

About Alfred Baeumler's Nietzsche. 4. 'Hellas and Germania'

Juan Sebastián Gómez-Jeria^{1,2*} 

¹Faculty of Sciences, University of Chile, Las Palmeras 3425, Santiago 7800003, Chile

²Glowing Neurons Group, CP 8270745, Santiago, Chile

DOI: [10.36348/jaep.2023.v07i11.006](https://doi.org/10.36348/jaep.2023.v07i11.006)

| Received: 11.10.2023 | Accepted: 16.11.2023 | Published: 19.11.2023

*Corresponding author: Juan Sebastián Gómez-Jeria

Faculty of Sciences, University of Chile, Las Palmeras 3425, Santiago 7800003, Chile

Abstract

The article 'Hellas and Germania' by Alfred Baeumler explores the relationship between ancient Greece and modern Germany. Baeumler discusses Nietzsche's relationship with Winckelmann in his work on the conquest of German Hellenism. He notes that Nietzsche was deeply influenced by Winckelmann's insights into the Hellenic world and saw himself as continuing Winckelmann's work. Baeumler argues that Nietzsche believed that subsequent scholars had failed to fully appreciate the essence of the Hellenic spirit, and that he saw himself as carrying on Winckelmann's legacy in this regard. He also notes that Nietzsche believed that the Germans had a special affinity with the Hellenic world, and that he saw Winckelmann and Goethe as examples of this connection.

Keywords: Baeumler, Nietzsche, Goethe, Hölderlin, Winckelmann.

Copyright © 2023 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

INTRODUCTION

Johann Joachim Winckelmann was born on December 9, 1717, in Stendal, Germany. The son of a shoemaker, Winckelmann showed a keen interest in study and the humanities from a young age. In 1738 he entered the University of Halle to study theology and medicine, although he soon turned his attention to classical philology and art history. In 1748 he moved to Dresden, where he worked as librarian for Count Heinrich von Büнау. There he had access to a magnificent collection of art that further sparked his interest in classical antiquity. In 1754 he published his work 'Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst' ('Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Art in Painting and Sculpture'), which laid the foundations of neoclassicism. In 1755 he traveled to Rome thanks to the support of Cardinal Albani. There he immersed himself completely in the study of Greco-Latin culture and art, closely examining the papal collections and the excavations that were taking place. The result of these investigations was his influential 'History of the Art of Antiquity' ('Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums'), published in 1764 (Winckelmann, 2011, 2013).

Winckelmann distinguished between the 'high style' of classical Greek art embodied in works such as

the pediments of the Parthenon and the 'beautiful style' of the Hellenistic period. He argued that beauty resides in noble simplicity and serene grandeur and idealized the Greek art of the fifth century BCE. He considered it the pinnacle of beauty for its noble simplicity and serene grandeur. This periodization was accepted by historians such as Lessing and had a great influence on neoclassicism. He rejected the Baroque as excessive. This inspired the neoclassical rejection of the Rococo. His meticulous descriptions of classical statues and remains laid the foundation for the modern archaeological method. Winckelmann's ideas had a profound impact on the German writers Goethe and Schiller, enthusiasts of neoclassicism. Goethe traveled to Italy following in his footsteps. The composer Richard Wagner defended the beauty of Hellenistic art in the face of Winckelmann's classicist canon. For his part, the English painter Joshua Reynolds rejected Winckelmann's ideas, defending an idealism based on Raphael and Michelangelo as opposed to the imitation of Greek art. In 1768, as he was about to return to Germany, Winckelmann was assassinated in Trieste by a thief who was trying to steal his medals and old coins. He is considered the father of art history and one of the main architects of neoclassicism (Harloe, 2013; Hatfield, 1964; North, 2013; Potts, 2000; Valdez, 2014).



Figure 1: From left to right: Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the Torso of Belvedere, and Apollo of Belvedere

Goethe discovered Winckelmann's work during his studies in Leipzig and was greatly impressed by his ideas about the Greek ideal of beauty and nobility. In 1786, Goethe made a formative trip to Italy, following in Winckelmann's footsteps. He visited Rome and Naples to see first-hand the vestiges of classical antiquity. Winckelmann's descriptions of statues such as the Apollo of Belvedere or the Torso of Belvedere deeply inspired Goethe. In his work 'Journey to Italy', Goethe pays tribute to Winckelmann's work in rescuing Greek art from oblivion and laying the foundations of neoclassicism. He shares with Winckelmann the admiration for the serenity and simplicity of Greek art as opposed to the 'exaggerated' art of the Baroque. However, Goethe has his own more idealistic view of antiquity. He is not a blind follower of Winckelmann but incorporates Winckelmann's ideas into his conception of Weimar classicism, along with Schiller. He defends an ideal of balance and control of the passions. In poems such as 'Limits of the Human Being' the influence of Winckelmann's exaltation of classical Greece can be appreciated. Goethe also departed from Winckelmann in his revaluation of nature, compared to the former's artistic-historical emphasis (Goethe, 2013; Hatfield,

1964; Valdez, 2014; Wellbery, Atkins, & von Goethe, 2014).

