests against Wolters' presentation of Klages, as though the latter had received all his inspiration from George. He ascribes this legend to the disciple and master cult of the George circle and its tendency to refer the intellectual life of the period entirely to George. Of the latter Wandrey says: . . . um so starrer treten an seinem Antlitz die Züge eines ehernen, herrschsüchtigen und herrschmächtigen Willens hervor, einer ausgesprochenen geistigen Persönlichkeit von imponierendem Ausmass. Nur als umfassende Stimme der Volksgemeinschaft, als Ausdruck überströmender welthafter Fülle, als Schöpfer aus dem Urquell des Lebens darf man ihn nicht mehr feiern wollen. These sentences serve to bring out the very differences between George and Klages. Both deriving from Nietzsche, Klages rejects the glorifier of the will to power and of the superman. He prefers Nietzsche's other face: the psychologist who strips the masks from the Ego's self-deceptions. To Klages life is not will to power; life is soul, or meaning, or even expression.

⁶⁶ See especially GW, 571 f., 900 f., 1446.

enormous differences, resembles the spiritual disposition of the savage.⁶⁷

Brief reference has already been made to the discrepancy between the cosmic fervor of the true poet and the ethical disposition, and to the distinction between the ES and the ICH, two antitheses listed by Klages as sub-divisions of his great primary separation of Spirit and Soul, and claimed by him as significantly unique discoveries.

It would appear obvious that with this non-ethical, anti-individual slant Klages cannot be linked with any form of humanism. In 1918 he elaborated his position still further when he published the *Brief über Ethik*, which ought to have shown how incompatible this view of life and literature was with any humanistic endeavors. The *Brief* "drips" with contempt for human society:

Ich habe früher darauf hingewiesen, was übrigens jeder weiss, dass *DIESE* Menschheit von Blut, Mord, Verrat, Niedertracht und Gemeinheit trieft und also wohl keinem Wunschbilde, auch nicht dem des Ethikers zu entsprechen vermag.⁶⁸

It calls attention to the connection of the ethical "sich bessern" ideal with Christianity, and to the inconsistencies of the dogmatic Christian faith, and reviles once more the Mosaic myth of creation; the categorical imperative is alleged to be the categorical negation of vitality, with the conclusion:

Der Erzieher zur "Sittlichkeit" ist unbewußt systematischer Lebensfrevler.⁶⁹

On the minus side are listed "Wille, Tat, Logos, Nous, 'Idee,' 'Gott,' être suprême, reines Subjekt, absolutes Ich, Geist," while the plus side of the ledger enumerates definite values which Klages calls the means of subsistence, or the nourishment of the soul: wonder, love, and example (Vorbild).

The soul, it is said in the *Brief*, may find wonder in landscape, in poetry, in beauty. The soul will find warmth in love, using love in its widest sense, including reverence, admiration, adoration.

⁶⁷ Cf. GW, 1258 f. The three groups which are "Träger eines noch pathischen Bewusstseins, das in Symbolen denkt," are: (a) the poets of all ages and times, not so much personalities as they are receptacles of speech waves of the soul; (b) wild peoples of the not too remote past (Indians); (c) prehistoric ancestors of the European cultured races. We recognize their nature by means of idols, cults, symbols, mysteries, myths, and a few historically proven facts of Promethean antiquity, which, actually, are prehistoric in origin.

⁶⁸ *Mensch und Erde*, p. 113.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

The eternal symbol of the soul which has thus been led is the loving mother with the beloved child. The examples of the soul are gods, poets, and heroes. The soul will blossom into beauty when it can gaze upon heroes. If the soul does not respond to these stimuli, its leader will depart, and then it may, concludes Klages with an ironic anti-climax, listen unharmed to a lecture on Ethics.

In this necessarily incomplete account of certain milestones in the life of Klages, the name of the greatest teacher of them all has been omitted. There is no beginning and no end to the debt which Klages owes to Nietzsche.⁷⁰

Surveying the touchstones of the biocentric method, as they have been thus far enumerated, we find:

- (1) The poet must believe in the Cosmos, disregard the ethical, eschew teleology;
- (2) He must have recollective powers to evoke the past; they are unconscious;
- (3) His soul must be poetry and his body vision; he has the ability to conjure signs and symbols of the interchange between soul and world;
- (4) He must be religious, recognizing many gods, ardent and adoring; he believes in change and transformation of all things;
- (5) His poetry must have been conceived in ecstasy and intoxication; his is the "pathic" surrender to the Cosmos;
- (6) He has intuitive and formative powers, hence his language will always be imagery, never conceptual;
- (7) The background of his poetry will be irrational or mystic, preferably of somber coloring, dark;

⁷⁰ This necessarily cavalier treatment of Nietzsche is unavoidable within the scope of the present paper. In connection with its subject matter, references to Nietzsche are found in Notes 12, 27, 28, 41, 57, 58, 65, 81, 82; and throughout the text. His influence is implicit in the George circle. Cf. also Ludwig Klages, *Die psychologischen Errungenschaften Nietzsches*, 2. Auflage (Leipzig, Barth, 1930), 228 pp., in which Klages has dissected Nietzsche so that "auf der einen Seite eine giftige, auf der andern eine goldene Hälfte darniedersinkt," . . . "daher selbst die Ehrfurcht dem echten Forscher schwerlich einen besseren Dienst erwiese, als es mit der Abtrennung seiner Irrtümer von seinen *Entdeckungen* geschieht!" (from the preface). For a comprehensive philosophic discussion of Nietzsche and Klages, see Heinrich Ellermann, *Nietzsche und Klages* (Hamburg, 1933).

(8) His standards are love, wonder, example.

There is a condition of life, as Klages knows, in which reality has become continuous song, a plane of existence upon which the rapturous exaltation of the poetic creation has become the only genuine reality. Who, when he sees Rilke's name among the biocentric poets listed by the Klages school does not think of Rilke's "Gesang ist Dasein," and who does not think of Rilke's account of the final "dictation" of the *Elegies*, when he reads:

Er weist auf einen Lebenszustand hin, dem die Wirklichkeit zum währenden Gesang geworden oder dem doch erst der tönende Ueberschwang des dichterischen Augenblickes den *EINTRITT IN DIE WAHRE WIRKLICHKEIT BEDEUTET*⁷¹

IV. THE REVALUATION OF GOETHE, SCHILLER, AND KELLER IN BIOCENTRIC CRITICISM

In examining the application of the biocentric method we can do no better than to observe how its founder takes the measure of Goethe,⁷² and then proceed to compare a brief sketch of the same procedure by a disciple of Klages.⁷³

Goethe is, for Klages, the inaugurator of the science of life; Goethe is the great teacher who preceded Carus in searching the soul; Goethe was the discoverer of the Unconscious, a thought which Carus developed: Goethe's concept of Polarity is a cornerstone of Klages' philosophic structure. But all of this breadth of achievement only proves to Klages that Goethe was not wholly a poet.

Klages acknowledges Goethe's humanism, but he divorces it sharply from any connection with poetry. In the very act of introducing his refreshingly non-academic⁷⁴ appreciation

⁷¹ *Mensch und Erde*, p. 102.

⁷² *Mensch und Erde*, pp. 93-110, "Bemerkungen über die Schranken des Goetheschen Menschen." Ludwig Klages, *Goethe als Seelenforscher* (Leipzig, Barth, 1932).

⁷³ Werner Deubel, "Goethe als Begründer eines neuen Weltbildes," *Jahrbuch der Goethe Gesellschaft*, xvii (1932).

⁷⁴ Klages' mind is certainly not academic! Cf. *Mensch und Erde*, p. 108: . . . während Dutzende von Goethebünden und Tausende von Goethegelehrten geschäftig sind, unter der Larve der Verehrung an seinem Werk und seiner Person Totengräberarbeit zu leisten, indem sie beide zum Gegenstand jenes widerwärtigen Götzendienstes machen, der uns jeden Waschzettel eines grossen Mannes für ein "Dokument" und Sakrum aufbinden will!

of Goethe, Klages restates his absolute standard of poetry:

Wer ein wirkliches Gedicht hervorbringt, hat etwas Vollkommenes hervorgebracht und ist als Dichter selber vollkommen. Es gibt nicht gute und schlechte Gedichte, sondern nur wirkliche und scheinbare und hinwieder echt dichterische Strophen und Verse und solche, die es nicht sind. Sollen auf diesem Felde Grössenabmessungen überhaupt einen Sinn haben, so würden sie bedeuten, der eine sei ausschliesslich Dichter, ein anderer sei es nur teilweise, und gerade dann käme Goethe die fragliche Spitzenstellung nicht zu.⁷⁵

Klages is in full accord with Emerson's classification of Goethe as the type of "writer"; he agrees with Gall's (the physiognomist's) declaration that Goethe had been born to be a public speaker; he admits Goethe's infinite understanding, wisdom, closeness to all human experience, his restraint in all his utterances, so that we are fully conscious of how much has been left unsaid; he admires the inexhaustible stores of pent-up truths, which a lifetime can never fully explore; he pays tribute to Goethe's detachment from all the barriers and boundaries of faction; he sees how free was Goethe from the narrowing confines of profession, politics, and faith. In short, he acknowledges a humanism determined by the laws of its own growth and development and visible in a German of great distinction, whose desire for inner equilibrium made itself felt throughout the cultured world.

