IDA'S AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT
(Idas Ästhetische Entwicklung)

by

Friederike Brun, née Münter

Dedicated to the Manes
of our transfigured
Friend

Anna Germaine de Staël

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Il est important dans l'éducation de
combiner à propos l'exercice de
l'imagination avec celui de l'intelligence.

(It is important in education to combine advantageously
the exercise of the imagination with that of the intelligence.)

Bonstetten

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Flüchtig, ein himmlischer Hauch, erscheint auf der Erde das Schöne;
Duftigem Blumenthau gleich, athmet es sehnsuchtsvoll ein!
Leise Berührung selbst, enthebt die strahlenden Farben,
Welche die Schwingen dir, liebliche Psyche bethau'n:
Herz nur und Seele versteh'n die entfliehende Anmuth zu fesseln;
Spiegelnd in Thränen das Bild! Tönend in Wehmuth das Wort.

Fleeting as Heaven's breath, the beautiful kisses the earth;
Like fragrant flowers' dew, inhale it longingly!
Gentle contact itself, dismiss the streaming colors,
Bedewing, fair Psyche, thy wings:
Heart and soul only can capture the fleeting grace;
Reflecting the picture in tears! Woefullly sounding the word.

[Unattributed]

[Most prominent persons mentioned in the text are identified in the Appendix]
Translator's Preface

Friederike Brun, née Münther, did not continue her autobiography beyond the events recorded in the preceding text, which closed with the period around 1780 when she was fifteen years old. When she again took up her pen to create the following work, it was to reexamine the childhood and youth of her own daughter, Ida (Adélaïde) Brun, who was born August 19, 1792 and whose precocious musical and balletic talents aroused considerable interest in the Europe of the Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic periods.

Friederike's life in the years that intervened between these two biographical fragments has been conveniently summarized by Ilse Foerst-Crato in her introduction to Women of Goethe's Time (Frauen zur Goethezeit), her edition of the glorious correspondence between Friederike Brun and Caroline von Humboldt, her distinguished contemporary.¹ The following brief extract may serve as a link between the two periods of Friederike's biographical involvement:

"At the age of seventeen [in 1782] she married Constantin Brun, who was born in 1745 in Wismar (Mecklenburg) [on the Baltic], and who, a financial genius of the first rank, had achieved an influential position in Danish commerce while still a young man. The first years of the marriage were happy, with the birth of their son Karl [in 1784], travels to Petersburg, Stockholm, Hamburg, where she sought out Klopstock and was inspired by him to write more poems. After the birth of her second child [Charlotte (Lotte), in 1788], Friederike became hard of hearing, a severe handicap for anyone completely focused on words, though she seldom complained about it.

"In the summer of 1789 she undertook an extensive bathing and cultural tour with the poet Baggessen, with Göttingen and Weimar as the main objectives. She made the acquaintance of August Wilhelm Schlegel and the classical philology specialist Heyne; Bürger read his elegies to her; she came into closer contact with Herder and his wife; Wieland accepted poems of hers for the Deutsche Merkur.

"In 1790 [when her second daughter, Auguste (Gusté), was born], the Bruns lived in Paris [where the French Revolution was then gathering momentum]. Friederike followed political events with interest. On the way home, a longish stay in Geneva brought her a decisive experience in making the acquaintance of Viktor von Bonstetten. Through his 'cheerfulness and gentle enthusiasm,' he soon came closer to her than the considerably older Brun, with his complete absorption in practical matters. In Zurich she visited Lavater, to whose lively religiosity she felt drawn despite all skepticism regarding its excesses. Then came Mainz with Georg Förster and Johannes von Müller.

¹Frauen zur Goethezeit: Letters from the State Archives in Copenhagen and the Archive of Schloss Tegel, Berlin; English translation by Richard Poate Stebbins in Sophie Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
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"After the birth of Ida in 1792 in Copenhagen, Lavater and the poet Friedrich von Matthisson, the friend of Bonstetten, were her guests. The last-named arranged for the first edition of her poems, which were published for the second time in 1798.

"On another bathing trip she saw Johann Heinrich Voss and Friedrich von Stolberg in Eutin; then went to Wörlitz to the Princess Luise of Dessau, whose librarian and reader was Matthisson, and then to Jena to Schiller. . . . [who] accepted some poems of hers ... although he had no real taste for them but merely praised her versification. In Carlsbad she met Goethe and, in his circle, the Berlin Jewesses Sara and Marianne Meyer [and] Rahel Levin. Zelter’s musical setting of her poem, ‘Ich denke Dein’ ['I’m Thinking of You'] had an ‘unbelievable charm’ for Goethe, who modified it somewhat and gave it the title, ‘Proximity of the Loved One.’ ”

The birth of Friederike’s daughter Ida – the central character of this memoir – coincided for the older woman with a variety of physical ailments that reached critical severity a couple of years later and, in 1795, sent her venturing once again into war-torn Europe in hopes of finding better medical treatment. On this prolonged excursion she was accompanied by her eldest son and daughter and received much attention from her friends Matthisson and Bonstetten. Italy, which she now visited for the first time, proved something of a revelation, immediately becoming her spiritual home and the goal of all future longings. It also refined and enriched the store of aesthetic and poetic creativity which she could now pass on to the talented small daughter who awaited her back in Copenhagen.

The considerations that ultimately led to the composition of the present memoir are explained in the following preface addressed to the young woman who became its subject.