Hölderlin discovered Winckelmann's work during his studies and was greatly impressed by his idealized view of Classical Greece. It incorporated many of his ideas. He shares with Winckelmann a deep love for Greek culture and a view of that period as the pinnacle of humanity. In his novels 'Hyperion' and 'The Death of Empedocles' we can see Hölderlin's admiration for the Greece of Pericles that Winckelmann extolled so much. However, Hölderlin has a more nostalgic and melancholic view of that lost ideal of the Greeks. It is not a celebration but a longing. In his later odes he laments the remoteness of the Greek gods and the loss of that harmony with nature. Hölderlin criticizes Winckelmann's neoclassical imitation and advocates a more spiritual return to the Greek. Aesthetically, Hölderlin departs from Winckelmann's classicism and elaborates a freer poetic language, with a changing rhythm. In short, Winckelmann was a key inspiration for Hölderlin, but he ended up developing a very personal voice on Greece, with more emphasis on longing than mimesis (Holderlin, 2008; Hölderlin, 1980, 2016; Murrey, 2014; Weineck, 2012).



Figure 2: From left to right. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Christian Friedrich Hölderlin, and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

Winckelmann and Friedrich Nietzsche lived in distinct times, but some connections and influences can be found between his ideas and works. Nietzsche was highly critical of Winckelmann's neoclassicism and idealism, which he saw as a sterile imitation of antiquity. In works such as 'The Birth of Tragedy', Nietzsche rails against Winckelmann's vision of a serene and Apollonian Greek art. Nietzsche vindicates the Dionysian. He points out that Winckelmann and the neoclassicists saw only a friendly side of the Greek spirit, ignoring its tragic and abject side. Nietzsche also firmly rejected Winckelmann's academic and archaeological emphasis, advocating a vital appropriation of the Greek legacy. In contrast to Winckelmann's nostalgia, Nietzsche adopts a critical and unnostalgic stance towards classical Greece. In aesthetic terms, Nietzsche proposes a substantially different artistic ideal, far removed from classicism. However, Nietzsche agrees with Winckelmann in pointing to classical Greece as a point of reference and cultural landmark. Both thinkers also share a deep interest and knowledge of Hellenic culture in its many facets (Böckmann, 1941; Guthenke, 2008; Hatfield, 1964; Liebert, 1937; McGill, 1940; North, 2013; Valdez, 2014; Weineck, 2012).

Hellas and Germania by the philosopher Prof. Dr. Alfred Baeumler (Baeumler, 1937).

Not Iphigenia's sweet complaint:

'And I spend long days on this shore
seeking in the soul the land of the Greeks';

but the impetuous expression of will of Faust addressed to the wise Chiron:

'And should not I bring you back to life,
With the strength of my ardent longing,
the unique picture of it all?'

It adequately expresses the relation of the Germanic spirit to Hellas. For Western culture, the

recovery of the Hellenic is the result of the immense efforts made by the soul of the Germanic race to return to itself. German Hellenism is a conquest, undertaken with a courage whose dimensions are truly universal-historical, of forgotten coasts and summits of the past, a true expedition of Alexander in the dominion of soul and spirit.

The reason why this event has not always been seen and understood correctly is to be found in the fact that we have not yet finished the action of reconquering the Hellenic world. But if one closes one's eyes to the reality of Germanic Hellenism, one inevitably runs the risk of misunderstanding and distorting such shocking phenomena as Hölderlin and Nietzsche. Therefore, the decisive battle begins with them.

The century will have to tell what values the West will use to shape a future. We are sure that only a system of values deeply akin to the Hellenic one will be able to save Europe from the anarchy of values. The discovery of the Hellenic world signifies nothing less than the harbinger of a new epoch, of an epoch beyond the Gothic and the Enlightenment. For us, the Hellenic is not one value among others, nor even a historical greatness next to the Roman, the Iranian or the Indian world. Rather, our consciousness confirms the intuitive certainty of Winckelmann, Hölderlin, and Nietzsche, according to which our fate is decided in relation to Helena.