But while Klages feels that in Goethe all the conditions *seemed* to be perfect to produce a poet, and while there is no end to the possibilities which may still be discovered in him, he avers that Goethe did not embody either the archetype of the poet nor even the archetype of the artist. If he had, he might have been consumed in his own flame. But he found his way back from the true reality of poetry to the world of man, to the human world. Sage and artist became fused in him, in womanly-personal fashion.⁷⁶

It is his return to the human level, to his need of "otherness," his fellow-beings, and his stress on personality which, in Klages' eyes, destroyed the poet in Goethe. "Person und All sind feindliche Gegensätze." Goethe, whose powers of decorum and whose

⁷⁵ *Goethe als Seelenforscher*, p. 87.

⁷⁶ *Mensch und Erde*, p. 108: "in weiblich-persönlicher Art." Klages' interest in the "Androgyn" problem is always demonstrated in his characterizations of the poet. Cf. however, *Grundlagen*, pp. 90, 223 and other passages for feminine and masculine traits.

sense of the fitness of things had well-nigh reached that measure and golden mean which antiquity praised, was not the solitary being which every poet is in essence. There is no "golden mean" in Klages' philosophy of life; there can be absolutely none for the poet, he thinks. Goethe was a social being in a still existent eighteenth century society. But Klages insists that social man is unable to endure the fullness of cosmic life. He needs the society of "others"; hence the social being sinks to the level of artistry, instead of living so dangerously that he is inevitably destroyed by the unendurable urge of his own adventurous soul. And that is what Klages means by "die Schranken des Goetheschen Menschen."

Klages detects in Goethe the metaphysical cleft of the biocentric thesis: the break between all sciences (natural and humanistic) on the one hand, and the science of life which Goethe inaugurated on the other. Goethe's spirit (*Geist*) is said to be continually struggling with life, which accounts for his behavior toward fiery enthusiasts like Kleist, Heine, and Grillparzer.

The Klages school,⁷⁷ following in these footsteps and frequently repeating the master's words, proceeds to destroy the legends of "the greatest German poet" and the "harmonious Olympian," and then, for the benefit of those scholars who may have noted discrepancies in the apparent harmony, brands the "two-souls-in-one-breast" explanation as superficially shallow. By a series of quotations in which Goethe contradicts himself, the metaphysical nature of the dissonance is emphasized, as Klages has already done. Goethe is made to share the "Untergangsstimmung" so close to the heart of Klages. The biocentric Goethe holds irrational views of art, is non-moral, admires the hero—and even the criminal—as a grand phenomenon of nature, believes in the unconsciousness of genius (not in the subconscious of all the rationalists from Leibniz to Freud), believes that divine inspiration is in league with youth, is opposed to progress and to old age (except when, in a renewed puberty, it is still productive), is against morality and on the side of the instincts, and is non-intellectual. The logocentric Goethe is best

⁷⁷ In this case Deubel. When I speak of the Klages school, I refer to the most zealous supporters of his critical theories. In this paper the limitations of space restrict me to Deussen, Deubel, Ackerknecht, Kern, Kasdorff, Prinzhorn. Cf. also Note 115. Klages often speaks of his "Schüler."

shown by Werther's faith in the Divine Providence of an almighty spirit, by his faith in the continuation after death of an immortal personality, by his belief in the value of progress, in a will that breaks down resistance and maintains the Ego, by Werther's turning to the spiritual self and persuading himself that there is a spirit which builds unto itself a body,—and more of the same.

In the biocentric picture Hölderlin's *Hyperion* serves as a foil to *Werther*.⁷⁸ Werther's *Weltschmerz* is termed logocentric, while Hölderlin's dithyrambic surrender is called biocentric, as is his acceptance of the blind omnipotence of fate and his belief in the timeless transformation of all material things. Hölderlin's flight to the stars, furthermore, is a soaring to the home of the gods despite his Icarus plunge, for Hölderlin had experienced perfection in the overflow of the soul during glowing moments. When Goethe played with a dagger out of disgust with his own remoteness and exclusion from life, and then decided that he would live after all, "wendet er dem All den Rücken, die Fülle des Lebens wird eingetauscht gegen die stilisierte Haltung, die Selbstbehauptung der 'Persönlichkeit'," but Kleist, throwing away his life with a grand gesture, was seized with an ecstasy never before known. Because Goethe found it impossible to surrender himself completely to poetic reality, he became a sage, preached renunciation, moralized, and enunciated his disgust with life through the scepticism and stinging coldness of Mephisto. (Incidentally, Klages, in his *Goethe als Seelenforscher*,⁷⁹ finds Mephisto the most perfect character that Goethe ever created.) "Schaffen" and "Tüchtigkeit" are alleged to be the sources of all of Goethe's logocentric activities. The logocentric Goethe was deaf to Hölderlin and to the Dionysian ardor of Penthesilea; he ignored the religious devotion of all romanticism to life, and focused his attention on the literary-philosophic distortions concocted out of the superficial constructions of Fichte, Schelling, and the early romantic and pseudo-romantic school.

One more quotation from the Klages following, and we shall have done with the Goethe criticism:

⁷⁸ For Klages first, and for Deubel after him. Deubel repeats the same things over and over that Klages has already said, using them in the manner of a battle cry. Kasdorff employs a similar technique, even to the identical turn of phrase.

⁷⁹ P. 52.

Wir besitzen aber den Bericht von *einer* Stunde in Goethes Leben, da er, wie vom Dämon des Logos selbst ergriffen, die alleinige oberste Gewalt und Wertigkeit des Geistes feiert und, von Satz zu Satz gleichsam immer weiter von sich wegverführt, die Idole seiner ihm eigensten Bios-Religion, nicht anders als es vordem Jacobi, Kant oder Schiller getan, in den Staub logistischer Verachtung zerrt, mit dem fremden Eifer des ihm sonst so widerwärtigen transzendentalen Geisteshochmuts die "grosse Mutter" verleugnet, die Wirklichkeit der lebendigen Erscheinungen zum toten Stoff entwürdigt und sich wie nur je ein Christ und Idealist zu einem übersinnlichen Jenseits bekennt.⁸⁰

It is not difficult to guess how Schiller fares at the hands of biocentric criticism. Klages refers to him repeatedly, and not always disparagingly. But the idealist Schiller, the master of rhetoric, the ethical man, the "thinking" poet is of course logocentric. Once Klages, following Nietzsche's example,⁸¹ quotes Schillers "Hymn to Joy"⁸² as an example of Dionysian ecstasy; from the Klages camp there are pages of elaboration on the theme,⁸³ with characteristic references to the "Vampyrbiss des Logos," to which Schiller succumbed, to "platonisches Gift," "Lähmung durch die Moral," and assertions that Schiller "floh" to his "Verderber Kant." The "dionysisch-orgiastischen Elemente" in the *Räuber* and in the "Hymn to Joy" were "vergiftet" by Schiller's increasing ethical trend, so that even Goethe cannot halt his "logozentrische Verirrung."

These anti-idealistic, anti-Kantian, and anti-moral elaborations are accompanied by the presumptuous claim that they serve "den wahren Schiller aus der Verfallenheit an diese verderblichen Mächte zu befreien," just as the real Goethe had previously been rescued. Thus the Klages camp, in its most extreme representative.

Less pretentiously and noisily biocentric research incorporated among its discoveries recently the name of Gottfried

⁸⁰ The reference is to the conversation reported by F. v. Müller, April 29, 1818, at Dornburg. *Goethes Gespräche*, ed. Biedermann, (Leipzig, Insel, Dünndruckausg.) pp. 379 ff.

⁸¹ *Geburt der Tragödie* (Leipzig, Kröner), p. 51 f.

⁸² *Vom Kosmogonischen Eros*, p. 56. Zieht er dabei doch sogar Schillers jugendlichen Hymnus an die Freude heran, um es uns näherzubringen, dass die Welle bakhischer Begeisterung, was sie einschränkt und löst, auch ebendadurch verknüpft.

⁸³ One instance has already been mentioned by Martin Schütze, *op. cit.* Deubel is the author of hundreds of articles, with such titles as "Schillers Kampf um die Tragödie, Umrisse eines neuen Schillerbildes"; "Schiller und die deutsche Erneuerung"; "Genügt Idealismus zur deutschen Erneuerung?" and many others.