(195) Mother to Daughter: A Word of Introduction
[by Friederike Brun]

I once promised our transfigured friend, Anne Germaine de Staël, to write the history of the development of your talents, for she considered that the manner in which they announced themselves from earliest childhood, and the principles whereby I attempted to develop them in you into a harmonious whole, were both remarkable in themselves and perhaps not without utility to the rare and highly favored mothers to whom children of this kind are entrusted. Later, our friend C.V. von Bonstetten several times urged me in writing to fulfill my promise, which had been given in his presence.

Now, since the manifestations from an ideal world of beauty are by nature as fleeting as the air; and ah! the equally fleeting heavenly gifts of beauty and virtue [are] confined within narrow bounds: since the dream of separation, and since (196) the veil which is lowered by the years upon the most brilliant dreams of recollection continuously spreads and thickens itself between us, I will attempt to hold fast in words what remains alive, and to explain how the high pantomimic talent not only arose in you, winged by music, nurtured by the arts of drawing, to
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that height which made you, for all who preserved a pure mind in a pure breast, a unique manifestation of their kind [ihrer Art]. To you I will recount yourself.

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You were a very delicate, often sickly, but always cheerful and sweetly smiling child. Before you had completed your first year, the great harmonist and composer J.A.P. Schulz, our bosom friend, stayed with us for six weeks, during which time he did not once hear you weep or cry. At the beginning of your second year, you were very ill of a persistent fever, and were not at all willing to be served by your usual attendant, a good-natured but simple girl, but constantly called for Anna, the cook! But the latter not only had a handsome face and a very pretty voice, but she also sang the works of Schulz and the Danish poet Thaarup, which had become folk songs from the Aemdfest and Peter's Hochzeit [marriage], with much grace; but you were so ill that you had to have your way. The cook became your (198) attendant, sent /sand/ you always to sleep and awakening, and I am certain that this joy contributed to your recovery.

But now (not yet eighteen months old) you began on your attendant's arm to sing after her, stammering the words, but with the melody so clear that Schulz often followed the two of you in astonishment. I, on the other hand, full of fear of a premature adulthood of my dear little Psyche, wanted to hear nothing of these tones, which could easily have turned into a premature swan song, and I begged Schulz, too, to ignore them.

You were three years old in the spring of 1795 when I, exhausted nearly to death by the frightful succession of inflammatory ailments which your first being awoke in me, with a thousand tears left you and your dear sister Auguste behind in order to go with Carl and Lotte [the elder children] to seek for life under milder stars; and already, on the occasion of a beautiful, dance-like piece of music, you jumped from my lap and hopped prettily along in a movement that was in time and in the spirit of the music, in sweet childish unconcern, in front of the astonished (199) auditors.

But when you were once taken to the opera with ballets, you imitated so exactly the good and bad posturings of the prima ballerina, that before my departure I exacted a sacred promise that you would not be taken more frequently to the theater, because I did not want my little muse to be perverted into a dancer. On the other hand, I asked them to give you full opportunities to look at my copper engravings.

When I returned to the charming solitude of Sophienholm [outside of Copenhagen] in the early autumn of 1797, I found you, as the longing mother's heart could only wish, delicate but healthy, cheerful and gracious, but – to the joy of my heart – untouched in regard to your talents!

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2Johann Abraham Peter Shulz (1747-1800), German composer and conductor; Court conductor in Copenhagen, 1787-94.
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With real hunger, when we now moved into the large house in town, you fell upon the copper engravings I had brought from Rome and other pieces of art. But you were very specially attracted by Tischbein’s “Homer” and his great work on Greek vases. You drew the noble, tall figures into yourself, so to speak – and were always silent for very joy in looking at the selection of those objects that (200) might be intended for you.

Although your elder brother and sisters were now beginning to take dancing lessons, I did not permit any dancing teacher to come to you. You, however, floated continuously, unprompted but irresistibly drawn, by the harmonious waves of related tones, light as a flowering petal!

Do you remember the happy Saturdays when the lovely playmates assembled around you [um euch]? of whom – except for the brother – no boys were allowed, except for the gentle Wolf (he should have been called Johannes!) and Count Baudassin, the friend of all of us? Do you recall these evenings of purest juvenile bliss, and how Baggessen, and a year later C. Victor von Bonstetten became your playmates? The former pouring out the glowing creative fantasies [Phantaste] in delightful fairy tales; where, camped about him on the carpet of my salon, by the twilight of alabaster vases, you scarcely dared to breathe for restrained rapture? But Bonstetten let himself be whirled right into the whole childish joyful delirium, so that often the big house was too small for you?

In the winter of 1798 (before Bonstetten’s arrival (201) in Copenhagen), it happened that Weise (with Hummel doubtless the greatest musical improviser of his time) improvised wonderfully on our piano; then you broke out for the first time in actual pantomime, extemporizing beautiful and noble positions appropriate to the extemporized music, in which at the same time there also appeared pictures from the antique that had impressed themselves on the young soul.

Soon afterward, when the loved swarm of children was again assembled, innocently hopping about, (202) you said to me: “But Mother, I’m dancing and don’t know what? Do tell me what I should dance?” Then I told you, in highly condensed form, the fable of Orpheus and Eurydice; and you played, to the lovely Elysium scene of Naumann’s opera, the role of Orpheus seeking his spouse out of the chorus of shades, after the beautiful music, with so much grace and truth (while the lovely maidens jestingly hid the beloved Eurydice from you, and finally allowed you to find her) – that Weise and I were alike enchanted.