For the West, the Germanic reconquest of Hellas is a process that is fertile in development and therefore difficult to grasp at a glance. To avoid any misunderstanding, we must firmly maintain that, despite its alleged great scientific merits, the 'neohumanism' of the nineteenth century, understood as a whole as a posthumous effect of the imposing Hellenic movement, represents a regression that risks reducing Greek

antiquity to a mere occasion, albeit apparently privileged, of historical knowledge. Among the neo-humanists only one was able to think and act according to an immediate relation to the Hellenic essence: Friedrich Thiersch. It should therefore be called philhellenic rather than neo-humanist. His basic assumption is life, not history: and so, even among philologists, he was the only one to recognize the grecity in Jahn's significant theory of physical exercise.

Nietzsche's merit is that he recognized and averted the danger of historicism. In his tragic struggle against neohumanism, Nietzsche safeguarded the vital importance of Hellenism to Western culture. Since Nietzsche, Germanism and Hellenism are directly related to each other. In their covenant of alliance lies the guarantee of the spiritual unity of Europe. But this unity does not spring from mere scientific cooperation, but rests on essential determinations of commonly shared values. The peoples who make up spiritual Europe cannot be taken for an indistinct whole, and yet the fact that they can be brought together under the banners of a life-bearing system of values, which represented by Hellas, should not be underestimated.

Crippled by its own excess of historical critique, 'neohumanism' has defined as a prejudice of classicism the fact that in the Hellenic world there dwells a power that for us constitutes an essential binding model. And, precisely at this decisive point, classicism has shown itself superior to the 'neohumanism' that emerged from it. Historicism has been scandalized that classicism has established an absolute norm. But the mistake lies rather in having understood this norm, valid for praxis, only in aesthetic terms. The idea of race, then, leads us to understand the meaning of that absolute norm starting from the physical element in its deepest roots, and therefore Hellenic.

Let us, then, leave aside 'neo-humanism', this unhappy birth of philological and historical criticism, and return to that single complex of creative acts which, as the spiritual reconquest of true Hellenism, certainly has greater significance for the history of western Germany than the much-decanted Renaissance.

It is clear that this reconquest must have begun with the humanism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In fact, in order to reconquer Hellenism, humanism had to give itself certain presuppositions. But the humanism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries represents a prelude to what begins only with Winckelmann. Born with Winckelmann, classicism is more than a taste and a literary or artistic current: it is a real movement that cannot be encompassed in humanism. Winckelmann did not limit himself to projecting onto ancient art the humanistic image of the exemplarity and paradigmatic value of ancient authors but instituted a new relationship with antiquity thanks to the fact that he had placed Hellas as such at the center of

his reflections, elevating the Greeks, as a historically existing people, a living model.

Until Winckelmann, Rome was the undisputed historical, religious, and spiritual fulcrum of the West. The city on the banks of the Tiber was the 'eternal' city par excellence, the heir of the ancient world, the mediator between declining antiquity and the new Christian one. Until Winckelmann, all studies devoted to Hellenism were closely linked to an overall vision whose center was Rome. Hellenistic studies had never modified the essentially Romanesque character of humanism. Humanism had always remained true to its Latin origins. The spiritual unity of the West seemed to derive perennially from the confrontation and integration of the two 'Romanesque' traditions (the ancient and the Christian). The Rome of Augustus together with that of St. Peter: was this not Europe? Homer, Plato, and Euclid were later annexed to the Romanesque vision of Europe. No one had ever thought that Hellenism could constitute a world in itself, an autonomous cosmos to be perceived and understood unconditionally. The Hellenic was only one of the elements of the ancient tradition. The latter would have perceived its scent and perfume without in any way modifying the primacy of Rome.

Winckelmann erased the vague idea of 'antiquity', recognizing the centrality of Athens and retreating Rome to second place. For this reason, he effected a transvaluation whose meaning neither Winckelmann himself nor his contemporaries could have misunderstood.

'The most silent words are those that stir up the storm. The ideas that surprise us guide the world with a feline step.'

If ideas have never come with a feline step, certainly are the Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture, published in Dresden in 1755. Without flinching, no one can take in their hands the book that gave life to the Hellenic movement. The concrete premise is Dresden's collection of ancient statues. After noting that Dresden contains in its collection works of indisputable attribution to Greek masters, Winckelmann begins as follows: *'The purest sources of art have been opened: blessed is he who discovers and tastes them. Finding these sources means setting out for Athens; and Dresden will henceforth be the Athens of artists.'*

In other words, go to Athens, not to Rome, and not to Paris. Winckelmann founded the new kingdom, disassociating himself from the Romanesque-humanistic legacy. His visual sensibility has opened up to him the domain of beauty, to which the West had had no access before him. Leaping space and time, guided only by his genius, Winckelmann managed to grasp what he felt was close to the depths of his being. In it, Romanism and Latinism are thus immediately transcended.