Keller,⁸⁴ who, according to Klages, unlike his own favorite Jordan, successfully evaded the "ideals" of the nineteenth century that mechanized the world and murdered life.⁸⁵ Klages accepts Keller with reservations as being not wholly romantic,⁸⁶ uses the *Grüne Heinrich* to illustrate significant dreaming,⁸⁷ but cannot forgive Keller for calling Jordan's *Nibelunge* a "modernen Wechselbalg."⁸⁸

The Klages school contents itself with emphasizing the non-democratic aspects of Keller, pointing out that his "Bürgerlichkeit" was a deceptive façade, and that he too was possessed of an Eros, as was Goethe, that guided his art away from conceptual outlets and into the channels of imagery. Great stress is laid upon what Keller himself called his "Frommsinn," that reverence for life that was a part of his being, and it is applied to art, to education, to politics, and finally summarized in a chapter called "Der Liebhaber des Lebens." Keller's unwavering humanity is said to be drawn into the "Kampf gegen den Untergang der Seele."

One is constrained to ask, with the book reviewer who does not feel that reverence for life is a monopoly of biocentric thought:

Denn wo deckte sich im Grunde diese Haltung nicht mit dem Dichterischen überhaupt?⁸⁹

and to add a sentence of Ricarda Huch's in her little volume on Gottfried Keller:

Welche Rolle bei Keller das bewusste Geistesleben spielte, verdient nachdrücklich betont zu werden in einer Zeit, wo viele glauben, das Höchste in der Kunst vermöge nicht des Menschen bewusster Geist, sondern es gehe aus einer ihm selbst nicht ganz durchdringlichen Dämmerung seines Innern hervor, und durch Bildung, also Aufhellen des Bewusstseins, laufe man Gefahr, die im Dunkel hausende Genialität zu verschrecken.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Erwin Ackerknecht, *Gottfried Keller. Das deutsche Leben. Eine Schriftenreihe biozentrischer Forschung*. Herausgegeben von Hans Eggert Schröder. Band v. (Berlin-Lichterfelde, Widukind-Verlag.)

⁸⁵ *Mensch und Erde*, p. 142: . . . während von gleichzeitigen Schöpfergeistern einige dank einem Kerne völkischen Fühlens jenen "Idealen" auszuweichen vermochten (das leuchtendste Beispiel ist Keller!) . . .

⁸⁶ GW, 906.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 987.

⁸⁸ *Mensch und Erde*, p. 138.

⁸⁹ Walter Schmiele, "Gottfried Keller," *Literaturblatt der Frankfurter Zeitung*, 19. Juni 1938, 71. Jahrgang, No. 25, Seite 10.

⁹⁰ Ricarda Huch, *Gottfried Keller, Die Dichtung*, ix, 31.

V. THE ROMANTICISM OF KLAGES

To those who identify the Romantic Movement in Germany with a philosophic renaissance in the form of transcendentalism Klages will appear as something short of a true romantic. To others, whose emotions are constantly stirred by the enduring glory of romantic poetry, he will seem to have captured the very essence and meaning of romanticism. To a third group, who believe that romantic explorations into the fields of psychology, medicine, and the natural sciences were far in advance of their time, he will be what he is to his admirers, a pioneer paving the way to a revival of still another angle of romanticism in the twentieth century.

It is apparent from what has already been said that Klages declines violently to admit any real participation of the Christian religion or of an ethical objective in what he considers the essence of German romanticism. The same is true of teleology. This leads to some curious separations, as we shall see. Romanticism is never, to him, "was die Schriftgelehrten die romantische Schule nennen,"⁹¹ but it is that intense vitality that we sense when we read Jean Paul, Hölderlin, Kleist, Novalis, Tieck, Arnim, Hoffmann, and Eichendorff.⁹² They are the strongest representatives of Klages' romanticism.

When Klages speaks of "romantic philosophy," he does not mean the idealism of Fichte, the transcendentalism of Schelling or Schopenhauer, or any flirtations with pantheism that are sometimes imputed to romanticism in Germany.⁹³ He does mean, in addition to Carus, the speculations of such thinkers as Pas-savant⁹⁴ and Schubert,⁹⁵ the one having a great deal to say about somnambulism and clairvoyance, the other about the entire "Nachtseite der Natur" and about the soul. Or, he cites Hufeland's⁹⁶ distinctions between plant and animal, with their harmonic relations to cosmic and telluric changes, taking care to discount the "logocentric" nature of Hufeland's separation into stages of higher and lower. He makes use of the utterances of Schindler,⁹⁷ who assigns vision to the night end of the polar

⁹¹ GW, 901. ⁹² GW, 233.

⁹³ Cf. Ricarda Huch, *Die Romantik* (Leipzig, Haessel, 1931), Erster Teil, pp. 189, 195. Klages abhors pantheism. ⁹⁴ GW, 586, 891.

⁹⁵ GW, 587, 589 f., 813, 893, 899 f., 918.

⁹⁶ GW, 813. ⁹⁷ GW, 892.

relation night-day, to Baader⁹⁸ and Görres,⁹⁹ with their mystic interpretations of cosmic events; there are quotations from and an extensive appreciation of Oken's *Lehrbuch der Naturphilosophie*.¹⁰⁰ In short, Klages turns back from conceptual thinking to symbolic thinking, and he frequently calls upon Novalis to aid him in this enterprise. It is such men as these whom Klages considers the real philosophers of romanticism. All romantic philosophy of this type uses the term "polarity" *in extenso*, and it is, I repeat, one of the most significant in Klages' interpretation of the universe. Klages belongs to the company of romantic psychologists and physicians like Kerner¹⁰¹ and Carus. All of his "Ausdruckslehre," including graphology, has a romantic base,¹⁰² as has everything that he calls real science. His whole conception of personality is an application of Novalis' "das Äussere ist ein in Geheimniszustand erhobenes Innere," a sentence which he uses to introduce *Vom Kosmogonischen Eros* and repeats in other books. There is no field of knowledge which, to Klages, German romanticism had not explored.¹⁰³

It is obvious that Fichte does *not* belong into this company,¹⁰⁴ but as Klages says, in his introduction to Carus' *Psyche*, it is natural to look for Schelling:

Wenn heute von romantischer Naturphilosophie die Rede ist, so pflegt man an den (weit überschätzten) Blender Schelling und allenfalls an Männer wie Oken, Kieser, Ritter, Steffens zu denken. Aber ebenso wie unter den spätrömantischen

⁹⁸ GW, 898.

⁹⁹ GW, 757–62; 798 f.; 812; 897 f.; 900; Görres furnishes Klages with a great deal of psychological material on Christian mysticism.

¹⁰⁰ GW, 895 f., 899, 1441–44.

¹⁰¹ Klages makes no special point of Kerner's romanticism.

¹⁰² Cf. E. Börlin, *Darstellung und Kritik der Charakterologie von L. Klages*, (Giessen, 1929) p. 7: Klages hat ein Grunderlebnis gehabt: des Ausdrucks. Alles ist Ausdruck von etwas. Er bleibt nicht nur bei Lebewesen stehen, sondern das gesamte Kosmos, auch die sogenannte tote Welt, ist ein ungeheures Ausdrucksfeld. Börlin's dissertation is sharply critical but objective.

¹⁰³ GW, 888 f.: Es gab eine romantische Astronomie, Physik, Chemie, Mineralogie, Geologie, Paläontologie, Botanik, Zoologie, Osteologie, Physiologie, Medizin, Pharmazie, ja einigermaßen selbst eine romantische Mathematik. A list which could have been compiled by anyone who read Ricarda Huch carefully.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. GW, 411: jeder "Subjektivismus" der Weltbetrachtung befindet sich auf dem Wege zur seelischen Gestörtheit.