Now, quite often, either for the grandmother’s or the father’s birthday, children’s ballets were put on by the friendly troop of young girls, in which you improvised your little central role, according to its content, as explained by me, and after a tryout with Weise preceding his wonderful improvisation. I say improvised, for it was never limited to the performance, for never was the performance limited, either on his side or on your part, to the pre-agreed version, and it was always more beautiful, more astonishing!

Meanwhile you enter your seventh year, and Bonstetten escapes the horrors of a
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Revolution (203) (in which the extraordinary popularity he enjoyed, particularly in the Pays de Vaud [around Lausanne], threatened to involve him) in the bosom of friendship – and as I have already indicated, it is only now that real juvenile life begins. Bonstetten – the pupil of Bonnett [sic] and friend of Gray, Johann von Müller, and Matthiessen – became such a child with you [children] in the “Children’s Paradise,” as he called our house, that it was often difficult to get him back to our shared evening readings; and at times he came late and rather overheated to my [salon], in order to affirm in Bonnett [sic], Garve and Aristotle the general laws of the science of the soul [Seelenlehre] -- whose elements this tireless observer often discovered in childish games.

You began to take piano and drawing lessons, making little progress in the former but more in the latter – always lightly and without pressure, always cheerful and healthy, though delicate. No dancing master is allowed to teach you anything except the postures in walking, standing, etc., and those of conventional good manners, and you seldom go to the theater, because you imitate too faithfully.

But I attempt, as with your sisters, to form you from within outward, for every external grace and (204) aptitude. In your case I worked even more zealously to this end, in proportion as a counterweight was needed to the aesthetic talents which even in the bud announced themselves so fully and brilliantly.

And here permit me a digression. In your upbringing, dear children, it had been my fundamental law, based on my own knowledge of my innermost being, that beauty, good figure, graciousness can be most surely developed only from the inside, and that talent itself receives its highest recognition only through the well-formed health of the soul.

Thus for good posture, gracious walking, perfect cleanliness and order in all things, you were given grounds for self-respect and respect for others, as well as the maintenance of health and the saving of time therein. Gentle manners and modesty, and understanding and assuring the rights of others, I sought to make second nature, and for everything that lies in the domain of courtesy and good manners I sought and found moral grounds; for what is called politeness consists in appearing what we should actually be; and that the most courteous (205) people should always be the best corresponds like the inside to the outside. Thus the saying, “Do, or have, this or that in order to please somebody” was never uttered by me to you. Early gentle moral training and nourishment of the soul with noble spiritual fare, combined with movement, cool air in the rooms, and moderation in food and drink, adorn, ennoble and form figure, propriety and movement with quite other charms than those which dancing masters, corsets [Schnürleiber] and coquetry [Gefallsucht] provide.

Thus you blossomed out in continuous development, but without ever overstepping the bounds of the cool, shady garden of childhood. Among the feasts of the heart which came to me through your precocious heavenly gifts, and through the friendship of Bonstetten and your lovely teacher Eleonore Rappe – and whose picture, animated by the morning breath of recollection,
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remained in my soul in ever-fresh dewy luster, I will try to describe for you and me and our friends the observance of my birthday in June 1800.

(206) The friends had chosen as its scene the charming bank of our lake opposite Sophienholm. A still young and happily greening plantation of fir trees [Fichten], birches and pines [Tannen], overshadowed by high, dark wooded hills, extended down to a point near the lake, where a friendly bank spreads the flowery rose carpet, picturesquely interpenetrated with young shrubbery.

As the afternoon begins to decline, Bonstetten invites [my] mother, [my] father's sister and me to an airy cruise on the lake. To my astonishment, the dear mother accepts, though she has avoided every boat ride since the death of her beloved son [Balthasar] in the waves of the Garonne.

The whole flock of young girls, my nieces and those of your father, from the blooming young lady Justina Brun on downward to the four-year-old, angelically beautiful Constanze Eggers, had gone walking with the motherly teacher Eleonore. But we advance over the mirror-flat lake, and slowly proceed past the box-crowned peninsula [Vorland] of Aldershvile into the deep lake-bay, (207) whose wooded heights suddenly rise up all around, and every trace of human hands disappears.

We floated [schwebten] past the dark high bank and again into open water, where the round Erlenkränze (alder wreaths) advance before the retreating woods, and the lightly stretching birch trunks rock their crowns in the golden evening light. There, light tones, gently trembling, advance across the mirror-like lake — spirit breaths, enticed from hidden wind instruments, and we glide toward the sweet tones.

Finally, as we round a thicket, there opens to my astonished eyes the loveliest scene from an idyllic world. Between the two groups of young firs and birches, half seen and half hidden, from all sides smaller and larger maiden figures flutter past like little doves! Grouped by greater and lesser height, they seem to look eagerly upon the approaching ones, like loving children of the seaside [awaiting] the approaching elders (208) returning from a dangerous voyage.

Now, pressing toward us in a lovely group, swinging May-blooms and spring posies in their hands, the joyful crowd awaited the approaching boat, when, from the climbing Greenwood, light as breezes floating downward on the tones, unfolding in a magic circle of lovely poses, and in a full-flowering wreath like a promising genius of life, my Ida sinks in my arms, upon my heart; and now mother, daughter, aunt and grandmother feel themselves wound about with a chain of flowers from the whole bevvy of young maidens!