‘As much as we may be able, the only way we can be inimitable is by imitation of the ancients, and what has been said about Homer, namely, that he learns to admire him who knows how to understand him, applies equally to all the works of art of antiquity, particularly those of Greece.’ Good taste, so say the ‘Thoughts on Imitation’, is first formed under the Greek sky, and the taste which Greece bestowed on her works of art has been indelibly impressed upon her. In the ‘History of Ancient Art’ of 1763, the ripe fruit of Winckelmann’s Hellenism, we read this lapidary passage: ‘The Roman artists must be regarded as imitators of the Greeks, so that they cannot have given life to any school or any style.’ With this idea, the West begins to detach itself from the undisputed authority of Rome. If, in the course of a century, Goethe, Hölderlin, and Nietzsche respectively discovered the Homeric epic, the Pindaric lyric, the Attic tragedy, and the pre-Socratic philosophy, they owe it to Winckelmann.

A no less significant shift in thinking is closely linked to the transvaluation that for the first time, and in a specific context, puts Athens in the place of Rome. Winckelmann is not so much a new humanist, who, instead of the literary beauty of the ancient authors, admires the plastic beauties of the Greek artists, as rather a revolutionary who, with an ardent spirit, dares to confront the present with Hellenic reality captured with rare insight. In this way, German classicism separates itself from any humanistic aspect, since it does not assume a posteriori or imitate a form, but rather discovers an entire world. As we read Winckelmann, the Hellenic world appears to us as if by enchantment, enigmatically projected and made visible in the evocations of the Rococo. That Winckelmann is the discoverer of a cosmos can be understood, as always, by the style of his language. He is not really talking about art and literature, but about the man who creates art and literature. Hellenism, according to Winckelmann, is a way of being of man: relating to the world, interpreted free from the shadows of the Middle Ages, of an illusory afterlife, and celebrating it in all its splendor.

Winckelmann’s plotinizing metaphysics of the Beautiful reveals itself to be insignificant and lacking in originality; while his descriptions of works of art reveal an entire world to us. In them he appears to us as one of the most brilliant realists in historical terms of all time. On the basis of the classicist formula of ‘noble simplicity and quiet grandeur’, one cannot help but understand what Winckelmann manages to say about nature, living forms and the Greek gods. He unveiled the Hellenic physis and understood the meaning of the care devoted to this physis by a people who have aimed exclusively at ‘begetting beautiful children’. ‘For the Greeks, nature was everything we imagined in idealistic terms.’ The physical education of children was considered a crucial task. ‘Thanks to physical exercise, the bodies were able to retain a gallant and manly aspect, that aspect which the Greek masters conferred on their statues, without

superfluous ornaments and additions.’ Along with the gymnastic competitions we must mention the great festivals and games that give luster to Hellenic life. The naked Greek reveals himself in all his bodily perfection; Art in this respect is by no means an outward adornment, but the natural reflection of a perfect existence. There is no such good order of life within the rigid ‘Egyptian’ laws. The essential political condition of the Greeks is freedom. Political freedom is rooted in the freedom of art.

With reason and acuity, Winckelmann reiterates as a fundamental characteristic of the Greeks the ‘serenity of the soul’. By this he also understands a strong and glorious vital resonance, typical of a people who are at the same time warriors and artists. Neither the Egyptians, nor the Etruscans, nor the Romans knew the joyful and triumphant tone of Hellenic virtue. Winckelmann is completely alien to the formalist interpretation (derived from a misunderstood harmony) of the ‘Greek serenity’ that ‘neohumanism’ would later pass off as the quintessence of the Hellenic worldview, which Nietzsche later firmly refuted in ‘The Birth of Tragedy’. When he weaves the praise of the ‘serenity of the soul’, Winckelmann does not invent it out of thin air, but glimpses it as the salient national trait of the Hellenes, which he deduces from their works and their lifestyle. With the same representative force he fixed the specific characteristic of the Hellenic essence, that is, the high esteem enjoyed by children and young people. The purest representation of beauty, which Winckelmann conducts in harmony with the Hellenes and in opposition to the Gothic taste, is given by the developmental phase from puberty to adulthood. Guided by his own artistic sensibility, he identifies the heroic lifestyle with the Ephebic Apollonian principle in which extreme tension is combined with supreme grace. By relying on this principle, Winckelmann captures the heart of the real life of the Greeks.

Youth and virility, both delineating the true ‘serenity of the soul’, find their perfect representation in Apollo. With Winckelmann, Apollo becomes for the West the divinity symbolizing the Hellenic world. Belvedere’s description of the Apollo goes so deep that it corresponds much more to the preclassic Apollo of the temple of Zeus at Olympia than to the later-period statue that Winckelmann actually had before his eyes at the time of describing it.