Seelenforschern noch ein *SCHUBERT* seiner Auferstehung harrt, so unter den spätromantischen Naturphilosophen Carus.¹⁰⁶

Klages elaborates in his later work this brief, uncomplimentary allusion to Schelling with the explanation that he does not consider Schelling one of the principal figures of the romantic movement:

Frühreif, wie er war, hat er zuerst und zwar im Alter von 24 Jahren den "Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie" veröffentlicht, eines Systems, das im Grunde durch schlagwortartige Prägungen imponierte und vor allem *den* Erfolg hatte, dass noch heute in zahlreichen Philosophiegeschichten die meisten der Männer, die wir erwähnt haben seine—Schüler heissen! Schelling hat lebenslänglich mit viel Aufwand fremde Gedanken umkomponiert (Spinoza, Kant, Beck, Fichte, Kiemeyer, Galvani, Steffens, Oken, Goethe, Winckelmann, Schiller, später Baader und Böhme); sein Eigenes ist demgegenüber gering.¹⁰⁶

Klages goes on to say that Schopenhauer does belong to romanticism, but that by renouncing romantic polarity he presents a monistic world, while his Will, nominally unconscious, actually is teleological.¹⁰⁷

Klages is in complete accord with every romanticist who through dream, magic, night, vision, clairvoyance, intuition, experienced reality in all its immediacy, to whom the world of rational intelligence and considered judgment were dream and unreality. We hear echoes of Hamann and Herder when Klages tells us that in the prehistoric stage poets were illiterate; hundreds of thousands partook of the elemental overflowing of the soul, the remnants of which are now pasted into learned herbariums called "collections of folk poetry." Then he goes on to say that one can be a poet without ever having made a poem, and that no poet ought to call himself such until reality has become one continuous song.¹⁰⁸ It is in the German romantic period that Klages still finds remnants of this original poetry, conceived in the unconsciousness of the dream:

Gleichsam umspült vom Brodem der Urpoesie schuf die deutsche Romantik ein *Schrifttum* des Traumbewusstseins, wie es in keinem Volk seinesgleichen findet, und lässt uns in den besten Stücken eines Tieck, Eichendorff, Hoffmann nicht einmal mehr zwischendurch erwachen. Durch letzteren insbesondere erhalten wir Einblick in das Wesen echter Magie und Verzauberung, um deren Deutung die neuzeitliche Suggestionsliteratur vergebens warb.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ (Jena, Diedrichs, 1926) p. XIX f. On p. IX he speaks of "die glänzende Attrappe Schelling." ¹⁰⁶ GW, 1444. ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Mensch und Erde*, p. 102.

¹⁰⁹ GW, 990.

If we looked in vain for the archetype of poet in the person of Goethe, it is here, in romanticism, that we find him:

EICHENDORFF, der wie die meisten Romantiker ein solcher war, ob er schon glücklicherweise die schönsten seiner Verse auch noch aufgezeichnet hat, nennt ihn "das Herz der Welt." Novalis sieht in ihm eine Form des "Magiers."¹¹⁰

And so in the German romantic disposition, Klages finds that state of true reality to which allusion has already been made: the condition of the absolute poet, to whom reality is poetry, and to whom no other plane of existence is real.

It is then, in general, the irrational side of romanticism which Klages finds so palatable. When, as in Eichendorff, there is a strong ethical tendency, he minimizes or ignores it. We remember that Eichendorff's own literary criticism, a piece of sheer poetry, despite its bias, is significantly called: *Über die ethische und religiöse Bedeutung der neueren romantischen Poesie in Deutschland*,¹¹¹ and that Eichendorff's very criticism of Hoffmann is based on ethical standards:

Sein Mangel war daher weniger ein literarischer, als ein ethischer, und es ist keineswegs zufällig, dass die ganz unmoralische sogenannte Romantik in Frankreich ihn fast ausschliesslich als ihren deutschen Vorfechter anerkennt.

But that negative criticism only proves to Klages that Hoffmann *was* a real poet.

Klages shares with all the romanticists of the ages—and with Hoffmann in particular—their unutterable *Sehnsucht* for a blissful isle, a perfect state, a Golden Age. Few of Hoffmann's critics, who focus their attention on the grotesque, are acquainted with or capable of experiencing the magic of his "Dschinnistan voller Herrlichkeit."¹¹² Unlike Mörike's "Orplid" and Hoffmann's "Atlantis," the Pelasgian Age of Klages, which corresponds to them in being a realm of pure poetry, is allegedly

¹¹⁰ *Mensch und Erde*, p. 102.

¹¹¹ (Leipzig, Verlag von A. G. Liebeskind, 1847). This fine bit of writing defends Catholicism staunchly, is frequently somewhat one-sided in its judgments, but it maintains a high standard, consistent in its debate, which is held in the language of a poet. It deserves resurrection, as a distinguished piece of writing.

¹¹² Cf. "Klein Zaches." Another land of pure poetry, containing the well-spring of pure humor, is to be found in "Prinzessin Brambilla." Hoffmann, unlike Klages, permits "Witz und Scherz" as a component part of his "Ironie." (Seltsame Leiden eines Theaterdirektors.)

historical, insofar as history can determine anything about primitive life.¹¹³

If, then, in the list of romantic figures whom Klages considers of consequence, we do not find the names of the metaphysicians, nor of the theorizing Schlegels, nor of the devout Wackenroder, with his ethical theories of art, it is not particularly surprising. On the other hand we do find a theorist, in the person of Arndt,¹¹⁴ in whose current resurrection Klages must have aided to a considerable extent,¹¹⁵ and another in that of G. Fr. Daumer.¹¹⁶ The former is introduced as an exemplary protagonist of three things: (1) a cult of nature (Rousseau); (2) romantic exponent of "emotional naturalism," particularly the "chthonic" aspect; (3) active patriotic enthusiasm, and as Klages adds, in this last activity has successfully protested against the dangerous faith in the so-called ideals of humanity.¹¹⁷ The obscure Daumer, we are told, is worthy of being called, on the grounds of cultural research, the forerunner of Nietzsche's "Antichrist" by his pioneer work in attacking the spirit of Christianity that is responsible for all the fanaticism and abomination of modern times.¹¹⁸

The range of Klages' interest in what he calls romanticism is thus a wide one; his eclecticism comprises, as has been shown, three groups:

- (a) those whom he considers the true poets;
- (b) practically all of the "Naturphilosophen," frequently the obscurer ones, to the extent that they represent his idea of "Forschungsgesinnung," symbolism and mythology, (Creuzer and the Grimms);¹¹⁹ all of the "Nachtseite der Natur";

¹¹³ It is actually both historical and mythical. ¹¹⁴ GW, 901-06; 915; 1444f.

¹¹⁵ Hans Kern, *E. M. Arndt, der ewige Deutsche* (Jena 1930), and other publications concerning Arndt. Kern welcomes and stresses Arndt's attacks on Christianity and makes him more biocentric than he is. Klages has seen fit in his chief work, to qualify the enthusiasm of his followers on the subject of Arndt (GW, 1444): Übereifrige Schüler des Verfassers haben in den geisteskritischen Bekundungen Arndts eine fertige Antizipation der Lehre von der Lebensfeindlichkeit des Geistes zu erblicken gemeint. Es wäre schön, wenn es sich so verhielte; aber davon kann keine Rede sein, und es ist kaum zu begreifen, wie man den mutigen Freiheitskämpfer, den man fast einen Gottesstreiter nennen dürfte, dermassen missverstehen konnte.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 901 f., 905.

¹¹⁷ GW, 903.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 902.

¹¹⁹ Creuzer is merely mentioned, GW, 907. The Grimms appear frequently. Creuzer and the Grimms are listed, *Vom Kosmogonischen Eros*, p. 233, among the "Vorgeschichtler und Mythologen, Erkunder der Kulturen des Altertums, Ergründer der sprachlichen Zusammenhänge, Völkerforscher und 'Folkloristen'."

- (c) a few preponderantly political or polemic writers (Arndt and Daumer).

Of those belonging to the second group, the Grimms deserve particular mention, not only as supplying Germanic legend, myth, and fairy tale, but because of their outstanding pioneer work in the field of philology. Klages seeks to emulate the Grimms by a thorough-going revival of the study of Semantics.

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of meaning to the poet in Klages' view; his two positions with regard to language: one that it is adequate and the other that it is inadequate to reality and life, are consistent with his biocentric and logocentric theses. The poet's language, the use of words that have been restored to their original meaning, more or less closely corresponding to the image, is reality; concepts, abstract terms, ideas incorporated in words are unrealities, because they do not coincide with the objects to which they are applied.

Klages, following in the footsteps of Herder, adopts the view that language is to be considered as a mode of development of the spirit, which, however, found speech already present when it became incarnated in man. But, in Jean Paul's words, the activities of the mind turned the original symbolism of language into a "dictionary of faded metaphors,"¹²⁰ until all elemental resemblance was lost in the static concept. In the wake of the Grimms, Klages searches for meaning assiduously, pleading for the restoration of the original use of words, and frequently using the re-established meanings in the determination of psychological interpretations. Thus, his contribution to Semantics is considered a valuable one.¹²¹

In examining primitive forms of speech, suffused with imagery, Klages delves into the exploration of primitive forms of life. Though his perfect primitive is the mythical Pelasgian, he has a historical primitive, who enables him to perpetuate a certain type of romantic tradition by glorifying the American Indian. The scene is the United States of America; the hero is the red man, and the villain is the "American." He does not, of course, develop the Rousseau "natural goodness" theme, because he is

¹²⁰ GW, 379.