Ever since the preceding winter, a severe cold in what for me was always a redoubtable autumn had relegated me to a condition which roused new anxieties among those who loved me. During the winter, these alarming accidents had so increased that the immortal gynecologist
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[Frauenartz] Saxtorph declared that only a flight into a milder climate could save me. He had made this declaration to your father and my mother at about the noon hour; (209) and on the afternoon of the same day, this strong, still lusty [lebensfroher] man died from the lightning-flash of an apoplectic fit [Schlagsfluss].

I was supposed to make a first trial [of a milder climate] in southern Switzerland, and Bonstetten, returning to his now somewhat quieted fatherland, accompanied us. Whenever I passed through Germany from north to south on my travels, I was always so ill, so weak that I must avoid all exertion, much talking, and especially even the pleasantest emotional movement and awakening, and must hasten only to the designated source of relief (for actual recovery no one offered me on this side of the Alps), and from there across the mountains! Thus it has come about that I know my German fatherland less well than I do Switzerland, France and Italy – and so it happened this time again on our hasty journey as far as Schlangenbad, and from there into Switzerland.

In dear, familiar Schlangenbad, however, a favorable fortune brought us a friend in the noble Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg. Quickly perceived and acknowledged was a hearty spiritual affinity [Seelenverhältnis] established between Bonstetten, him, myself and you. You snuggled up to the tall, serious-looking, (210) and to many perhaps somewhat abrupt and standoffish appearing man with childish confidence, and were with no one dearer [lieber] than with him; for there ruled in him a pure, nature-loving, childlike soul, and you two understood one another much better than you did with most children of your own age. I had the same experience in my childhood and time of innocence [Tugend], and yet we both, you and I, were true and long-remaining children.

Already on the beautiful shores of Lake Geneva [des Lémans], in the landscape between Lausanne and Court, where we occupied a pleasantly situated country cottage [Landhaus], Heaven gave us neighbors such as it gives only to its favorites. Huber the Blind Man, his faithful wife and their interesting children became our friends. This whole family is music, and you lived and wove and floated upon musical tones!

But for me the blind Huber and Bonstetten often drew too vigorously on the tender casing of the chrysalis! We spent the winter in Geneva, where you shared with me the best and the brightest [geistreichste] society. But here it was noticeable that particularly the older men, with especially premonitory intellectual perception, (211) embraced and understood you. Huber, Bonstetten, Volta, the noble Pietet brothers – the physicist and the agronomist – listened to your youthful tones and could not tire of seeing your (always musically inspired) pantomimic presentations. But the blind Huber did not tire of hearing Schulz’s and Weise’s German and Danish songs from you.

Already in the early autumn of 1801 we had visited Madame de Staël in Coppet, and that great soul had directed a rare sympathy to us – But she returned to Paris in the late autumn, leaving matters with the presentiment of the feeling in which we later rejoiced.
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During the autumn and winter, Bonstetten read to me Voss's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, while you, after your study hours, and just like other girls of your age (and more eagerly and childishly than many), played on the floor with your dolls; and we do not at all believe you are listening. But we soon notice an unusual displeasure in you when the reading is interrupted by visitors; and our attention having been aroused, we discover that your little head has actually been serving as a noble backdrop *[Bildwerk]* for the *Odyssey* (212) and *Iliad*.

In the latter work, you often turned things around backward when referring to Troy, the Skaean Gate, or [Mount] Ida, and here and there you reversed matters when the Simois or Skamander appeared! We now showed you Le Chevalier's map of the region. Our reading, too, was now designed for you, with omissions (but *without your knowing it*), and, full of life, the word was transmitted to you as picture! I myself read with you from the Bible, but however poetically you were aroused by drinking from this sacred source of life, I allowed no [visual] representations, even from the histories of the Patriarchs; for this region of the soul must be kept apart in order not to desecrate the sacred.

In 18 degrees of cold, which we experienced in that Geneva winter, my health could not flourish; and the great Jurine, our doctor and friend, early sent us into the milder Vaudois *[Waaltand]* region. Once again we lived above Court and below Lausanne, in the neighborhood of our dear Huber, alone yet sociably. Bonstetten frequently came down to us from Valères (where he had a rural property in a romantic locality, half a mile beyond the little town of Orbe at the foot of the Jura); (213) and we began to read a lot for you from the Greek tragedians, especially from Christian and Friedrich Leopold Stollberg's animated and insightful translations.

Sophocles' harmonious beauty transfixed you with new feelings, and these soon made their appearance in your often merely childish dances — where the music gave the incentive, and the blind Huber's chords on the piano often encouraged more of this than I as yet wished — replete as they were with unexpected positionings *[Stellungen]* and an expression found only in the ancients and their works! This had already happened sometimes in Geneva, where you wanted to be costumed like the splendid Dulber's *Odysseus* [or] Pallas Athene; and now, to the astonishment of Piktet, Bonstetten and the soulful old Volta, the small nine-year-old girl, with such plastic correctness in position and gesture, represented the blue-eyed bearer of the Aegis [Athene] in such a way that smiling and admiration vied with one another!

But when, finally, dipping your spear toward your favorites in the Assembly, you majestically (though on a greatly reduced scale) disappeared behind the curtain, and a few minutes later reappeared, teasingly imitating a flower-crowned Hora lightly swaying (214) to the tones of Schulz's delightful opera, *The Queen of Golconda* — and finally giving only to your freely chosen favorites wreaths, flowers and fruits, with a grace given only to you -- then each and all receive wreaths, blooms and fruits like a consecration of the Graces!