‘His stature surpasses all human form, and his bearing reflects the divine greatness which imprints him . . . From the heights of his purity, he sublimely directs his gaze to the infinite, beyond his victory: on his lips one reads contempt, and the anger he encloses within himself dilates his nostrils and rises to his haughty forehead.

Humanism interpreted the gods in an allegorical sense, that is, not as a reality of worship, but as abstractions, personifications, imaginations, poetic

fictions. On the contrary, Winckelmann's renewed relationship with Hellenism is shown by the fact that in his descriptions he breaks with allegorical rationalism and, as an ancient interpreter would have done, bases them on the distinction between men and gods. For Winckelmann, God is not so much an idealized and spiritualized man as a true divinity, that is, an autonomous entity, separate in relation to the being of man's world. The Greeks call the gods 'the Blessed'. And Winckelmann places as the main characteristic of the image of the gods the blissful tranquility. Winckelmann therefore continues his description of the Apollo of Belvedere as follows: 'But the peace and tranquility of the soul that floats above it remains unchanged [...]'.

In the landmark commemorative letter of 1805 dedicated by Goethe to Winckelmann, Winckelmann is celebrated as an 'ancient nature'. The appellation shows how profoundly Winckelmann's influence has acted. It shows how Goethe understood Winckelmann to the core. One can be a humanist or an archaeologist, without possessing an 'ancient nature'; but only the latter would have been able to comprehend the Hellenic world.

Goethe knew that he was not only an epigone of Winckelmann's efforts in the field of art, but also an ancient nature that continues the struggle for life waged by his famous predecessor. Thanks to him, classicism has become an essential constituent of German culture, but not without losing in strength and resolution what it had achieved with Winckelmann.

A single overview is by no means sufficient to do justice to Goethe's enormous contribution to the reconquest of the Hellenic world. However, we wish to fix here its consequences in the field of the history of the German spirit. Unlike the tragic natures of Hölderlin and Nietzsche, Goethe's epic spirit did not set out to make the fateful decision first made by Winckelmann. Goethe's classicism finds its ultimate expression in the second part of *Faust*, that is, in the superb vision of the union between the Germanic spirit and the Greek spirit. The historical event that begins with Winckelmann and is defined by Goethe has its allegorical representation in the nuptials between *Faust* and *Helen*.

The *Spell of Helena-Galatea* is undoubtedly among the poet's most fascinating creations and is on the same level as his youthful lyrics. But here the Winckelmannian vision and theory of the Apollonian and virile nature of the Hellenic world are missing. *Apollo's* spell would have been more historiographically correct and more historically significant than *Helen's*. If he had wanted to make a decisive contribution to Winckelmann's description of *Heracles' Torso*, Goethe would have had to portray a *Siegfried* (albeit an outsized one for his imagination!).

The second part of *Faust* does not represent the document of a new opening, but the testimony of the

personal life of the Author in the twilight of his second period. The Gothic spirit from which Goethe has just detached himself is shown to be on a par with the Hellenic one, precisely because Goethe clearly sees before him the historical task of proceeding with the recovery of the Germanic spirit to which the Gothic also tends. But this would only have been possible by passing through *Apollo* and not *Helen*. Initiated by Winckelmann, the break with the Gothic vein recedes, although only in part, through Goethe's individual resolution of the conflict.

But we must never lose sight of development in its entirety: without Goethe, the opening up of Greek antiquity would never have been a decisive event in the history of the German mind. His sincere 'feeling of antiquity' bursts forth continuously and with great energy from his superb verses. As far as his conscience has been able to go, poems such as 'The Bride of Corinth' and 'Great is Diana Ephesians!' show it. But Goethe also looks into the depths of Hellenic religion with the 'Song of the Fates' and 'The Limits of the Human'. But what prevented Goethe from making up his mind? Goethe's classicism lacks that moment which Winckelmann was so resolute about and then reappeared with Hölderlin and Nietzsche: it lacks the awareness that classicism belongs to the sphere of religion and that in this sphere no 'this and that' is allowed, but only an 'or this or that'. Winckelmann raised the question of religion, which Goethe assumed and understood, but left it unresolved. This constitutes the historical-spiritual presupposition of the tragic life of Hölderlin and Nietzsche.

The indecision in which the *Faustian* poem runs aground is expressed by the aesthetic position of the late Goethe, who avoids drawing the extreme consequences of classicism: that is why he does not succeed, as a poet, in grasping the great ancient style. The path that leads to the hymn, pursued, and found by Hölderlin with the sacrifice of a lifetime, is therefore closed to him. And it is true that in Goethe's poetry the gods appear from time to time, but always and only evoked, never directly questioned, and celebrated. The admirable lyrics of the *Divan* create an original and partly religious atmosphere – a mystical-pantheistic atmosphere, never ancient. Thus, the second part of *Faust* is an expression of a commitment: not only in terms of worldview, but also in an aesthetic sense.