¹²¹ Franz Dornseiff, *Der Deutsche Wortschatz nach Sachgruppen*, p. 276, quotes Klages extensively and speaks of his "feines Sprachgefühl." Cf. also the third chapter of *Grundlagen*. The instances in GW are too numerous to mention. Whether they are all new or valuable is of course another story.

interested in the fullness of living, unimpeded by goodness,¹²² but the inglorious history of the exploitation of America by the white race¹²³ fans the flame of his scorching attack on all civilization, and enables him to deliver frantic blasts of attack on "Amerikanismus" in particular, that word used in Germany since at least 1754, and from the second half of the nineteenth century on as a term of opprobrium to signify materialism and soullessness.¹²⁴ Klages' passionate defense of the Noble Savage is combined with the realization that it is a lost cause; he feels himself to be one of the "last of the Mohicans" and utters a despairing wish that "humanity" like ours might perish:

Wir alle, die wir aus leidenschaftlicher Liebe des Lebens so Grauensvolles beweinen müssen, sind "*letzte Mohikaner*." (italics mine) Wer aber von solchen noch Wünsche zu hegen wagt, müsste nur eines wünschen: dass eine derart Verruchtes vollbringende Menschheit *so schnell wie möglich* absinke, veraffe, verende, damit um ihre verwirrenden und verfallenden Arsenale des Mordes noch ein Mal begrabend, entmischend, und sich selber erneuernd der Rausch der Wälder brande.¹²⁵

The shortcomings of the biocentric method¹²⁶ and of the

¹²² GW, 1222, quoting von Gagern, the Indians are "die wahren, die unschuldigen Kinder Gottes, deren Gebeine still unter den eisenbesäten Schlachtfeldern ihrer Mörder ruhen . . ."

¹²³ GW, 1210: Die Geschichte der Menschheit ist eine Kette von Greueln; aber sie alle werden an Scheusslichkeit wohl übertroffen von den rund anderthalb Jahrhunderte währenden Teufeleien, mit deren Hilfe dem werdenden Amerikaner die völlige Vernichtung der Landschaft eines gewaltigen Erdteils und die Niedermetzelung nahezu aller Indianerstämme gelang, denen an Heldentum und Wildnisschönheit seit ältesten Tagen wenigstens sich vergleicht.

¹²⁴ Schönaich uses it in 1754 to poke fun at Bodmer: "Die ganze Seite enthält eine Figur, die wir den *Amerikanismus* nennen; indem sie Amerika und Gog und Magog noch vor der Sündfluth zusammen koppelt." Ladendorf, *Historisches Schlagwörterbuch* (1906) places it in the third decade of the nineteenth century (according to Gutzkow) and frequently thereafter. Ricarda Huch, *op. cit.*, II, 337, tells us that Creuzer ascribed his growing unpopularity to the same cause: "Ja, die Staatsräte selbst, die für die Universitäten sorgen sollten, klagt er, hätten ganz nordamerikanische Ideen vom relativen Wert der Studien. Es wende sich alles mehr der Praxis und Wirklichkeit zu: in seinen mythologischen Vorlesungen habe er gerade die wenigsten Zuhörer." Klages, who no doubt knows these and many other uses not known to me, flays this "Amerikanismus" unmercifully. Cf. GW, 767, 1210 ff., 1242, 1454. ¹²⁵ GW, 768.

¹²⁶ Cf. Wandrey, *op. cit.*: Es gehört zu jenen Gefühlswidersetzlichkeiten, die am ehesten die Grenze dieser Lebensphilosophie spüren lassen, dass die Verherrlichung des vorgeschichtlichen Lebens und der Naturvölker bei Klages schliesslich darauf hinausläuft, ein Volkslied, einen schön geschwungenen Indianerbogen oder Federschmuck für ein wohlgefälligeres Zeichen und Kunst-

sources of Klages' research are rather startlingly demonstrated in this phase of his romanticism. The suspicion that the method can be used to allow polemic subject matter to triumph over sound values is amply confirmed by extensive references to one Friedrich von Gagern, whose *Grenzerbuch*, with its sub-title "Von Pfadfindern, Häuptlingen und Lederstrümpfen"¹²⁷ strengthens Klages' amplification of the catch-word "Amerikanismus" to the point of hysteria.

Von Gagern's book is a curious medley of American history and imperialistic jingoism. In style it is a hodgepodge of German idiom, heroic imagery, crude humor, and "Jägerlatein"; in tone it varies between the abusive scolding of a fishwife, and the "Kraftsprache" of Sturm und Drang. The Indians furnish us with "packende, prachtexemplarische Helden, Kämpen, Kerle; Streiter wie Achill, Odysseus, Diomed; Recken wie Hagen, Dietrich, Hildebrand."¹²⁸ There is no limit to the unrestrained invective against the American in general and the pioneer in particular; early America is pictured as Europe's colony of criminals; the "American" is brutal, vulgar, wasteful, lacking in taste, deceitful, barbaric; the American woman is a spoiled doll, capricious, low, lazy. Vicious attacks on Christianity—"der verpestete weisse Christ" is a mild example—are relieved by the portrayal of the Indian, who had invested everything about him with a soul, as a happy being in his tribal life, surrounded by wild creatures and beautiful objects of his own making, who had a natural sense of justice within the setting of this blissful wilderness.¹²⁹

werk vor dem Angesicht des Wirklichen zu erachten als einen gotischen Dom, eine Tragödie Shakespeares oder eine Brucknersche Symphonie.

¹²⁷ Friedrich von Gagern, *Das Grenzerbuch*, 19. Auflage (Berlin, Paul Parey, 1927).

¹²⁸ A curious analogy is that of the ancient German and the Indian. Fairchild, *op. cit.*, p. 5: "Tacitus pictures a noble and virtuous race living in a state of savage simplicity and implies a contrast between the moral excellence of that race and the vices which were sapping the strength of the more complex and pretentious Roman civilization." The *Grenzerbuch*, was deliberately "geschrieben und gegeben in Sinn und Absicht der Taciteischen Germania!" P. 50, the Indian chief Metacomet is a "Recke," "Volksheld"; p. 51: "wer dünkte da nicht an einen anderen Häuptling, der vor einigen neunzehnhundert Jahren in den germanischen Urwäldern gelebt und geliebt, gestritten und gelitten?"

¹²⁹ Other illustrations of von Gagern's style:

p. 23: rohe Verschwendung ist nun einmal amerikanische Natur.

This is the book from which, admiringly, Klages quotes pages to prove the fallacy of civilization. The attacks on Christianity within this natural paradise, and the extenuation of savage cruelties as merely a matter of dimensional differences,¹³⁰ are thoroughly in line with the literary "noble savage" tradition.¹³¹

One might concede the admissibility of ploughing through the extravagances of this modern Cooper to extract a historic

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- p. 25: selbst dieses gefühlsrohe, oft geschmacklose und unbeholfene Volk . . .
 - p. 30: jenes alte Amerika zu gutem Teile als Verbrecherkolonie Europas . . .
herzlose verfinsterte Puritaner . . . verwilderte Deutsche . . . entlaufene
Sträflinge . . .
 - p. 41: ahnungslos selige Wildnis, Urwald, Ursteppe mit ihren glücklichen
Völkern und Tieren . . .
 - p. 52: der rote Mann in seinem natürlichen Rechtsgefühl . . .
 - p. 85: der allbeseelende Indianer . . .
 - p. 144: das allbeseelende rote Volk . . .
 - p. 158: Nicht von Frankreich, von Amerika aus wurde das Abendland der alten
Welt korrumpiert und revolutioniert. Schärferes Urteil erkennt in Amerika
den ersten Spartakistenstaat, und der barbarische Geschmack des
freigelassenen oder entlaufenen Sklaven, der grausame Hochmut des
Emporkömmlings ist dem Amerikaner bis heute haften geblieben.
 - p. 224: Mitgefühl, Ehrfurcht vor dem Gotte im Mitgeschöpf kannten die Hinterwälder nicht—dazu waren sie Christen.
 - p. 228: so ist dieser Deutsche schon Typus des Amerikaners: zusammengesetzt
aus blutiger Rücksichtslosigkeit, kaltem Eigennutz, Scheinheiligkeit und
kindisch roher Schwärmerei.
 - p. 233: Ihren Ladies gegenüber sind die Amerikaner ja vollkommene Tröpfe und
Trottel.

¹³⁰ Cf. *Vom Kosmogonischen Eros*, p. 83: Wenn manche Dajaken auf Borneo, um das Beratungshaus gegen Erdbeben oder Brand zu schützen, in die Grube für den Hauptposten eine lebende Sklavin brachten und sie vom niedersausenden Balken zerschmettern liessen, so mag die Vermutung urvölklicher Grausamkeit den Schein von Berechtigung haben, wie wenig dazu auch die Tatsache passen will, dass uns der gleiche Stamm von den vorzüglichsten Kennern als wahrheitsliebend, ehrlich, wohlwollend beschrieben wird und als—wenigstens früher—gänzlich unbekannt mit Diebstahl und Raub . . . Da wir Bräuche von ähnlicher Furchtbarkeit bei sämtlichen Wilden in Menge finden, wie Aussetzung überzähliger Kinder usw. . . während das Leben des Stammes sich im Zeichen äusserster Friedfertigkeit, hochempfindlichen Gerechtigkeitssinnes und erstaunlicher Opferwilligkeit des Einzelnen abspielt, so werden wir zur Annahme einer Verschiedenheit des Fühlens gedrängt, die zuletzt nur als Dimensionsverschiedenheit gedacht werden kann.