In September 1802, Jurine found me so much more ill, and so weak, that he decides I must again cross the Alps. You, too, had been attacked by the consequences of an extremely
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persistent cough in the throat; but this could not at all be dealt with in a summer when in May and June the grapes and their blossoms froze, and in late July, August and the beginning of September we were roasted by a Senegal-like heat; and thus you, too, were much in need of milder airs.

We went by way of the great [Saint] Bernard and Turin to Genoa, where we embarked for Livorno, and from there, with no stops except for single rest days, we hurried to Rome, where you arrived completely cured. And here, in the city of All Times, the uniquely chosen Free State of Art, (215) your inner life awoke to the most gentle clarity of contemplation, and your whole being strained toward the purest, highest beauty!

Very remarkable was the way in which, as a nine-year-old child, disdaining all spurious color effects and mannerist peculiarities, you immediately, with inborn artistic instincts, honored only the true and beautiful!; and how the antique, Raphael and his great predecessors, immediately drew you into the world of higher yet human ideality. It is true that you initially took some umbrage at old pictures often darkened by the dust of millennia [Jahrtausende], mutilated or badly restored. But the Tribune of Florence, like the Room of Niobe, you left with the deep silence of feeling! But even more than the Laocoön [Pythontödter], you were drawn in Rome to the Tragic Muse, from whose enthusiastic contemplation you were not to be torn away.

In the picture galleries, I was astonished by the (216) extreme sureness of your feelings. How often have you led me to smaller works of the older masters, often hidden away in dark corners and covered with dust. Franza [Francia], Pietro Perugino, Fra Bartolommeo and Garofalo were your favorites among them. But Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael you venerated with real passion [Inbrunst]. Among Raphael's followers, Anibale Carracci, Carlo Dolce [sic], and Sassoferrato were your favorites. Deeply moving to you were the truth to nature and life of the Netherlanders and Germans. But in Genoa you had already learned to value Albrecht Dürer.

I kept you more occupied with drawing than with music; nor did I allow you to hear too much music, because it was mediocre due to the great impoverishment of Rome during this winter. Gluck, Schulz, Naumann and Weise had tuned your musical sense to such a high pitch that I did not want it to be degraded by the feeble attraction of the newer Italian music; and you were not yet ripe for the music of the great, old Italian masters. You heard quite a lot of Paisiello, Zingarelli and Cimarosa. But soon you were performing on your own, in the most charming manner, beautified and ennobled, the (217) Roman folk tunes which resounded around our highly placed residence on the Pincio.

Inspired by this behavior, our Roman piano teacher plays us a pious trick. We occupied the middle rooms of the Villa di Malta; Bonstetten had one wing, and [Wilhelm von] Humboldt [and family] the other; but there were in addition all kinds of smaller accommodations for foreigners in this many-angled building, and various small artists' nests had been installed whose occupants were in part unknown to us.
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One day Bonstetten (whose hearing is extraordinarily acute) tells me that there must be another young foreign lady residing here, who has a delightful voice. "For some time I have been hearing the tones clearly!" No one in the house claimed to know any new arrival; and the "faithful Marie," our only feminine attendant, was silent. You, however, took your music lesson in the farthest room, and just at the time when I took my afternoon rest, in their [ih rer] neighborhood.

But one afternoon chance took our friend [Bonstetten] into that room. Suddenly he broke into my room. "Get up quickly," he said, while Marie vainly pursued him in an attempt to keep him quiet (218). "Now I know who has the lovely voice!" And drags me from my couch into the foremost room, where Delicati [the music teacher] was no longer able to hide the fact that, led on by your lovely voice, he was giving you a little vocal instruction during half the lesson time. He now lowered his large, dark blue Roman eyes in such a shamefast way, as though he had been caught in some sin, because, when everything had been agreed upon with him on the very first day, to his inquiry, "Has [she] a voice?" he had been given the answer, "They don’t want to use it yet."

But now the silver spring [der Silberquell] had escaped from the deep! Already you were opening, gently vaulted, the exit of that Odeum [] which (219) a good Italian vocal teacher declares necessary for singing, and, when he does not find it, tries to form it in the mouth. Already you intoned firmly and clearly, and gently moved your voice in rising and falling, and your lips opened, smoothly smiling, to let the sweet tones flow outward. When we left Rome in July, you had so taken possession of the Italian vocal style that nothing could have made you forget it.

How to pronounce the noble speech of song, you were taught by my true friend, Pietro Giuntotardi, that most resounding Bocca Romana [Roman Mouth]!

Only very seldom do I allow myself the pleasure (220) of seeing you in the Pantomime, unfolding your innermost being before me; and of allowing you to express in [physical] attitudes what your soul has daily absorbed. How difficult the sacrifice [Versagen] often seemed to me, especially [in conjunction with] the joy the first artists took in you. That of the very lovable Cannova [sic], who had just reached the noonday summit of his fame, was fervent! "Quella ragazza è la vostra più Cella [sic] poesia" [That girl is your most ... poetry"], he said, and was doubtless right; in you I saw blossoming what from early childhood had budded in my own interior: [for] what with me became words, with you became tones and pictures.