And as the classicist Goethe's masterpiece *Pandora* demonstrated, the mixture of classical and romantic elements could not necessarily lead to a formal hodgepodge and thus ultimately to the most hybrid form of the Baroque, that is, opera. The classicist Goethe thus leads to a form of art that is not absolutely Greek, but romantic, no different from the other Germans who, only a generation before the conclusion of the *Faustian* poem, had recovered, thanks to Hölderlin's work, the Pindaric hymn.

Goethe merely collects and transmits, while Hölderlin decides and looks ahead. Hölderlin's last 'Hymns' are presented with unparalleled purity and in absolute independence from the formal Baroque universe of the eighteenth century. And we certainly do not belittle the all-encompassing, conservative, and conciliatory spirit of the great Goethe, if we declare that German classicism is fulfilled not by Goethe but by Hölderlin! For us, Goethe remains the same. But Hölderlin is the man of destiny who, revered by us as a seer, had previously been long unknown.

To give expression to his universal vision, Goethe turns to the Persians and the Indians; Hölderlin, on the other hand, knows only Hellas and Germania. Hölderlin's path is identified with the course of destiny of the German spirit: it returns to Germany via Hellas. And we could not distort it more brutally than by relating it to the romantic school! It is precisely the purity of classicism that separates him from the romantic Goethe. In his poetry, the landscape and the altars of Hellas stand with an immediacy that is somewhat disturbing to us moderns. The poet who never set foot on Greek soil contemplates the panorama of the Greek archipelago:

'Of your islands, still flourishing, none has disappeared. Crete and Salamis green with the imperishable laurel; Delos, surrounded by fertile reefs, raises its haughty head at dawn; Tenedos and Chios abound with purple fruits; from fertile hills flows the fountain of Cyprus; of the Calaurius, as of old, silvery streams pour into the ancient waters of Father Oceanus. All of them are still alive, the mothers of heroes, the islands, blooming year after year.'

When, one morning, looking down from the ship, I looked for Delos and a flat, elongated island presented itself, I knew then that this could not be the old Delos, and that therefore Hölderlin had been mistaken in portraying it with a 'haughty head'. But it soon became clear to me that what had appeared to me was the great Delos; while not even the Ionic Homer could have described more accurately than the Swabian Hölderlin the island of Apollo and Leto, the little Delos I saw shortly afterwards, with the rough height of the Cinto.

What Winckelmann had intuited would later appear in all its vivid reality to the contemplative soul. It would contemplate, however, not an absolute 'beauty' or a fictitious and idealized Greece, but that real context that is Hellas with its gods, heroes, and men. This world has not collapsed, but still maintains a mysterious relationship with the object of our search and discovery. Hölderlin, in the last analysis, glimpses what binds us so closely to Hellas not in the sphere of art and poetry, nor even in the domain of noble sentiments and ideals. With the courage that comes from purity, he glimpses in the bond that unites us to Hellas the same relationship that mediates between us and the Hellenic gods. We love Greece because its gods are also ours. The poet who for

more than a century has been understood and misunderstood as the singer of a romantic nostalgia for Greece, reveals himself in the end to be the only sober person in an age of abstract, romantic, and idealistic intoxications. Hölderlin speaks of a healthy sobriety, announcing a healthy realism: without gods there is no community, and without community no heroic life is possible. Uprooted equals ungodly. 'To die is to live alone and without gods!'

Where there are heroes, there gods are worshipped. Hölderlin's hope for Germany thus coincides with the hope of the return of the gods.

'I can already hear the choruses of the party in the distance
in the green heights and the echo of the forests;
where the child's spirit is awakened, where the changing
soul of the people
joins in the song of praise to the gods.'

The peculiarity of Hölderlin's lyric consists in the fact that it excludes with the utmost energy any accidental, sentimental, or personal accent. It is 'anti-modern' in the highest degree, for it reveals nothing subjective or romantic. Hölderlin wonders about man, but he can only answer if he announces divinity. Without the touchstone of the divine, men fall into disorder. It is only if they remain devoted to the sacred powers that peoples reach their summit.

'Only before the Celestial Ones the peoples
They obey the sacred hierarchical order
erecting temples and cities [...]

Hölderlin announces a new communion between gods and men: not the unity of an absolute God and man, but the union of a popular community with its own gods. The Poet cannot live without a community. He is not so much a spokesman for the subjective feelings and thoughts of isolated individuals, which only taken together form an audience capable of understanding, as an original and spontaneous singer of hymns and praises to the divine powers, their interpreter, who only by placing himself at the service of the divinity recognizes himself as an integral part of the community. But in an age without gods, the relationship with the community is altered. The Poet is that loner who does not see the hour 'when my solitary song / joins you in songs of joy [...]