¹³¹ Fairchild, *op. cit.*, p. 2: "To me, a Noble Savage is any free and wild being who draws directly from nature virtues which raise doubts as to the values of civilization."

nucleus (though some of von Gagern's sources are a matter of question),¹³² but only an unfit critic could extol von Gagern as a poet. He appears in a certain type of literary criticism as *the* red-blooded Austrian whom the critics have jealously ignored, in favor of the scribbler Bahr, the incomparably more bloodless Bartsch, or at best the aesthetic Hofmannsthal. We are told: Dies aber bezeugt in seinen besten Büchern Gagern als einen Dichter von hohen Gnaden, dass der oft geradezu bestürzende Reichtum seiner Phantasie im Grunde nur das unerschöpfliche Schauen, Sagen und Singen des Ewig-Einen ist, des Vielgestaltigen, des Lebens und seiner nie auszutrinkenden Bilderfülle der Gezeiten, Farben, Gerüche, Klänge.¹³³

The critic, however, brands himself with the partisan stamp when he continues to laud the imperialistic, anti-democratic, chauvinistic von Gagern¹³⁴ as the great folk poet and nobleman, who is able to enlighten his people on the ruling forces of civilization, Jewry, and the clergy by telling them unpleasant truths. With this conclusion we appear to have reached the *reductio ad absurdum* of biocentric criticism and to have left the realm of poetic reality.

Both von Gagern and Klages make "Amerikanismus" a pretext for diatribes on the American woman, glittering generalities quite in the journalistic vein, unsupported by any justifiable criticism. Besides such undisciplined invective as

die Amerikaner waren damals noch vernünftiger als heute, ihre Ladies noch keine Puppen und Dirnen,

von Gagern makes the rule of matriarchy responsible for the non-noble savage:

Die Krieger, die Häuptlinge waren nichts als Waffen in den Händen der Matronen. Man begreift den Ruf, die Erfolge, den Mut, die Unbeliebtheit der Irokesen.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 97 ff., Fairchild discusses Carver, one of von Gagern's sources: "It is not now regarded as a personal narrative, but as a compilation from various sources, with perhaps a judicious admixture of pure imagination . . . The book obviously furnished much support to the Noble Savage idea . . ." One might add that it is still doing so. P. 100: "Wordsworth and Southey used the 'Travels' (by Carver) to give substance to their imaginings."

¹³³ Werner Deubel, "Das Neue Deutschland und Friedrich von Gagern," *Die Literatur*, xxxvii (November 1934), 73 ff.

¹³⁴ All of the characters fall easily into types. The Indians and certain backwoodsman are like Germanic heroes; the Jesuit fathers are all good and kind; so are the Quakers, headed by "Papa Penn"; the Puritans are all bad; the "Americans," still another and lower category, are the scum of civilization. The "Christians" are among the last two.

Megärenverfassung, die sich in manchen amerikanischen Verhältnissen treulich widerspiegelt . . . ¹³⁵

and Klages feels impelled to define his position at the outset of his chief work:

Das Wort Schwachsinn ist Euphemismus, wenn man z.B. zu hören bekommt, dass die teilweise bemerkenswerten Existenzvorteile, welche die moderne Amerikanerin, dieser *unmütterlichste* Frauentypus des Erdballs, dem Manne gegenüber errungen hat, von nicht wenigen Mimen des literarischen Tiefsinns als Erneuerung—urzeitlicher Mutterkulte ausgelegt werden! Mit den Worten, den armen misshandelten Worten wirken sie eine Mauer aus Finsternis, hinter der die leuchtendste Wahrheit verblasst und entschwindet.¹³⁶

From this coign of vantage, we see why the women of the German romantic movement are completely ignored by Klages. We must discount Wolters' statement about the *Kosmische Runde* that "die geschlechtlichen Freiheitsstrebungen der Romantik, des Liberalismus, der Frauenbewegung und der eben damals einsetzenden Jugendbewegung wurden weit überstiegen und vor allem das Vaterrecht der Ehe verworfen"¹³⁷ and say that Klages has retained only the last item.

With views like those just referred to, it is not to be expected that Klages would be interested in any manifestation of feminine individuality that would detract from the unimpeded exercise of "Mütterlichkeit," unless it were because of a great creative gift directed into other channels, like that of Droste, for example. As creative artists, he has no occasion to mention Caroline or Bettina, who have long stood as symbolic incorporations of a living romanticism. Dorothea and Rahel, Jewesses, could not in Klages' anti-Jahwistic and racial philosophic outlook partake of the essence of German romanticism. Klages' stormy friendship with the "unmarried mother" Franziska von Reventlow, whose memoirs lend vivid color to Wolters' claims for the "Kosmische Runde,"¹³⁸ is infinitely revealing. The termination of this friendship, coupled with the utterances quoted, give at least a clue to Klages' position in these matters and hence to the application

¹³⁵ *Grenzerbuch*, *op. cit.*, 71 f. After describing, to the last bloody detail, the cruelties of the Iroquois, and adding again "Man ahnt die Megären im Hintergrunde" von Gagern adds, for good measure, a legendary Medusa of American mythology, and then naively remarks: "Die Forschung freilich schreibt diese Scheusslichkeiten der irokesischen Herkunft von Südnationen zu."

¹³⁶ GW, xxiv.

¹³⁷ Wolters, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

¹³⁸ Cf. Note 42 and the entire chapter in Wolters, 258 ff.

of his principles in so-called biocentric books that deal chiefly with the theme of motherhood,—not all of them romantic, by any means.

The problem of the “Androgyne,” so engrossing to German romanticism but referred by the romanticists largely to human personality, is the cornerstone of Klages’ view of the universe. It is, as has been said in the course of the discussion on Bachofen,¹³⁹ another aspect of polarity and enables Klages to speculate on the extent to which the whole cosmos is masculine and feminine:

Die wechselseitige Zweiheit von Wachheit und Schlaf, von Tag und Nacht, von Sonne und Erde, vielfältigster Gestalt die ganze Natur durchwaltend, ist wesensidentisch mit der Zweiheit von Mann und Weib. Das jedesmal bipolare Ganze —unzutreffend als Organismus begriffen—ist demgemäss “androgyn” und was wir daran als *lebendig* erschauen der im Gamos immer von neuem vollzogene Ausgleich unablässig erneuerter Lebensspannung der Pole. Mag dabei der eine Denker vornehmlich den Gegensatz der, wie sich versteht, *in sich* bipolaren Geschlechter betonen, der andre den von Sonne und Erde, bestimmend bleibt die kosmische Polarität, die sonach im Eigenwesen als verbesondert erscheint.¹⁴⁰

This passage is followed by illustrations from Novalis, Baader, and Görres.

Klages has admittedly no concern with the progressive and humane tendencies in German romanticism, none with its social aspects, and needless to say, no interest whatever in its cosmopolitan, international character. These elements, which exist side by side with the revival of the past, the yearning for the Middle Ages, and the insistence that the strength of a people lies in its own traditions and legends, are to Klages just as far afield from the true nature of romanticism as he believed them to be alien to the real Goethe. Klages finally agrees that one may deplore, but that one cannot explain away the deeply religious, avowedly Christian character of German romanticism.

VI. BIOCENTRIC APPROPRIATION OF CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE AND THE CONTROVERSY WITH THOMAS MANN

In contemporary criticism the biocentric appraisal seems chiefly to have been applied to prose,¹⁴¹ though Klages himself

¹³⁹ Cf. Note 76. In my paper: *Rilke and Jens Peter Jacobsen*, PMLA, LIV, 904 and 906, I have applied Klages’ terms. ¹⁴⁰ GW, 897.