As winter was turning to spring, you were once so profoundly affected by Sophocles’ Electra that I attempted to let you present [before an audience] the heart-rending scene of the meeting with the supposedly dead brother at the grave of Agamemnon. Bonstetten made his large room available, and our friends among the artists helped me convert it into a mourning grove [Trauerhain]. When you appeared with the urn on your arm, in which you believed you were holding the loved one’s ashes, your figure, stance, gesture, and the correctness and beauty
in the fall of your drapery [des Gewänderwurfes] were so (221) astonishing that we all forgot the child! When you found Orestes’ lock of hair, the filial offering to the dead on the grave monument, you exhibited in such a way the transition from the most hopeless despair to the dawning hope that I scarcely dared to breathe, in order not to spoil the magical mental process – for your Orestes was [actually] your daily fraternal playmate, Wilhelm von Humboldt [Jr.] – you had probably informed him well in the rehearsal – for I had written out the synopsis for you, and the recognition scene went very well. Ah, we did not guess that within a few months the beloved, blooming boy would rest at the Pyramid [of Cestius], and that him for whom you appeared to weep on the stage, you would have to mourn in reality.

One evening we were at the house of Angelica Kauffmann – only one lady, an intelligent Venetian (Countess Salvi Trissina), and some few gentlemen whom I didn’t know were present, when Angelica sweetly requested that “you should just show her a few poses!” You loved Angelica very much, and, excited at the same time by the whole setting of this temple of art, you enchanted yourself and us in a cycle of impressions [Empfindungen], from which enthusiastic transport we awoke with one breath. Angelica pressed you long and silently to her breast, and said softly to me, “You have given Art a Muse!”

We left Rome three weeks later than we had (223) intended, since when the trunks were already packed and we had paid the deposit [caparra] to the coachman [veturino], you came down with the measles, though in the most fortunate way! It turned out to be a developmental illness [Entwicklungskrankheit], and as you were carefully nursed, you left Rome in full health and bloomed during the following years in a way that showed that the eight months in Rome had visibly promoted your physical and mental development in harmony with your inner being.

Our beloved Karl came to meet us in Augsburg, where we separated from our dear Bonstetten and regretfully proceeded northward.

In Jena we lingered for a day, and spent the afternoon and evening with Göthe [sic] in his elevated residence in the Castle – beautiful, unforgettable hours! Göthe was all mild, conciliatory benevolence for us, and the eight years that had passed since we had met at the warm springs of Carlsbad had passed over him as in Morgana’s magic garden. A perspicacious friend of children, Göthe at that time had associated much with my two eldest children, and in the meantime (224) we had kept in touch only through friendly greetings. Now he received you, small new acquaintance, with really fatherly partiality, and smilingly recognized with friendly recollection the headstrong boy [Karl] in the now tall youth.

We were quite alone with him. With the greatest interest he looked through, with my son and the latter’s companion at the universities (two eager pupils of the great Werner), the collection of natural history curiosities, in the midst of which he received us. But as you diffidently came closer and closer to a very well-stuffed African tiger, the poetic teacher’s spirit awoke! He put you on the dreadful handsome beast, grouping you with our shawls in ever new and charming poses of an Ariadne, grouping you with the tiger; and while he, completely
occupied with these lovely fantasies, paid attention only to you two, for us spectators the tall figure became a creative Prometheus or Daedalus. He also wanted to see a cycle of poses of you, and while doing so] his wonderful eyes encompassed you as with a circle of light-beams.

(225) On the next day we drove to Weimar. Alas, I did not find Herder in the dear familiar house behind the church; only his noble spouse, surrounded by the more or less grown children. That evening [am andern Abend] I sat for a long time alone beneath an apple tree which had once shaded Herder, my parents and siblings, while the smaller children played on the lawn. Now, my father was long since dead, and my dear sister – but Herder was absent!

Then I was seized by such a premonitory longing for the sublime, mild teacher of heavenly wisdom, and who since my early youth had embraced me with such loving recognition! Unrestrainedly flowed my tears, and that premonitory sorrow raised my eyes to where reddish clouds traversed the evening sky, as though he were already there in a purer element, to which he would also return before a new spring adorned the apple tree.

Herder's son guided us to Tiefführte to the Mnemosyne of the German Parnassus, Amalie of Weimar, who received us on the fine summer evening in the garden; her great fiery eye shone from the rising shadow of the aether, like the evening star from the twilight: (226) it too a precursor of the immortal dawn.

Wieland was just then with his exalted [female] friend. Never had I seen him so. A quiet sorrow ([the deep heart's mourning the much-loved spouse] shrouded the features ennobled by age; gentle quietness reigned about him, and loving benevolence breathed from every word he spoke. He seemed to me like the incarnation of his hermit in Oberon. You immediately fastened his whole attention – and soon disappeared on his hand in a young plantation of fragrant shrubbery.

What did he tell you during this promenade, my Ida? What teachings of Socratic wisdom fell from those Attic lips? Did he give you, as he once did to me, in the Haine [Grove] zu Bolwedern, a lecture on the sixth sense, which perhaps is lacking to us only that we may be as close to the invisible world as it is to us?! Never will the magic [Weihe] of that hour evaporate for me. Fanciful as his own Agathon, he surrendered himself to those exalted revelations of the innermost being, and for me in this hour there was kindled quite new light on himself, for whom now Plato and now Aristippus (227) floated around in the boundaries between the sensual and the supersensual worlds, like a splendid bird of twilight!

But now all of the veils of dusk had fallen from him! High upward he pointed his noble skull [Scheitel] into the twilight's red! When he came out of the bushes with you, both of you smiled as though transfigured! "Just breathe on [aufhauchen] this tender bud," he said gently to me. It was his last word to me! Have I truly fulfilled his order, my Ida?