Thus, the gods are not 'given' to us like the weather, plants, and stones: their reality has a mysterious relationship with the life of the community that worships them. 'As heroes crown them, so the sacred elements need the devoted heart of man to honor them.' That is why the gods are no longer seen like the stars in the sky. A community without gods cannot, therefore, reintroduce the cult of the Celestials by a majority vote. Peoples only return to their gods in the sudden resonance

of historical events. Consciousness moves along with what happens in the course of time. Knowledge of the decline of the gods is given only to those who have not yet boldly lost faith in the people and in the return of the gods. And the courage of one's vocation grows along with the deepening of one's consciousness. It is here that we must look for the meaning of the famous passage in the *Hyperion* about the Germans.

And where Hölderlin finally arrived in complete solitude, Nietzsche has gone through his entire brief life, but bathed in the brilliance emanating from a crucial turnaround. The consciousness of the disappearance of the gods in his century does not leave him for a moment. It is precisely this awareness that gives life to the most stupefying and enigmatic book, 'The Birth of the Tragedy of the Spirit of Music'.

Nietzsche had to re-establish the relationship between the German and Hellenic spirits on the basis of a markedly worsened situation, from which the nineteenth-century sciences of antiquity expanded in all directions and were determined in a 'neo-humanistic' sense. Apollo was conjured by Winckelmann, while Helen was conjured by Goethe. Hölderlin's appeal, on the other hand, went unheeded. The Germans, however, must make Hölderlin's fate their own; and with the youthful work of Nietzsche the Hellenic movement enters a new phase. From now on, the religious question posed by classicism falls under the enlightening light of conscience and is decisive for German spirituality. Associated with Nietzsche's name is the idea, ever more pressing, of that far-reaching decision before us.

Starting from the universe of Winckelmann and Goethe, the young Nietzsche raises the question of why, since the time of our two predecessors, the tension that leads us back to the Greeks has been progressively relaxed; moreover, he draws the conclusion that at some crucial points even the two precursors did not succeed in 'penetrating the core of the Hellenic essence and establishing a union of love between Greek and German culture'. Nietzsche's ensuing struggle to define precisely the Hellenic spirit reaches its own fulfillment in the face of the heroes of classicism. Nietzsche turns to Winckelmann and Goethe from the heights of a strengthened relationship with Hellenism and with a mixture of superiority and recognized respect: 'Perhaps the Germans have incurred an unfavorable climate. But there is something Hellenic about them – and this is awakened in contact with the South: Winckelmann, Goethe, and Mozart.'

The essential character of Nietzsche's youthful work, a work composed on an impulse of necessity, in any respect, certainly does not make it easy for the Author to delineate his overall understanding of the Hellenic spirit. The young Nietzsche speaks of a Greek god and his return under the mask of a learned philologist. The Hellenic spirit and the Germanic spirit

are united by a mysterious affinity. And so, after the former powers of life and art have lost their cathartic power, the time has come to revive the tragedy of the German spirit. Dionysus and Apollo are thus assumed: by antithesis and by identity at the same time, this is the new formula for designating both the Hellenic world and its most perfect creation: Attic tragedy.

And how powerful is the formula 'Dionysus and Apollo!' The allegorical game of Faust and Helen comes to an end. Before us stands the ephebus god: victorious, sternly Doric, in all his resplendent splendor renewed. And next to him is Dionysus, 'mysterious and inscrutable', even though he is a Hellenic divinity made up of non-Greek elements. Today we tend to overestimate what Nietzsche says in psychological terms about sleep and drunkenness, forgetting the aesthetics of musical drama; And yet we marvel at discovering the grandiose project of restoring a Hellenic existence from the distinction between two opposing cults.

And it is precisely as an initiate of the god Dionysus (albeit with the aspect of one who gives shape to a theoretical treatise) that Nietzsche speaks to his own Alexandrian epoch of that reality whose language is music and dance. He calls 'Dionysian' that supreme pleasure to which the passage through twilight and negation leads, evaluating men and cultures in relation to a tragic-Dionysian criterion. The German soul, from the depths of which the Reformation was born at the time, seems to Nietzsche to be of a Dionysian nature. With unheard-of audacity, but with profound truthfulness, he quotes the Lutheran chorale as the 'first sign of the Dionysian call' and announces the rebirth of the German myth.