¹⁴¹ Deussen, *op. cit.*, p. 30* lists: W. Deibel (*Götter in Wolken*), H. Carossa (*Der Arzt Gion*), F. M. Dostojewskij (*Die drei Brüder Karamasoff*, *Raskolnikow*

considers the novel a lower form of literature, admitting, with unwonted humility, that this is a purely personal slant.¹⁴²

Among so-called biocentric books we find such divergent prose as Ina Seidel's *Wunschkind*, the humanistic Carossa's *Arzt Gion*, and the religious and humane Ernst Wiechert's *Magd des Jürgen Doskozil*.¹⁴³ Thematically, these three books are united by a central thought: the will to motherhood at all costs, the supremacy of the child, the serving function of women.¹⁴⁴ In all three of them (1) the central figure is a woman; (2) each of the three women is determined to bear a child at all costs; (3) no considerations of reason enter into this resolve; (4) no untoward external factors can dissuade the woman from her high purpose (ill health, physical unfitness, poverty and crime); (5) the father of the child plays almost no role.¹⁴⁵ All three women live on the vegetative plane so lauded by Klages.¹⁴⁶ (Ina Seidel speaks of "traumhafte, pflanzliche Bereitschaft".)

u.a.), D. Eckart (*Lorenzaccio*), A. Gide (*Uns nährt die Erde*), K. Hamsun (*Segen der Erde*) R. M. Rilke (*Gedichte*), D. H. Lawrence (*Die Frau, die davon ritt*), M. Luserke (*Legenden*), G. Robakidse (*Die gemordete Seele* u.a.) I. Seidel (*Das Wunschkind*), J. M. Wehner (*Das Land ohne Schatten* u.a.), E. Wiechert (*Die Magd des Jürgen Doskozil*) u.a. Leaving aside Rilke and D. H. Lawrence for a separate study, I have chosen the three German books best known to me for necessarily brief discussion.

¹⁴² Goethe als *Seelenforscher*, p. 83: "Wir zweifeln sogar, ob ein Roman überhaupt und ob insbesondere dieser Roman den Titel der Dichtung verdiene" (refers to *Wahlverwandtschaften*).

¹⁴³ Ina Seidel, *Das Wunschkind* (Stuttgart 1930). Hans Carossa, *Der Arzt Gion* (Leipzig 1936). Ernst Wiechert, *Die Magd des Jürgen Doskozil* (München 1932).

¹⁴⁴ Using the same authors, the topic, without reference to Klages, has been treated by Mimi Jehle, "Attitude toward Woman in the Modern German Novel," *Monatshefte für Deutschen Unterricht*, March 1937 (xxxix, 109 ff.) and by Elisabeth Darge, "Märchenbild und Mutter," *Die Literatur*, September 1937 (xxxix, 715 ff.)

¹⁴⁵ In Ina Seidel's book he is killed in battle almost immediately. In Carossa's he has died and been forgotten by the mother long before the child is born. Wiechert's ferryman has nothing of the dignity of Wordsworth's dalesmen, but he does exhibit "natural goodness." He is taciturn, slow of perception, inarticulate. The author conveys the impression that he is "despised and rejected of men," a hunted being like an animal, yet one of nature's noblemen, with natural affections that are deep and true. His movements and his actions are often compared with those of an animal.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Wolters, *op. cit.*, p. 255: Mit einem Satze sprang Klages über die männlichen Jahrtausende rückwärts in die Zeit des Mutterrechts, nein noch

If the biocentric outlook, as Klages asserts, is contrary to humanism, then the literary criticism which calls these books "biozentrisch orientiert" must meet the issue squarely. It happens that all three of them are humanistic and humane. All of them seek to hold fast what each author believes to be eternal truths in the midst of flux, change, destruction. All of them are filled with a love for humanity, in its earth-bound origins and its higher aspirations. Artistically, restraint and ethical considerations are everywhere visible in the making of these books.

Both Carossa's thinking and Wiechert's essayistic confessions are impregnated with the humanism of Goethe. Deeply disturbed by the current attacks on humanism, and thus on Goethe, Wiechert only recently reiterated his confession of faith in this broad humanity:

Da war Frömmigkeit und Duldung, Heidentum und Christentum, Fleiss und Mühe, Kunst und Wissenschaft, Einsames und Geselliges, Höhe und Abgrund, Tränen und Härte, Deutschtum und fremde Kulturen, Weisheit, Irrtum und Schuld. Da war die Summe alles menschlichen Lebens zusammengepresst in eine einzige, fast gesprengte Form, aber eine Sittlichkeit ohnegleichen hatte das alles gebändigt und achtzig Jahre eines einzigen Lebens hinausgehoben als ein Beispiel für ebensovieler Jahrhunderte.

Das war es nun, was ich gesucht hatte für mein Leben, das Unerschütterliche, der sittliche Mensch. Das Fernsein von Hass und Dogma, das Gehorsamsein der inneren Stimme des Dämons, das aller Schönheit und Güte Weitoffene, das demütige Sitzen zu den Füßen Christi wie Mohammeds, des Sokrates wie des Hafis, die reine HUMANITAS, die Gotteskindschaft ohne Namen.¹⁴⁷

Contrast with this the "biocentric" call to arms:

Ein Goethebild, das man nicht wie eine Flamme in die Herzen einer skeptischen, enttäuschten oder ratlos ergrimten Jugend werfen könnte, ist heute ein Verrat an der Jugend, an Deutschland und nicht zuletzt an Goethe selber. Den "geheiligten Lügen" der Ideale, der alten Fahne des "Guten, Wahren, Schönen" muss Ehrfurcht verweigert werden.¹⁴⁸

and the distortions of "biocentric" implications become evident.

The negative side of the indirect Klages criticism is represented by a portion of the attacks that have been launched in Germany against Thomas Mann. He is, according to a certain

weiter des mütterlichen Sumpflebens . . . and GW: Die heidnische Welt ist die des Nachtbewusstseins, das pflanzenhaft teil hat am unsichtbar magnetisch strömenden Pflanzenschicksal. Es bedarf wohl des Raumes und der Zeit, aber nicht des Lichtes . . . with Ina Seidel's "traumhafte, pflanzliche Bereitschaft."

¹⁴⁷ Ernst Wiechert, *Vom Trost der Welt* (Werkstatt für Buchdruck, Mainz, im April 1938), pp. 17 f. ¹⁴⁸ Deubel, *op. cit.*

Kasdorff¹⁴⁹ who ardently adopts the biocentric thesis, the bugaboo typifying the rational mind, the Logos. Kasdorff calls him the advocate of Will, who tries to create by supreme effort but who produces only monstrosities, dead results of intellectual manoeuvres. In short, Kasdorff brands Thomas Mann as the wholly "logocentric" writer, one unworthy of the name of "Dichter."

Kasdorff operates freely with arbitrary definitions and distinctions, notably with the term "decadence," where he performs some precarious hair-splitting to prove that Eduard von Keyserling and Friedrich Huch are not decadent, while Thomas Mann is. Klages' terms "Life" and "Existence" are applied to show what is death and what is not death. To illustrate: little Hanno, in *Buddenbrooks*, appears almost as a depraved character; he suffered from "Lebensschwindsucht," he had neither depth nor richness of inner life, and he "musste unter *allen* Umständen zugrunde gehen," while little Thomas, in Huch's *Mao*, dies "nicht aus Mangel an Lebenskraft," but "weil er als Kind so ungewöhnlich stark, reich und tief lebte." This of course follows Klages' lead on Friedrich Huch.

To many of us it would seem that there is more than one point of similarity between Friedrich Huch's artistic, dreamy characters, who are totally unfit to cope with the world of facts and phenomena, and Thomas Mann's Hanno Buddenbrook, to whom death is blessed release. We remember Thomas Mann's fine appreciation of Friedrich Huch when, after the death of the latter, he reiterated his oft-repeated belief that all poets were accustomed to being on intimate terms with death.¹⁵⁰ Decadence and artistry, as we saw often enough among Thomas Mann's contemporaries, including his friend Friedrich Huch, frequently go hand in hand.

A more interesting "biocentric" criticism of Thomas Mann, not academic like Kasdorff's, comes from the pen of D. H. Lawrence, himself quite unaware that he was to be accorded

¹⁴⁹ For a masterpiece of prejudice, using Klages as authority, cf. Hans Kasdorff, *Der Todesgedanke im Werke Thomas Manns* (Leipzig, 1932). See my review, JEGPh xxxiv, No. 4, October 1935.

¹⁵⁰ This essay by Thomas Mann has been used as an introduction to Huch's *Gesammelte Werke*. See also Thomas Mann, *Rede und Antwort* (Berlin 1922), pp. 278 ff.

this posthumous classification. Writing of *Death in Venice* in 1913, and repelled by a morbidity that seemed to offend against all that Lawrence most valued, he identified Gustav Aschenbach with his creator, Thomas Mann:

But then there are the other artists, the more human, like Shakespeare and Goethe, who must give themselves to life as well as to art. And if they were afraid, or despised life, then with their surplus they would ferment and become rotten. Which is what ails Thomas Mann. He is physically ailing, no doubt. But his complaint is deeper: it is of the soul.