On August 23, 1803 we returned home to our dear ones.
Weise was now your only music teacher, as he had been to your older sister Charlotte. You were so strong, so tireless in singing that Weise, misled in this way, had you sing things that were far beyond your age: e.g., bravura arias of Mozart requiring a range of almost 2 ½ octaves, like the splendid “Come scoglio, in moto reste” (“Like a rock, remain unmoved”) from Cosi fan tutte, or deeply passionate ones like “Tradita schernita” (“Betrayed and Scorned”) and others which could have been dangerous! But for the development of your musical and pantomimic talent, the operation of this musical genius was extremely beneficial.

Your improvised (228) accompaniment of his improvised playing, through analogous placements and consecutive treatment, was made possible only by his high and individualized art of improvisation. The bass, specifically of Weise the learned musician, never lacked, even in unconscious surrender to the moments of exaltation, either correctness or thoughtfulness. Like God’s words of the heart and the highest sense, the bass powerfully asserts itself, ordering and commanding, while the right hand floats on the wings of fantasy in a luxuriant fullness of tones.

Seldom, and only during my uninterrupted two years’ illness, could my prison of suffering form this edifying scene! Sometimes it became possible in Sophienholm, where I suffered somewhat less during the summer months. But you drew industriously after the antique with your sisters and a few playmates, and we continued to read Homer, the Aeneid, Sophocles and Ovid.

I had read to you the whole story of the Psyche of Apuleius out of Lucian; from old pictorial representations you had called these into the life of marble; and on a beautiful summer afternoon in September, (229) at a moment when Weise was there, the darkened room in which I lay was opened; the sofa was brought before the door leading into the salon, which was fantastically and mysteriously decorated with shrubbery; a lawn-altar and other necessary properties – and you appeared on the altar costumed as Venus, before you a group of maidens sacrificing to you incense (from the other small room opposite were heard Weise’s accompanying chords), and there you alone carried through the entire cycle of the legend in light joy, deep sorrow and frightful truth – while your expressive gesture made the absent seem present, and the beloved god or the frightful goddess seemed, in your poses, expressions and looks, as fleeing but longed-for or as fear-awakening.

A cultivated foreign lady and her charming daughter, the only spectators of this unforgettable presentation, may remember these consecrated hours in reading these lines.

Our mothers’ hearts palpitated in unison as you, with flying locks, deathly anxiety in every gesture, fleeing before the pursuing spirits of the Underworld, in and out among the bushes placed in the wings, (230), finally sank down dying – and then, revived by gentle tones of love, little by little awakening, opened the sweet eyes in which were revealed the presence of the Ever-present – now to you the assuredly neighboring God. This was in the summer of 1804, when you were almost 12 years old.
Ida’s Aesthetic Development

In the winter of 1804-1805, my convulsive nerve troubles had reached such a point, and the attacks were beginning to assail me during my sleep-like exhaustion in such a threatening way, that the doctors, citing symptoms of epilepsy, affirmed that in order to guard against this most dreadful evil I must again [seek] a milder air. I longed for Italy, but Geneva, the Vaudois region, or, in the worst of cases, the south of France were determined upon.

My trunks and coach were already aboard the Kiel packet boat when, beginning on May 24, Augustine, then you, then Charlotte, one after another in just a few days, came down with scarlet fever: the red and white pustules joined with the scarlet! I myself was lying seriously ill when I was informed that Lotte was (231) hopeless and that you two were in great danger! And Guste, whose scarlet fever had originally been hidden and misdiagnosed, I found to have relapsed and also [to be] seriously ill because they had not taken care of her! Ah, you were preserved to me! But none of you was ever again as strong as before.

Although you recovered very rapidly, neither the doctors nor I were without anxiety about the consequences of this dreadful ailment, right in the middle of the most decisive development of the bud of life. On July 24, 1805, we left Copenhagen by ship, and after the use of [the baths of] Schlangenbad, which was health-giving for all of us alike, we reached Geneva at the beginning of November, where we were welcomed with open arms by our Bonstetten and our true friends from 1802, and received by Anne Germaine de Staël with a fervent cordiality that confirmed for us the depth and mutuality of the sympathetic feeling which had immediately drawn us to her on first acquaintance.

Here, then, began a new and deeply awakening soul-life for you! And it became clear to me that Providence had [marked] you for the highest development of your (232) many-sided talents – which, however, were to be developed and unfolded more through the kindling, lightning sparks with which great souls inoculated you [in dich sprühlen], while still deferring to your tender age, than by persistent individual drive [anhaltende Selbstbestrebung].

But only great souls understand extraordinary children. They know their own kind. Like a solar eagle [Sonnenadler], Staël irradiated you with her uniquely soulful regards! no shyness before her in your young heart; you [two] were immediately in each other’s confidence [vertraut]! I, however, trembled lest she haul you across the boundary of childhood, and from the cool morning shadows into the summer heat of her passionately mobile nature! Heartfelt words of trust about this were exchanged between us. “I understand you in everything and always! I wish to be a child with Ida, but don’t take her away from me completely – give her to me sometimes,” she promised, begged with heartfelt love!