The decisive contribution to Nietzsche's life is the project of a new philosophy, starting from the unaltered forces of that profundity which is common to Hellenic and Germanic culture. The philosophy of the will to power, so difficult to interpret, so distorted, is born of a congeniality of soul and spirit with the auroral philosophy of pre-Socratic Hella. The Nietzschean project, *Dionysos philosophos*, signifies the definitive detachment of German philosophy from the theological-philosophical ballast in whose shadow German idealism developed. And so the name of Nietzsche is associated with the decisive crisis of Western philosophical thought.

In 'The Will to Power' we read an aphorism that tends to encompass the whole of German philosophy (and therefore Nietzsche himself) as a particular form of the *Sehnsucht* [desire for some intangible thing, note from translator] for the Greek world. This philosophy, Nietzsche argues, aims to continue in the discovery of antiquity, in the unearthing of ancient philosophy, especially of the pre-Socratic, of 'what among all the Greek temples is best concealed'. From this follows an interpretation of the German efforts aimed at a universal philosophical understanding, which at the same time

corresponds to a self-definition and a justification of German classicism in its ultimate meaning:

'Therefore, it seems, we can judge from later centuries that the whole of German philosophy has a specific dignity precisely because it is a progressive recovery of antiquity, and any claim to 'originality' sounds petty and ridiculous in the face of the superior claim of the Germans: to have resumed that bond which seemed forever broken, that bond with the Greeks. that is, with the 'human type' so far best achieved. Today we approach all those fundamental forms of interpretation of the world revealed by the Greek spirit with Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles, Democritus, and Anaxagoras. It is obvious that as far as our ideas and determinations of value are concerned, we are becoming more and more Greek, in the manner of ghostly Hellenizing presences; and I hope that in the near future this will also be true for our bodies! There I place henceforth (or rather always) all my hopes for the German essence!'

Parts 1 and 2 of this series can be found in (Gómez-Jeria, 2023a, 2023b)

REFERENCES

- Baumler, A. (1937). Hellas und Germanien. In *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (pp. 295-311). Berlin: Junker und Dauennhaupt.
- Böckmann, P. (1941). Hellas und Germanien. Entstehung und Bedeutung einer griechisch-deutschen Lebenseinheit. *Von deutscher Art in Sprache und Dichtung, Stuttgart-Berlin, 5*, 341-404.
- Goethe, J. V. (2013). *Collected works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*. Hastings: Delphi Classics.
- Gómez-Jeria, J. S. (2023a). About Alfred Baumler's Nietzsche. *Journal of Advances in Education & Philosophy*, 7, 283-295.
- Gómez-Jeria, J. S. (2023b). About Alfred Baumler's Nietzsche. 2. 'The Solitude of Nietzsche'. *Journal of Advances in Education and Philosophy*, 7(10), 402-408. doi:10.36348/jaep.2023.v07i10.005
- Guttenke, C. (2008). *Placing Modern Greece: The Dynamics of Romantic Hellenism, 1770-1840*: Oxford University Press, USA.
- Harloe, K. (2013). *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity: History and Aesthetics in the Age of Altertumswissenschaft*: OUP Oxford.
- Hatfield, H. (1964). *Aesthetic Paganism in German Literature: from Winckelmann to the death of Goethe*: Harvard University Press.
- Holderlin, F. (2008). *The Death of Empedocles: A mourning-play*: State University of New York Press.
- Hölderlin, F. (1980). *Las grandes elegías (1800-1801)*. Madrid: Hiperión.
- Hölderlin, F. (2016). *Hymns and Fragments* (Vol. 27): Princeton University Press.
- Liebert, A. (1937). Contemporary German Philosophy. *The Philosophical Review*, 46(1), 30-67. doi:10.2307/2180653
- McGill, V. J. (1940). Notes on Philosophy in Nazi Germany. *Science & Society*, 4(1), 12-28.
- Murrey, L. (2014). *Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry: The Terrifying-Exciting Mysteries*: Springer.
- North, J. H. (2013). *Winckelmann's "Philosophy of Art": A Prelude to German Classicism*: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Potts, A. (2000). *Flesh and the ideal: Winckelmann and the origins of art history*: Yale University Press.
- Valdez, D. (2014). *German Philhellenism: the pathos of the historical imagination from Winckelmann to Goethe*: Springer.
- Weineck, S.-M. (2012). *The Abyss Above: Philosophy and Poetic Madness in Plato, Hölderlin, and Nietzsche*: State University of New York Press.
- Wellbery, D. E., Atkins, S., & von Goethe, J. W. (2014). *Faust I & II, Volume 2: Goethe's Collected Works-Updated Edition*.
- Winckelmann, J. J. (2011). *Historia del arte de la Antigüedad*: Ediciones Akal.
- Winckelmann, J. J. (2013). *Winckelmann's images from the ancient World: Greek, Roman, Etruscan and Egyptian*: Courier Corporation.