Lawrence, instinctively understanding by a certain kinship of spirit what Klages meant, sums up his criticism of Thomas Mann:

And even while he has a rhythm in style, yet his work has none of the rhythm of a living thing, the rise of a poppy, then the after uplift of the bud, the shedding of the calyx and the spreading wide of the petals, the falling of the flower and the pride of the seedhead. There is an unexpectedness in this such as does not come from their carefully plotted and arranged developments.¹⁵¹

Hans Prinzhorn, an able psychiatrist and physician, a fervent disciple of Klages both in psychology and in literature, and one of the leaders in what I have somewhat arbitrarily called the Klages school, translated D. H. Lawrence's *Woman who Rode Away* (among other things) as an illustration of biocentric writing. It was Prinzhorn through whom Thomas Mann became indirectly involved in a Klages quarrel. Over ten years ago, in an essay dealing with Freud,¹⁵² Thomas Mann mentioned Klages by name, made references to what he considered a deeply-rooted obscurantism, and used Freud as a glowing contrast. The essay was the means of fanning an already smouldering issue into a flame. By defending psycho-analysis, the very antithesis of "Seelenkunde,"¹⁵³ by drawing the moral inference that Klages had distorted the very spirit of German romanticism by deflecting it into an over-emphasis on the anti-intellectual side, and finally by warning his contemporaries that the dark, anti-intellectual psychology might prove dangerous if applied to

¹⁵¹ *Phoenix*, New York, 1936, pp. 309, 313.

¹⁵² Thomas Mann, *Die Forderung des Tages* (Berlin, Fischer, 1930), "Die Stellung Freuds in der modernen Geistesgeschichte," pp. 196 ff.

¹⁵³ For a discussion of psycho-analysis by Klages, cf. *Grundlagen*, pp. 225-29. These views have a definite bearing on literary criticism, as witness the remarks concerning Hebbel, pp. 221 ff.

society and its institutions, Thomas Mann paved the way for a political as well as an intellectual controversy. His political speech in 1930, to which later he gave the sub-title "Ein Appell an die Vernunft,"¹⁵⁴ described Klages' philosophy and linked it unmistakably with the present political party in power.

Prinzhorn promptly took up the cudgels in defense of Klages. He was an exponent of the latter's methods in the psychological and medical fields, had achieved some fame in the treatment of mental diseases, and was a bitter opponent of psycho-analysis in practice or in literature. On all these scores he felt impelled to attack Thomas Mann for dragging politics into a purely literary discussion. He called Thomas Mann a slanderer who had dragged the nobility of Klages' philosophy into the dust by making deductions as to its application in the political field.¹⁵⁵

Prinzhorn, with a summary sweep, disposed of all of Klages' enemies. Thomas Mann appears among the "Relativisten, Gleichmacher, Formalisten: diese fühlen sich durch Klages entlarvt und bekämpfen ihn erbittert."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Thomas Mann, *Deutsche Ansprache* (Berlin, Fischer, 1930), pp. 15 ff.

¹⁵⁵ Hans Prinzhorn, "Der Kampf um Ludwig Klages," *Deutsche Rundschau*, CCXXXV, 103-11.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, This is an important article, because Prinzhorn substantiates Klages' accusations of plagiarism and gives names. He deals first, in moderate language, with opponents whom he considers worthy of serious controversy (two groups), then with the third group, in the course of which his indignation inflames him to aver: "Zeitgenossen von einigem öffentlichen Ansehen wie Thomas Mann . . . geschwollene kleine Journalisten wie L. Marcuse wetteiferten miteinander durch giftige Entstellungen, vage politische Andeutungen," and descends to the level of "Ghetto-Gegeifer" etc. Finally we hear who Klages' "geistige Diebe" are: (a few excerpts will show the tone) Geltungssüchtige Ausbeuter: folglich Gehässigkeit und Brunnenvergiftung . . . mit fremden Federn schmücken und nach altem Gaunertrick die Stelle schmähen, an der sie ihren neuen Schmuck "entnommen" haben. (Stichwort: Mischung von intellektuellem Piraten und Bildungs-Clown):

- (1) Graf Hermann Keyserling . . . versuchte zweimal, Klages für seine Schule der Weisheit auszunutzen, hat sich seine Formeln angeeignet.
- (2) Theodor Lessing . . . Schulkamerad von Klages, der von dessen Jugendvisionen, den Urbildern des heute in gewaltigen Dimensionen ausgeführten "biozentrischen Weltbildes" seit Jahren literarisch lebt. Was bei Klages in geduldigem Ringen zum Reifen gebracht wurde, hat der vielgewandte jüdische Literat Lessing rasch in marktgängige Kleinmünze gegossen, das Pathos eines tragischen Grundgefühles hat er durch Sentimentalität und schnoddrige Flachheit zur Groteske verzerrt.

After Prinzhorn's death the indefatigable Werner Deubel took up the torch, seeking both to perpetuate Prinzhorn's faith and Klages' theories.¹⁵⁷

VII. CONCLUSION

Biocentric criticism in literature rests on the philosophic and psychological background established by Ludwig Klages. It is proud to call itself romantic and it disdains every humanistic premise. It enlists under its standards, however, poets and writers who have stood preponderantly for the humanistic tradition, determining, much in the fashion of the classic-romantic controversy, the biocentric and the logocentric traits. Very roughly speaking, the alleged antithesis biocentric-logocentric corresponds to the claim of romantic-classic polarity; however, Klages has exercised extreme selective care in formulating his definitions of romanticism, and all the values lie on that side. The enthusiasm of his followers, which he himself deprecates as at times "over-zealous" in drawing hasty conclusions, carries biocentric criticism to the point of excess and sometimes misinterpretation of the founder.

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- (3) Scheler (stiller Gegner von Klages) . . . hochbegabt aber substanzlos . . . hat die letzten Jahre seines Lebens hauptsächlich darum gerungen, wie er den Gegensatz Geist-Leben in einer irgendwie von Klages abweichenden Form definieren könne.
 - (4) Hat Lessing seinem Buchtitel *Untergang der Erde am Geist* eines der grossen Leitmotive von Klages wirksam plakatiert, so stellt
 - (5) Spenglers "Untergang" auf viel höherem Niveau eine Verengung dar . . . wobei die geistigen Beziehungen keineswegs so einfach liegen wie bei Keyserling und Lessing . . . In "Der Mensch und die Technik" absurde Vergrößerung von Sachverhalten, die Klages seit 1910 in tragischer Grossartigkeit . . . dichterisch und philosophisch dargestellt hat.
- Driesch . . . hat für die Problemstellung von Klages kein Organ.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Werner Deubel, "Hans Prinzhorn und die deutsche Revolution." *Deutsche Rundschau*, CCXXXVI (1933). 107 ff. Es war das grosse Ereignis in Prinzorns Leben, dass er ein ganzes "biozentrisches" Denksystem aufgerichtet fand. Die Begegnung mit Ludwig Klages . . . wurde . . . entscheidend. . . . Wenn heute die einst so geflüstertlich aufgelohten Namen Spengler, Scheler, Thomas Mann, Driesch, Graf Keyserling, Th. Lessing u.v.a. ihren Klang verloren haben, so ist dies vor allem Prinzorns unentwegtem Kampf gegen die täuschenden Fassaden zu danken. . . . Man begreift es, dass Prinzhorn unter den höheren geistigen Menschen der Erste war, der das Wesen der national-sozialistischen Bewegung verstanden und aufatmend begrüsst, aber auch in mahnenden Aufsätzen . . . vor Verfälschungen zu hüten versucht hat.

In its essence biocentric criticism is vitalistic. It glorifies Life, as carefully distinguished from mere Existence,¹⁵⁸ but it is not necessarily optimistic in its outlook.¹⁵⁹ It is non-moral and non-ethical, its religion is paganism, its mysticism is thorough-going. Its standard of perfection is the completeness of soul content (meaning) of the work of art, its birth in fire, flame, and intoxication, thus constituting its own reason for being. In judging it, the biocentric critic demands that neither the author nor the work be a product of reasoned reflection; neither must have been dominated by volition or activism, nor manifest a high degree of consciousness or personality. "Live dangerously" and "surrender yourself to the cosmos" are keynotes of biocentric criticism. The proof of value lies in successful symbolic thinking, that is, wealth of imagery. The great standards of Wonder, Love and Example are unceasingly symbolized in the infinite variety of the Cosmos, in the constantly recurring pattern of the Mother and the Child, and finally in the continued re-appearance of poets, gods, and heroes.

The biocentric quest leads to "Kulturpessimismus," to a longing for a Golden Age, primitive forms of life, and unconscious modes of living.

LYDIA BAER

Swarthmore College

¹⁵⁸ Cf. *Vom Kosmogonischen Eros*, p. 71: Nicht im Dasein und in der Behauptung des Daseins offenbart sich das Leben, sondern allein in den Augenblicken jener überströmenden Fülle, die selbst mit Zerstörung des Leibes noch nicht zu teuer erstanden wäre!

¹⁵⁹ Klages devotes an entire chapter, GW, 906 ff. to "Dithyrambiker des Untergangs."