During that winter, Mme. de Staël poured the overflowing fullness of her being – through Bonaparte’s tyranny the silver stream was confined within narrow banks – into theatrical

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3Je vous comprenez en tout et toujours! Je veux être enfant avec Ida, mais ne me l’ôtez tout à fait – donnez-la-moi quelques fois.
Ida's Aesthetic Development 86

presentations. – Concerning what she accomplished in this genre, as unique as in everything else, I have expressed myself (233) elsewhere. But here it was just as though you [two] were pouring two living springs into one another. You bloomed, but perhaps noticeably only to a mother's eye, tenderly and still weakened by the illnesses from which you had just recovered; Bonstetten and Staël saw only the rosy cheeks, and the cheerful spirits. And when I denied you to Staël for her theater (for many reasons, among which I allowed the concern for your health to stand out most prominently) – when Jarine now and then prescribed medications, she scolded: "Don't start drugging her! She's as healthy as the Pont Neuf! Look at her! Is she not gay as Pincon [sic]?"\(^4\)

But little by little she hexed us all into her whirlpool! We had to follow the laws which keep suns, earths and moons floating in their orbits! And the powerful central Sun dragged all of us after her! Soon I had to allow her one of your pantomimic presentations. It was the resuscitated Canephores.\(^5\) A dark bedroom, onto which my salon opened, as background: You, veiled, on the pedestal, the light falling on you sideways from above; soft animating music, and after the animation, the Canephores distributing the sacred gifts.

Staël's happiness was inexpressible! – only what had it cost? To it belonged all the hard-heartedness of mother love, to deny you for Rousseau's Pygmalion, which was given in his theater. How she could beg: Donnez-la-moi! pour cette seule unique foi[s]! [Give her to me! For this one single time!] Moral grounds decided. But now she heard that you had sometimes appeared in scenes of Althea, the mother of Meleager. And the mere thought of this subject of high tragedy inflamed her. Your own mind had always inclined to the high tragic; and, overborne by the two of you, I laid out for you the succession of scenes and the action, and arranged all the scenery. The dark room in the background opened with a feeble illumination, (235) and the slain brothers appeared on the right side on a large couch; while I had intended something quite different, Madame de Staël had reserved for herself the preparation of the torch with which Althea touches off the fire that is supposed to burn the fateful funeral pyre and, in it, the life of the son. "Moi j'arrange le flambeau!" [I'll arrange the torch], she wrote me on the morning of the performance; "mais [but], she added, with characteristic gallantry, le foyer des talents est en vous [the seat of the talents is in you]."

In this performance, my Ida, which you later repeated several times, you deployed a talent which was astounding even to me, who knew all your capabilities. You were costumed in a strictly antique style, and very handsome with the purple mantle and the white, richly folded tunic! But so masterfully did you handle the drapery that it never disturbed you, even in the most violent passion, but was always a subordinate, incidental [prop], and yet was full of an ordered beauty which is sometimes found lacking in famous actors and mimes.

\(^4\) N'allez pas la droguer! Elle se porte donc comme le pont neuf? N'est-elle pas gaie comme Pincon?

\(^5\) In ancient Greece, maidens carrying on their heads baskets holding sacred objects used at festivals. The reference is to Aeschylus' drama of The Choephoroi.
Ida's Aesthetic Development

And now, while heart and soul were focused upon you, my Anna Germaine [de Staël], who was next to me, put on a drama within the (236) drama! Like lightning and thunder, everything worked upon her—and when the funeral march broke in upon the tunes of the jolly opera; when the folding doors in the dark background opened, and the bier with the fallen heroes appeared, Althea first listened, interrupting the opera—then stared, white as a ghost, and, crying out, fell all of a piece!

From then on she heard and saw nothing except you. Was Althea with you, and broke out in tears only when you, ending the scene of horror, quick as a flash and yet beautiful and noble, sank down, wounded by your own sword!! Atalanta to Meleager's Ume; Galatea alone, as awakening to life. Plastic representations in cycles from the Psyche story, from Niobe; as Muse of the Dance, as Bacchante, Betale, etc., inspired an enthusiastic August Wilhelm von Schlegel to write his poem to Ida Brun, one of the loveliest and most soulful of his most beautiful songs.

(237) But song, also, unfolded its resounding wings ever more powerfully in your young breast! It is true that your fine young music teacher, Catruso of Naples, had immediately declared that "he would not permit you to sing anything of such great extent as hitherto!" But for this very reason your voice gained in intensity, sonority and vigorous fullness. If your pantomimic presentations had enchanted our Staël, Huber the Blind Man, the deeply responsive musician, listened to you with that soulful sensibility that I have seen to appear only in the faces of musical blind people.

Comical in this connection was the jealousy of Madame de Staël. She wanted you to be wholly dedicated to her beloved pantomime. "Croyez-moi, laissons-là la musique! Il faut la vouer entièrement à la Pantomime; car c'est là qu'elle est unique!"6 N'en faites rien (the blind man whispered), car elle ne le sera pas moins, quant au chant! But I also had you draw industriously, in order that from all these fine gifts you should acquire something lasting, in which you alone and independently would take pleasure: if circumstances should arise which would interfere with those [other pursuits], and if precarious health should limit the exercise (238) of those talents which demand the flowering of all natural gifts.

Other, greater authorities than I in regard to art and the soul were especially often astounded by the calmness, almost cold-bloodedness, with which you performed your pantomimic presentations. During these, you noticed everything around you, every movement and all the expressions of the spectators; no little disturbing accident intruded on your composure, nothing disturbed you—but this equilibrium is perhaps the seal which nature affixes to the works of genius.

6Believe me, leave the music alone! She must be dedicated entirely to Pantomime, for that is where she is unique.

7Do nothing at all, for she will be no worse off as far as singing goes.